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Isaiah Berlin's Contribution to Liberal Theory:

Pluralism as a Romantic Response to Liberalism

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To M. M.

'tis requisite that the writer have some plan or object . . . some aim or intention in his first setting out, if not in the composition of the whole work. A production without a design would resemble more the raving of a madman, than the sober efforts of genius and learning.

<div align="right">Alexander Gerard, Essay on Genius</div>

No atoms, casually together hurdl'd,

Could e'er produce so beautiful a world.

Nor dare I such a doctrine here admit,

As would destroy the providence of wit.

<div align="right">John Dryden, To my Honor'd Friend Sir Robert Howard</div>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Isaiah Berlin's idea of value pluralism has traditionally been seen as supportive to liberalism. Recently however, the idea of an implicit connection between pluralism and liberalism has been questioned by theorists arguing that there is no theoretical link between both, and that in fact, pluralism presents obstacles to liberalism.

In this thesis, I present pluralism as being a romantic response to Enlightenment-inspired liberal theory. My claim is that liberalism, even though it cannot be derived from a pluralist moral theory, provides strong support, both in practice and historically, to our pluralist moral condition. In chapter 1, I explain Berlin's conception of history and the importance of the context. I also contrast pluralism with other liberal theories to lay the foundation of my argument. In chapter 2, I present Berlin's highly original conception of human nature, and his defence of negative liberty. In chapter 3, I demonstrate how pluralism is a romantic response to traditional liberalism by exploring two liberal themes that were both redefined in new terms following the romantic revolt, namely rationality and tolerance. Finally, in chapter 4, I argue that pluralism does not entail liberalism, but that none the less a liberal society is the political arrangement best suited to the fact that human beings disagree about ends, and that values and ways of life are incompatible and incommensurable.

Le pluralisme moral est traditionnellement perçu comme supportant le libéralisme politique. Récemment toutefois, ce lien implicite entre pluralisme et libéralisme a été davantage questionné par des théoristes qui soutiennent, au contraire, que le pluralisme représente plutôt un obstacle au libéralisme politique.

Dans cette thèse, je présente le pluralisme comme étant une réponse romantique au libéralisme traditionnel. Je soutiens que le libéralisme, bien qu'on ne puisse le dériver d'une théorie morale pluraliste, fourni un solide support, à la fois historique et en pratique, à nos présentes conditions morales pluralistes. Dans un premier temps, je présente la conception de l'histoire de Berlin, ainsi que l'importance du contexte dans sa théorie. En second lieu, je contraste le pluralisme avec d'autres théories libérales pour poser les fondations de mon argument. Le deuxième chapitre consiste en une présentation de la conception de la nature humaine de Berlin ainsi que sa défense de la liberté négative. Dans le troisième chapitre, je démontre en quoi le pluralisme est une réponse romantique au libéralisme en explorant deux thèmes libéraux qui ont dû être redéfini en de nouveaux termes suite à la révolte romantique, c'est-à-dire la rationalité et la tolérance. Et finalement, je soutiens que le pluralisme n'entraîne pas automatiquement ni nécessairement le libéralisme politique, mais que néanmoins, des institutions libérales sont l'arrangement politique le mieux adapté au fait que les êtres humains diffèrent à propos des fins, et que les valeurs et modes de vie sont incompatibles et incommensurables.

ABBREVIATIONS

AC	*Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas.* New York: The Viking Press, 1979.
AOE	*The Age of Enlightenment: The 18th Century Philosophers.* New York: Mentor Books, 1956.
CC	*Concepts and Categories: Philosophical Essays.* London: Pimlico, 1978.
CTH	*The Crooked Timber of Humanity.* London: John Murray Publishers, 1990.
FE	*Four Essays on Liberty.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.
RR	*The Roots of Romanticism.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999.
VH	*Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas.* New York: The Viking Press, 1976.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

I.

My topic is Isaiah Berlin's idea of value pluralism, the origins of which he found in Machiavelli and the romantic movement. The originality of Berlin lies in his belief that incompatible and incommensurable ways of life conflict with one another, and that we, human beings, free and self-creating agents through choice-making, are better off living in societies where negative liberty is protected by liberal institutions because this is what best fits our age and our human nature. Berlin is a value-pluralist liberal and his pluralism is a romantic response to Enlightenment-inspired liberalism. This is in essence his contribution to liberal theory, highly controversial and at the centre of a debate that will rage for sometime.

In this thesis I examine Berlin's interpretation of the romantic movement to explore its long-lasting effects in modern liberalism. I also defend his conception of liberalism against critiques such as Eric Mack and George Crowder, for whom Berlin's theory is an "overly simple vision of a world-historical struggle between monism and pluralism."[1] I intend to demonstrate that on the contrary, beyond 'the hedgehog' and 'the fox' dichotomy, Berlin grasped what is the most typical of our time, namely, the assumption that ways of life clash, systems collide, and values conflict; that this is a permanent feature of life, and no theory is likely to ever remove it. Under these circumstances, a liberal polity is the most suitable political arrangement to cope with our moral universe.

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[1] E. Mack, "Berlin and the Quest for Liberal Pluralism," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (July 1993): 216.

In 'The Originality of Machiavelli'[2] Berlin is astonished by the number of different interpretations of Machiavelli's thought and how fundamentally divergent these interpretations are, despite the fact that his writing is so clear and simple, definite, limpid and consistent.[3] We can say the same of Berlin's writing: it is marvellously clear and accessible, never abstruse nor abstract. And we can also say the same about the number of different interpretations of his thought, ranging from John Gray who labelled him "a communitarian-liberal"[4] to J. G. Merquior who called him "an eloquent libertarian."[5]

So now, just like Machiavelli has been over the past four centuries, Berlin is at the centre of a polemic about his philosophical and political contribution in the history of ideas and political theory. In the eyes of his admirers (Henry Hardy, Claude J. Galipeau, Michael Ignatieff, Yael Tamir, William A. Galston, to name a few), Berlin was a man of profound insight who has been mistakenly oversimplified. He was a "legendary lecturer"[6] who had an amazing "ability to understand others, to enter into world-views vastly different from his own."[7] To his critics, he was "the mouse who wanted to be a lion,"[8] the over-rated thinker who has never written any major work, the name-dropper and non-rigorous lecturer: "don't ask me what I mean by decent. By decent I mean decent - we all know what that is."[9] I examine these appreciations and critiques in my evaluation of Berlin's contribution to modern liberalism. In their place, I will be suggesting yet another interpretation of his work with a strong emphasis on Romanticism to show the distinctiveness of Berlin's pluralism.

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[2] In *AC*, 25-79.
[3] Ibid., 25-6.
[4] See J. Gray, *Berlin* (London: Fontana Press, 1995), 103, 108.
[5] J. G. Merquior, *Liberalism Old and New* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 125.
[6] I. Berlin, interviewed by Michael Ignatieff for *Talk Show* on BBC2, January 1992, National Sound Archive, the British Library, London.
[7] C. J. Galipeau, *Isaiah Berlin's Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2.
[8] F. McLynn, "The Mouse Roars," review of *The Roots of Romanticism*, by Isaiah Berlin, *New Statesman*, 19 April 1999, electronic version at www.britannica.com/bcom/magazine/article/0,5744,338738,00.html

II.

I will highlight four aspects of Berlin's thought:

(1) The first chapter will consist of a critical examination of Berlin's conception of history and the historical context in which he was writing. The first section deals with Berlin's concern 'with what fits where'. It is important, for example, that a model of human nature and society used to explain a set of actions fits our sense of what human beings felt, thought and did at a certain point in time. In this respect, Hamlet could not have been written at the court of Genghis Khan.[10] Following this, it is important to depict the historical context in which Berlin was writing in order to appreciate the originality of his work. Indeed, Berlin's liberalism departed from that of John Rawls,[11] Ronald Dworkin,[12] and Robert Nozick,[13] in that he was more concerned with stressing the inherent and inevitable conflict between values and ways of life than in defining universal principles of justice, seeking equality and harmony, or primitive laws of property, for instance.

(2) In chapter 2 I will present a critical review of 'Two Concepts of Liberty', the essay which has launched a debate between 'negative' and 'positive' liberty, or the liberty of 'the ancients' and that of 'the moderns' as Benjamin Constant called them.[14] In doing so, I will also present Berlin's model of human nature and society. This will raise a fundamental contradiction between, on the one hand, Berlin's attack on monism, and, on the other, his claim that there is such a thing as a common human nature. I will attempt to solve this

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[9] Ibid.

[10] See "The Concept of Scientific History," in *CC*, 27.

[11] J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1999).

[12] R. Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978).

[13] R. Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books Publishers, 1974).

[14] Benjamin Constant, "The Liberty of the Ancients," in *Benjamin Constant: Political Writings*, ed. B. Fontana (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 309-28.

apparent paradox by unfolding a three-dimensional conception of human nature, which is at the heart of his pluralism and is, perhaps, the most 'fitting' to be found in our time.

I will also contrast Berlin's defence of negative freedom with MacCallum's triadic formula to show that, although Berlin's 'Two Concepts of Liberty' became a landmark in political theory, other conceptions of freedom are also available. But I will show that the triadic formula poses serious problems for pluralists who object to it. Charles Taylor's critique, which attacks the way in which Berlin builds his philosophical defence of negative liberty, presents a different challenge. But a reading of Isaiah Berlin's essays clearly show that he was mainly concerned with civil liberties first and foremost and 'Two Concepts of Liberty' is an attempt at providing a historical interpretation rather than a logical demonstration of the superiority of negative over positive freedom to avoid totalitarianism.

(3) The third chapter deals with the disreputably elusive but nonetheless rich concept of Romanticism. My claim is that the romantic movement has forced moderns to re-think the terms in which they speak of liberalism. I will proceed by steps, first by describing the movement, its emergence and main conveyors in Germany, France and England. I will also contrast the ideal of the Enlightenment with the romantic movement to show how drastic a shift the latter has produced in the way we conceive of politics and conflicts. I will focus on two themes that I think were inspired by Romanticism and are at the heart of pluralism, namely tolerance based on diversity and practical reason, as opposed to the rationalism of the Enlightenment. I will conclude this chapter with the difficult paradox of the *dérapage* of the romantic thought, which produced aggressive nationalism, totalitarian doctrines and regimes, mass destruction and extermination. Berlin was acutely "aware of the dangers in the romantic cult of the hero, the penchant for grand acts, and the

justification of the use of men and women as material for political works."[15] This is why he makes a distinction between the positive and negative heritage of Romanticism and distances himself from the dark side of the movement. Following this, I will stress the positive heritage of Romanticism, which far outweighs its negative legacy, the result of distortions and exaggerations.

(4) The last chapter on the idea of value pluralism will be an occasion to review and summarise the main points of Berlin's thought, as well as a grouping exercise of his model of human nature and society, understanding of liberty, reading of Romanticism, culminating with his contribution to pluralism that he found in the writings of Machiavelli and Herder. Berlin is a value-pluralist liberal and the fourth chapter will explore the possibility of a connection between moral pluralism and a liberal political organisation, a controversial move to which some theorists object whereas others provide support. In this thesis I will respond on behalf of Isaiah Berlin to Crowder who claims that ". . . pluralism provides no positive assistance to the liberal case, . . ." but rather ". . . sets certain obstacles in the way of that case."[16] And I will show how, being a romantic response to classical liberalism, pluralism indeed supports liberalism.

[15] C. J. Galipeau, Ibid., 57.
[16] G. Crowder, "Pluralism and Liberalism," *Political Studies* 42 (1994): 293.

INTERPRETATION AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

I.

There are several reasons for studying Berlin's thought. First, the wide range of topics it covers, from Greek philosophers to English empiricists, French *philosophes* of the Enlightenment to German romantic writers, and Italian humanists to Russian thinkers. This sheer number of essays renders his contribution to the history of ideas indisputable. Also, the fact that he lived, witnessed and reported – as much in his Second World War despatches[1] as in his numerous essays - with remarkable acuity the most crucial and influential events of the past century gives him insight into different world-views. He is a challenging author and has been repeatedly accused of generalisation, moral relativism, and pessimism, but never of having misunderstood the thought of Hume, Montesquieu, Hamann or Herder.

Today we need to return to Berlin for two other reasons: his innovative reading of the romantic movement, in which can be traced the origins of a modern and renewed version of liberalism, whereas everybody else saw the seeds of totalitarian doctrines and regimes; and his defence of the idea of value pluralism, the *idée maîtresse* present in most, if not all, of his writings. My challenge will be to bring to light the wholeness of Berlin's work. Here is a quote about Georg Büchner, German playwright (1814-1837), that is also true of Berlin and which, I think, represents how one should set up to study his work: "there *is* an

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[1] I. Berlin, *Washington Despatches 1941-1945: Weekly Reports from the British Embassy*, ed. H. G. Nicholas (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1980).

underlying consistency and unity in Büchner, but it may be found only within and through the multiplicities of his work – not despite them."[2]

In the first part of this chapter I will stress the influence thinkers such as Vico, Hume, and Kant had on Berlin's conception of history. In the second part I will present other modern liberal theories so as to frame the context in which Berlin developed his original defence of pluralism.

II.

To begin, a few facts about Berlin's life will be outlined insofar as they are relevant to his work and illuminating of his thought. Sir Isaiah Berlin was born in Riga on 6 June 1909. He was brought up speaking Russian and German. The Berlins moved to Andreapol in 1915 and then to Petrograd two years later, where the young Isaiah witnessed the First Russian Revolution in February 1917 and the Bolshevik coup in November the same year. His family then moved to England in 1921 where Berlin was educated at St Paul's and Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He was a Fellow of All Souls College (1932-38) a Fellow of New College (1938-50), Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory (1957-67) founding President of Wolfson College (1966-75) and President of the British Academy (1974-1978).

Isaiah Berlin spent most of his professional life at Oxford except for short periods of time. He worked for the British government in New York and Washington for three years during the Second World War, writing war despatches, attending social events and meeting the leading political and academic figures of the day, including Chaim Weizmann, leader of

[2] J. Reddick, "Introduction," in *Georg Büchner: Complete Plays, Lenz and Other Writings*, trans. J. Reddick (London: Penguin Classics, 1993), xiv.

the Zionist movement. He also worked for a brief period in Moscow in 1945 where he witnessed the damage the Stalinian regime had done to the artistic and cultural life of his country.

While in Russia, he had a few decisive meetings, which were to have a great influence on his thought, and perhaps on the course of history itself. Indeed, there he met Boris Pasternak and Korney Chukovsky, but more notably Anna Akhmatova, the most celebrated pre-Revolution poet, now silenced and watched by agents of the regime. It is also reported that the meetings between Isaiah and Anna triggered the Cold War and "the end of the war-time [Soviet] cooperation with Western allies . . . ."[3] Indeed, the KGB was keeping surveillance reports on the temporary First Secretary from the British Embassy and the poet, and Stalin did not like that Akhmatova was "consorting with British spies,"[4] which clearly marked the beginning of the Soviet anti-foreign xenophobia.

Back in Oxford after the war, Berlin gave up philosophy to practice history. He felt that philosophy, at any rate the Oxford philosophy (which, following John Austin, was mainly concerned with the examination of the function of words),[5] had reached a dead-end. So he turned to the history of ideas instead, encouraged by R. G. Collingwood who urged him to read Vico. He started lecturing in the United States in 1949, during which time he developed further the idea of value pluralism which baffled American students. But for now let us examine Berlin's conception of history.

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[3] M. Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (London: Viking, 1998), 167.
[4] Ibid.
[5] See R. Jahanbegloo, *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1991), 151.

III.

"Cultural history and the history of ideas are cultivating exercises, ... Studying history develops our sense of ourselves and our fellows."[6] It requires emphatic insight and intuitive empathy to make sense of views radically opposed to one's own like Berlin did. For example, he wrote splendid essays on Leo Tolstoy, Albert Sorel and Joseph de Maistre, who yet held views he did not share. Indeed, Berlin did not agree with Tolstoy's historical determinism, Sorel's Fascism, nor did he agree with Maistre's ultramontane Catholicism. Nevertheless, he understood their views and made sense of them. Some ideologies are totally abhorrent, such as Fascism, Nazism, and Communism, but if we follow Berlin and insist that they are a historical rather than a demoniacal phenomenon, then it is possible to argue that they are humanely comprehensible. It is possible to understand morals that we abhor because they are human, only too human, to paraphrase Nietzsche.

To develop our sense of ourselves and our fellows is the noblest activity for it provides the surest guard against intolerant and morally abhorrent regimes - the 'cold of humanity':

> When travellers are overcome by cold, it is said, they lie down quite happily and die. They put up no fight for life. If they struggled, they would keep warm; but they no longer want to struggle. The cold in themselves takes away the will to fight against the cold around them. This happens now and then to a civilization.[7]

Berlin had the knack of it, entering world-views morally utterly different from his own. His historical interpretation has two dimensions; first, when analysing and judging morals, ideologies, human behaviour, works of arts - any human action, we have to ask ourselves if the narrative fits with what was possible at the particular time it was practised, believed, written, created, etc: ". . . what fits into a given situation and what does not . . . is the

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[6] C. J. Galipeau, *Isaiah Berlin's Liberalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 29.
[7] R. G. Collingwood, *Essays in Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 187.

ultimate test of sanity . . . ."[8] Second, we have to examine the model of human nature and society used to explain the action(s) to see if it fits the knowledge of mankind that prevailed at the time. Aristotle, for example, believed that some persons were born to be slaves, a belief that was the norm in Ancient Greece and in other civilisations. We now know that slavery is not a natural category, but rather a judicial relation between persons that became socially unacceptable in most Western societies at one point in time, and was thus abolished. This derives from a progress in the knowledge of mankind, knowledge that the Ancients lacked.[9] Empirical mistakes of this kind are not a rare phenomenon in the history of ideas. Often times, what was good and fitting in one age is out of place in another. However, it is possible for man to understand these different views, to correct mistaken conceptions that rest on an incomplete knowledge or a model of human nature and society that we judge wrong, unacceptable or even abhorrent in the light of our contemporary experience of mankind.

Berlin's view of history was deeply influenced by his interpretation of the work of the Neapolitan jurist and philosopher Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), according to whom what man made he could know better than what he did not make. This principle goes back to St. Augustine for whom "one could know fully only what one had oneself made,"[10] such as history, theories, and ideologies, as opposed to the world, nature, and universe, which are not man-made. According to this principle, only God could understand the workings and purposes of the universe, the external world, and the nature of things. It was all well beyond human understanding. But with Vico, what was within human understanding, namely history, became the way by which we acquire self-knowledge, a "total

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[8] See "The Concept of Scientific History," in *CC*, 139.
[9] See C. J. Galipeau, Ibid., 45, and S. Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 43-4.
[10] Cited in "The Divorce Between the Sciences and the Humanities," in *AC*, 94.

impression"[11] by means of which we can understand what people and societies are. Hume took this idea even further by stating that "knowledge and belief ultimately rest on acquaintance with the data of direct perception" or "faith" as Hamann would prefer to say.[12] Sensorial perception is a human skill that is infallible and leads to a kind of knowledge that is immediate and requires no evidence. By this means, it is possible to understand what we, or our fellows, have made; inventions, creations, institutions, history, and perhaps improve, at any rate alter, our self-understanding of human nature.

Vico's concept of knowledge has two dimensions; the *verum* and the *factum*. The *verum* is an *a priori* truth. It is attained in mathematical or logical reasoning, which are always exact because they are a human invention. Mathematics is a method rather than a body of truths. We can only apply the laws and principles of the method to the external world, such as mathematical theorems or physical formulas to describe a phenomenon, or make a hypothesis about the relationships between constitutive parts, for instance, but we cannot transpose this method to human affairs, for men and women are not

> . . . merely organisms in space, . . . but . . . active beings, pursuing ends, shaping their own and others' lives, feeling, reflecting, imagining, creating, in constant interaction and intercommunication with other human beings; in short, engaged in all the forms of experience that we understand because we share them, and do not view them as external observers.[13]

The *factum* dimension, on the other hand, is what is made. It is not the area in which human beings are mere spectators or 'external observers', it is the area within which they become actors. Historical knowledge, since it is knowledge of what people made, leads to self-knowledge through a "capacity of sympathetic understanding"[14] or *fantasia* as Vico called it.[15] To get a picture of a past event, to perceive the 'texture' of an age, to sense

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[11] Concept borrowed from Justus Möser, cited by Berlin in "The Counter-Enlightenment," in *AC*, 13.
[12] See "The Counter-Enlightenment," in *AC*, 7.
[13] "The Concept of Historical Knowledge," in *CC*, 133.
[14] C. J. Galipeau, Ibid., 19.
[15] G. Vico, *Vico: Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 69.

the quality of a work of art, one must not only take into account historical facts and data, but rather grasp the context of human action and creation. In order to do so, Berlin claims that there are basic concepts and categories which refer to human experiences and of which we speak when we attribute motives, purposes, and behaviour to human beings, such as intentions, goals, feelings, passions. These categories

> . . . are the everyday notions common to mankind at large, related to the permanent interests of men as such. They may be modified at particular periods, in particular countries, by particular circumstances, but all of them are species of basic human attitudes, outlooks, goals, and beliefs. Without some degree of understanding – indeed, sharing of – these concepts, it would not be possible to understand either men or history at all."[16]

What Vico (and later on Herder) brought to light is that to understand man and history we must ask ourselves if the narrative fits, we must get a sense of what fits when. When reading Greek drama, for instance, we have to mentally reconstruct the Greek culture, mythology, and society to understand what it must have been like to live in a place and at a time where people believed that gods interacted with men. This narrative is totally at odds with the Christian idea of a unique and distant god. And

> it is this kind of awareness (the historical sense) that is said to enable us to perceive that a certain type of legal structure is 'intimately connected' with, or is part of the same complex as, an economic activity, a moral outlook, a style of writing or of dancing or of worship; it is by means of this gift (whatever may be its nature) that we recognise various manifestations of the human spirit as 'belonging to' this or that culture or nation or historical period, ..."[17]

Berlin's interest in the history of ideas also follows from his interpretation of Tolstoy, for whom "philosophical principles can only be understood in their concrete expression in history."[18] Berlin is indeed very sympathetic to this vision of history - human actions - as always taking place in a context and not being a mere series of unrelated events. Thus with philosophy, which, to Berlin, does not correspond to the image of the solitary sage

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[16] I. Berlin, "Is a Philosophy of History Possible?" in *Philosophy of History and Action*, ed. Y. Yovel (Reidel: Dordrecht, 1978), 221.
[17] "The Concept of Scientific History," in *CC*, 109.
[18] I. Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History* (London: Phoenix, 1999), 14.

meditating in a dimly lit room or a dusty library. In fact, the best ideas always emerge and develop within conversations, debates, or mere social chit-chats. In other words, within a context. This is how Berlin came up with perhaps the idea he is best known for; that of the dichotomy between hedgehogs and foxes.

It is at a social gathering taking place before World War II that Lord Oxford told Isaiah of a line he had read from the Greek poet Archilochus: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing."[19] Berlin immediately started, as a game, to divide all thinkers and philosophers of the past into hedgehogs and foxes.[20]

Essentially, hedgehogs

> . . . relate everything to a single central vision, one system, less or more coherent or articulate, in terms of which they understand, think and feel – a single, universal, organising principle in terms of which alone all that they are and say has significance - . . .

Foxes, on the other hand

> . . . pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected, if at all, only in some *de facto* way, . . . related by no moral or aesthetic principle. . . . their thought is scattered or diffused, moving on many levels, seizing upon the essence of a vast variety of experiences and objects for what they are in themselves, without, consciously or unconsciously, seeking to fit them into, or exclude them from, any one unchanging, all-embracing, sometimes self-contradictory and incomplete, at times fanatical, unitary inner vision.[21]

In short, hedgehogs are monists and foxes are pluralists. The French *philosophes* of the Enlightenment were certainly monists to a large degree for their ideal was the search for ultimate universal laws and principles, applicable to all men under all circumstances and at all times.

> Monism is the view that there is one and only one reasonable system of values. This system is the same for all human beings, always, everywhere. Human lives

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[19] Cited in Ibid., 1.

[20] Anecdote reported in M. Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life*, Ibid., 173.

[21] I. Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History*, Ibid., 3.

are good only to the extent to which they conform to that system, ... It is acknowledged, of course, that countless people do not conform to it. The reason for this is sought, however, in the deviating people, not in the system of values that the conception embodies.[22]

In monist doctrines, these deviating people are not merely pursuing different goods. They are in the wrong and do not recognise the perfectness and harmony of the system of values. Thus, they must be educated or repressed.

Monists also believe in a chain of beings, idea originating in Plato's *Timaeus*[23] and forming the image of a hierarchical arrangement of the Universe in which everything must fit perfectly and harmoniously. They thought that men were all the same everywhere, and that there must be a set of rules that regulates their behaviour. If this set of rules is to be discovered, it is by the means provided by the tremendous advances in knowledge in the field of the natural sciences, and this discovery would put an end to all human misery. This optimism in the sciences, the belief that the laws and principles of the natural sciences can be applied to the understanding of human behaviour, the incessant quest for a final solution, is the ancient doctrine of natural law shared by hedgehogs. Plato, Dante Aligheri, Voltaire, Hegel, Auguste Comte, Karl Marx and Fiodor Dostoevsky were all hedgehogs.

Pluralism, on the other hand, "sets itself over against monism. The pluralist theory begins with a refutation of monism."[24] It focuses on the multiplicity and variety of human experiences. The pluralist interpretation of our moral condition is deduced from the literature of travel that began to flourish in the eighteenth century.[25] Indeed, according to

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[22] J. Kekes, *The Morality of Pluralism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 8.

[23] Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. B. Jowett (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1949).

[24] J. A. Wahl, *The Pluralist Philosophies of England and America*, trans. F. Rothwell (London: The Open Court Company, 1925), 134.

[25] Accounts of literature of travel are quoted in Montesquieu, *De L'esprit des lois* (Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1969), J. G. Herder, *J. G. Herder on Social and Political Culture*, trans. F. M. Barnard (London: Cambridge University

the accounts of the explorers, there were major differences between people living at different places under different climates. Following these observations, it was difficult indeed to hold that all human beings were all the same everywhere. Also, they did not believe that any rule could be discovered, but rather, that a multiplicity of rules could be invented. People and cultures create and invent themselves. Pluralists object to the existence of one single system of values. They recognise the existence of a diversity of equally valid systems of values. By this I do not mean that all systems of values are equal. On the contrary, such systems cannot be measured against one another since they are incomparable. But they are all valid, and individuals can reasonably wish to pursue the goals and live the pattern of life that correspond to the chosen system of values. Also, pluralists do not believe in a science of human behaviour that generates explanations and predictions of human events by obedience to laws similar to those we find in the natural sciences. Aristotle was a fox, as well as Leibniz, Montesquieu, Goethe, and Bertrand Russell, amongst others.

Being a pluralist, Berlin did not agree with Marx's historical determinism. Indeed, Marx did not acknowledge cultural differences. National cultures were of no importance to him, lacking all political significance. Although they both conceived of human beings as self-transforming creatures, Berlin rejects the Marxist historical conception of man because it rests on a metaphysical premise which claims that the human essence is universal and self-realises itself fully in alienation and creative labour. Also, he did not share Marx's "notion that history obeys laws, whether natural or supernatural, that every event of human life is an element in a necessary pattern, ..."[26] In Berlin's view on the contrary, which is at one with Herder's, the human essence is rather best expressed in cultural diversity and the ability individuals and communities have to fashion diverse forms of life.

Press, 1969), and J.-J. Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (Paris: Nathan, 1981), amongst others.

Berlin does not believe in the historical process as being a collective progressive activity of men. History is not cyclical nor linear, it is not determined by mechanical causes either.[27] It is a dynamic amalgam of different ingredients with different causes as factors, aiming at providing a realistic picture explaining the how's and why's of the present and of the past. History ". . . is the ultimate criterion of reality as against illusion, incoherence, fiction."[28]

What is history then? It is not mere dates and facts and great figures of the past. Nor is it what historians make of it. This kind of history has resulted in the 'interested errors' cultivated and "maintained by rulers and largely responsible for the blunders, vices and misfortunes of humanity."[29] It is also reminiscent of Francis Bacon's *idola mentis* (idols of the mind) which had, he believed up to his own time persistently stood in the way of objective knowledge.[30] History is rather a mental projection, into the past, present, and future, of our knowledge of human nature, of what individuals thought, felt, and did at a certain point in time. It is an activity that requires judgement, imagination, a "capacity for understanding people's characters, knowledge of ways in which they are likely to react to one another, ability to 'enter into' their motives, their principles, the movement of their thoughts and feelings."[31]

Berlin's liberalism is founded on a dynamic conception of history, which in turn is the basis of his conception of human nature and society. The distinction made between monism and pluralism in the discussion above leads to the next section of this chapter, which is

[26] "Historical Inevitability," in *FE*, 51.
[27] For a supporting argument see C. J. Galipeau, Ibid., 169: ". . . he [Berlin] claims that history has no determined, linear course."
[28] "The Concept of Scientific History," in *CC*, 133.
[29] "The Counter-Enlightenment," in *AC*, 1. See Also "Hume and the Sources of German Anti-Rationalism," in *AC*, 163.
[30] View he developed in Book 1 of his *Novum Organum*. See the English translation *The New Organon*, ed. L. Jardine and M. Silverthorn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
[31] "The Concept of Scientific History," in *CC*, 133.

devoted to the examination of the classical liberal theories to show what is so innovative in Berlin's pluralism. I will present classical liberalism, utilitarianism, and neutralism, which are all monist theories since they believe in a harmonious whole and in overriding priority rules in political decision making. I will also discuss Berlin's view on nationalism, which is another point on which he departs from other liberal theories.

IV.

Liberalism has changed tremendously since its "great original culprit", Luther, "set the demon of individualism free."[32] What used to be the doctrine of religious tolerance, freedom of speech, thought and assembly, of the protection of a minimum amount of individual liberty and the cultivation of certain choices available to individuals, saw its underpinnings dramatically re-thought after the emergence of successive new phenomena and social changes such as technical progress, the Industrial Revolution, the unbridled private enterprise, failure of education, urbanisation, nationalism, mass poverty, and so on. Influential thinkers as different from one another as John Stuart Mill and Nietzsche came up with different views about democracy, conception of man and of the good, and they all had a great influence in the modern development of liberalism.

Early liberals (John Locke (1632-1704) in England and Montesquieu (1669-1755) in France) were very concerned with separating powers as to avoid tyranny. Hence the division between the legislative, executive and judicial powers. The division between public and private spheres of life, where "public referred to state officials and to the exercise of power by force" and "private referred to the activities of men and women in

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[32] J. G. Merquior, *Liberalism Old and New* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 16.

society, from which government should be excluded . . . ."[33] was also of great importance. This division is mainly the result of religious conflicts and wars, where liberty of religion was in the end said to belong to the private sphere of life.[34] We can also interpret the history of liberalism through changes in the priority that was given to one sphere over the other. There is however an implicit agreement in liberal thought on the idea that the private and public spheres are not mutually exclusive. One can participate and enter into a public debate and then exit this public area to fulfil a need for self-detachment, for example. Or a woman may well be a representative for some civil organisation and be a wife and a mother all at once. Liberals do not agree on the width of each sphere, but they all grant to each individual an area within which he is or should be left alone, free to do as or be what he pleases, without being interfered with or coerced by the state or any other individual.

Utilitarianism is another liberal movement developed mainly by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and James Mill (1773-1836). The spirit of utilitarianism is 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number', meaning that in the process of political decision-making we should always choose the option that will maximise the well being of the majority, or the greatest possible number of people. The pluralist objection to utilitarianism is the denial "that all goods can be weighed against each other according to their tendency to produce happiness or pleasure."[35]

Later on, liberals such as Thomas Hill Green (1836-1886), John Hobson (1858-1940) and Leonard Hobhouse (1864-1929) created a new form of liberalism in which the implementation of the potential for individual development is done through the state, its

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[33] N. L. Rosenblum, *Another Liberalism: Romanticism and the Reconstruction of Liberal Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 60.
[34] See J. Locke, "A Letter Concerning Toleration," in *Political Writings* (London: Penguin Classics, 1993), 390-433.

laws and enabling institutions. They thus reconciled liberalism with the 'statophobia' of its early days.[36]

As a result, twentieth century liberalism became, at any rate in the Anglo-American world, dominated by the 'neutralist' approach, which culminated in the seventies with the publication of John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (Ronald Dworkin also falls into this category). Often times, neutralist political theorists are concerned with justice, laws and equality perhaps more than with liberty itself. They want to find the perfect social arrangement through ultimate principles on which everybody agrees, or through egalitarian arrangements to make the most human beings happier, or the less human beings unhappy. Their systematic theory is likely to take the form of a book of rules to be applied by judges playing the role of social referees. There is thus a shift from the legislative dimension of politics to the judiciary as to where decisions are made.[37]

Neutralism leads to legal formalism, circumscribed political authority and settled standing rules that value the general as opposed to the individual. This approach is very monist by nature. The premise is that the theory of justice is the truth and everybody is better off when the truth of the theory of justice (or of equality or neutrality) is acknowledged. Whoever disagrees with a rule or a principle is in the wrong or has misunderstood and must go back to the book of rules to find the right answer.

Also, since "liberalism is the political philosophy *par excellence* of constitutionalism and rights, due process and the rule of law,"[38] there is no room for conflict in the neutralist approach and this is the reason why pluralists reject it. Indeed, the diversity of cultures

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[35] G. Crowder, "Pluralism and Liberalism." *Political Studies* 42 (1994): 295.
[36] For more on social-liberalism see J. G. Merquior, Ibid., 99-109.
[37] For an account and critique of the neutralist approach see C. Blattberg, *From Pluralist to Patriotic Politics: Putting Practice First* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1-33.

and of historical contexts, which are of great importance to pluralists, are *nil* for the neutralist liberals, which does not correspond with a realistic picture of our moral universe. There is no real political dialogue when the society is ruled by judges who hear claims and hand down decisions. According to pluralists, human beings are faced with different alternatives, conceptions of the good, and values. These are competing, incompatible and incommensurable with one another. And it is precisely because neutralists do not recognise the inherent presence of conflict in everyday life and politics that Berlin rejects this monist approach.

To reiterate, historically speaking, liberalism was a response to political tyrannies and arbitrary governments. Constitutional divisions, checks and balances, were introduced so as to keep personal ambitions and interests in check because liberal theories often rest on a mistrustful and pessimistic conception of human nature and society. By taking away personal emotions and private passion from the political and public sphere of life, the irrational and dangerous threat of self-expression was repressed. Also, "legalism makes good faith and trust rational. It also imposes on men and women the discipline of thinking and acting *as if* they were abstract individuals, requiring them to disregard character and beliefs, loyalties, loves, tastes, and aversions. Looking on one another as legal persons for purposes of law and exchange requires self-control . . ."[39] of the kind Rawls requires of individuals when they are under the veil of ignorance.

Another aspect of Berlin's liberalism that departs from post-war liberal theories is his original treatment of nationalism. He acknowledges and praises the need for human beings to belong to cultural communities and in this respect he is closer to an older tradition of liberal thought such as John Stuart Mill's. Indeed, whereas most twentieth-

[38] N. L. Rosenblum, Ibid., 34.
[39] Ibid., 37.

century liberal thinkers considered nationalism as mere revived tribalism, Berlin stresses the importance of the sentiment of nationality as a source of social stability. This makes his case stronger against the charges of communitarian thinkers who criticise liberalism for its atomist character and conception of the self, for Berlin's liberalism is not insensitive to community values.

The concept of the 'situated' and 'embedded' self, mainly developed by Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor,[40] were first formulated as criticisms of the abstract individualism of liberal theories for which the relations of the individual with its projects or with other individuals are accidental and instrumental rather than constitutive. This is the case in Rawls' liberalism where individuals are like ahistorical free-floating Kantian subjects. And this is the kind of liberalism targeted by communitarian thinkers. In Berlin's liberalism, on the contrary, relationships and attachments play a constitutive role in the formation of identities and allegiances, for human beings belong to communities. And this is why John Gray calls him "a communitarian-liberal."[41] Where Berlin departs with the communitarians is in the concept of the 'radically situated self' as formulated by Michael Sandel[42] and Alasdair MacIntyre according to whom our identity is shaped by belonging to one single community. Berlin rather claims that men who belong to a modern culture have different allegiances, belong to diverse communities and have plural identities.[43]

However remote Berlin is from neutralists such as Rawls, he does not reject all aspects of Kantianism. In effect, he is at one with Kant's objection of determinism because it is a doctrine that is not compatible with morality. Indeed, how are we to hold individuals accountable for their actions if all is pre-determined in a fixed pattern? For only free

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[40] See A. McIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1984) and C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
[41] J. Gray, *Berlin* (London: Fontana Press, 1995), 103, 108.
[42] In M. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

individuals who are the true authors of their actions can be held responsible for what they choose to do or not do. "Since responsibility entails power of choice, those who cannot freely choose are morally no more accountable than stocks and stones."[44]

To return to nationalism. It is to his own astonishment that Berlin realises, in 'The Bent Twig', that none of the most influential thinkers of the nineteenth century foresaw the emergence and development of one of the dominant *donne* of the recent history, namely nationalism. Indeed, the fathers of science fiction foretold great technological discoveries and inventions. The early sociologists, Saint-Simon, Condorcet and Comte, all believed in a rationalisation of society and depersonalisation of administration and bureaucracy. Marx predicted the end of history with the proletarian revolution. Surprisingly, nationalism had become quite a dominant movement by then, still, nobody thought much of it: for the liberals and rationalists, ". . . it is a mere sign of immaturity, an irrational relic of, or retrogressive return to, a barbarous past: . . . ."[45] For the socialists Marx and Engels, "nationalism, like religion, is a temporary phenomenon . . . ."[46] How mistaken they all were.

Berlin is not sympathetic to nationalism. Yet he was an overt Zionist. In order to understand the kind of nationalism he rejects an important distinction must be made between nationalism and national sentiment:

> By nationalism, I mean something more definite, ideologically important and dangerous: namely, the conviction, in the first place, that men belong to a particular human group, and that the way of life of the group differs from that of others; that the characters of the individuals who compose the group are shaped by, and cannot be understood apart from, those of the group, defined in terms of common territory, customs, laws, memories, beliefs, language, artistic and religious expression, social institutions, ways of life, to which some add heredity, kinship,

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[43] View also shared by Y. Tamir in *Liberal Nationalism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993).
[44] "The Counter-Enlightenment," in *AC*, 15.
[45] "The Bent Twig: On the Rise of Nationalism," in *CTH*, 248.
[46] Ibid., 249.

racial characteristics; and that it is these factors which shape human beings, their purposes and their value.[47]

Next, Berlin adds two other characteristics of the detestable species of nationalism, namely; (1) the assumption that ". . . the pattern of life of a society is similar to that of a biological organism: . . . ." And (2) nationalism ". . . entails the notion that one of the most compelling reasons for holding a particular belief, pursuing a particular policy, serving a particular end, living a particular life, is that these ends, beliefs, lives, are *ours.*"[48]

This account differs from national sentiment, which can probably be traced to tribal feeling in the earliest period of history and which Berlin is sympathetic to. Indeed, the need to belong to an easily identifiable group seems, since Aristotle (according to whom man is a *zoon politikon*), to be a natural requirement on the part of human beings to fulfil their basic human needs. When Berlin rejects nationalism, he actually rejects the elevation of this sentiment into a conscious doctrine, at once the product and articulation of this human sentiment, which becomes "a force and a weapon."[49] He rejects the aggressive nationalism that springs from humiliated sentiment. In an interview with Michael Ignatieff for the BBC2 Berlin explained how this operates: it usually begins when a nation feels inferior to a glorious and thriving neighbour nation, which engenders a feeling of humiliation on the part of the 'backward' nation. Then the humiliated nation rejects the belief that they are indeed inferior to the arrogant nation. As a result, the inferior nation starts imitating the superior one until they begin to question this mimetic behaviour. When they start questioning, when they begin to think 'we too have a history of a glorious past' or 'our homeland and soil is as rich as theirs' or still 'our language is more ancient,

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[47] "Nationalism: Past Neglect and Present Power," in *AC*, 341.
[48] Ibid., 341-2.
[49] Ibid., 341.

beautiful and poetic than their civilised and pompous utterances', this is when the bent twig snaps back.[50]

According to David Miller, Berlin gave nationalism such a bad name that now theorists are careful in choosing their words and "look for some other terms to express their commitment to nationality."[51] Miller thinks that Berlin packs a great deal in his definition of nationalism, and then proceeds to show that it is an illiberal and belligerent doctrine. I think that this judgement of Berlin's account of nationalism rests on a misunderstanding of his thought. Berlin observed rightly that historically speaking, the twentieth century was probably the worst of all in recorded human history mainly because of national sentiment being elevated as a doctrine but he is not against national sentiment *per se*.

Berlin is at one with Herder's nationalism, which is cultural and populist.[52] It can be seen as "an innocent attachment to family, language, one's own city, one's own country, its traditions . . ."[53] and this is not to be condemned. Aggressive nationalism, on the other hand, is ". . . detestable in all its manifestation, and wars are mere crimes."[54] Berlin did not endorse the idea shared by many nationalists that to each nation must equate a state. Herder equally detested the state, and he never advocated any political project for nations to survive, thrive and flourish. On the contrary, he thought that the less government they have the better: "I find it hard to believe that man should have been made for the state and that his happiness springs from its institutions."[55]

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[50] I. Berlin, interviewed by Michael Ignatieff for *Talk Show* on BBC2, January 1992, National Sound Archive, the British Library, London.
[51] D. Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 8.
[52] See "Herder and the Enlightenment", in *VH*, 156-65.
[53] Ibid., 157.
[54] Ibid.
[55] J. G. Herder, Ibid., 310.

The case of Israel was different. Indeed, Zionism is a special kind of nationalism for which there is room in Isaiah Berlin's liberalism. First, it is coherent with ". . . his insight that individual well-being demands common cultural forms, and that individual self-identity and self-esteem require the respectful recognition of these cultural forms by others."[56] Recognition of a people's cultural forms does not mean that each nation must have its own state. But the special case of the Jews, gone unprotected from persecution virtually everywhere at least at one point in time, justifies their need of a state. Also, Berlin was not insensible to the claims of justice formulated by Palestinian citizens and was sometimes critical of the direction the Zionist movement would take. In Israel as anywhere else, he always condemned the pathologies of nationalism. And this is where the special character of Zionism becomes apparent. There would probably never have been a Zionist movement if there had not been prolonged Anti-Semitism, the result of ultra-nationalism that emerged in Europe towards the end of the nineteenth century. Zionism was a nationalistic movement based not on blood and kinship, or a shared culture and language, but rather on inheritance of a religion and disparate elements coming from almost all over the world.

To sum up, it is Stuart Hampshire who has best described Berlin's view on nationalism:

> Berlin has argued with great force that Enlightenment thinkers who looked forward to men and woman becoming citizens of an undivided world were deceived. Herder, Hamann and Hume were, in their different ways, right to represent persons as governed in their thoughts and sentiments by the habits and customs in which they were nurtured, and not by rational principles demanding universal agreement. Vico was right to assert against Descartes that natural languages, and civilization itself in its many forms, are the products of imagination and of poetic invention and of metaphor, and not of abstract reasoning and of clear and distinct ideas. Clear and distinct ideas are accessible to all humanity; the idioms of natural language are not . . . . In the last analysis, a sane nationalism is to be justified by a utilitarian argument – that most men and women are happy only when their way of life prolongs customs and habits which are familiar to them.[57]

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[56] J. Gray, Ibid., 115.
[57] S. Hampshire, "Nationalism," in *Isaiah Berlin: A Celebration*, Ibid., 128.

In this section, my aim was to highlight the fact that pluralism is a criticism of other forms of liberalism in many respects. First, unlike classical liberalism, utilitarianism, and neutralism, pluralism is not ahistorical. It recognises historical and cultural differences. Second, it is a charge against monism. Pluralism suggests a different account of our moral condition and this has practical implications in political governing, decision-making, and handling of conflicts, as I shall explain further.

V.

In this chapter I presented Berlin's historicism and liberalism because they are both criticism of monist doctrines. My aim has been to highlight the originality of Berlin's conception of history by showing where it stems from and how it can provide a sound and suitable framework for political thought. But more importantly, I wanted to show that this framework is not perennial and immutable, but rather is bound to change and evolve as a result of our experience. Then, I briefly exposed the emergence of liberalism through the development of its successive constitutive features. The point was to lay the foundations to the critical examination of Berlin's 'Two Concepts of Liberty'. Finally, I presented Berlin's account of nationalism for it is a recurrent topic in his essays, it springs from an essential aspect of human nature (which I will also examine in the next chapter) and a political by-product of the second phase of the romantic movement (which I will discuss in chapter 3).

LIBERTY

I.

'Two Concepts of Liberty', the famous 1958 lecture presented before the University of Oxford and published in *Four Essays on Liberty*, was a landmark in political theory that has generated an impressive literature. Although Berlin was not the first to think in the terms of 'positive' and 'negative' freedom, he has nonetheless clarified the thought of the French politician and writer Benjamin Constant, which was centred around the 'republican' *versus* 'liberal' accounts of freedom,[1] and he has moreover sharpened and nuanced the view of John Stuart Mill for whom all non-interference was good and all coercion was evil.

Before examining the distinction between negative and positive liberty, I wish to present Berlin's model of human nature and society, since it is the starting point of any theory concerned with human affairs. I believe that much of Berlin's contribution to liberalism has been missed by critics such as G. C. MacCallum, Tim Gray, and Charles Taylor because they mainly focused on the relevance and coherence of his distinction between the two concepts of liberty, or on how he built his philosophical justification in favour of negative freedom. My claim is that Berlin's account of freedom fits into a bigger picture that is related to his reading of the history of ideas and his very unique, many-faceted and sophisticated conception of human nature.

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[1] B. Constant, "The Liberty of the Ancients," in *Benjamin Constant: Political Writings*, ed. B. Fontana (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 309-28.

II.

The question of human nature, and of the absence or presence of a 'nature' common to all human beings, is, strangely enough, an aspect of Berlin's work that has not been given substantial attention. His liberalism rests on a highly original model of human nature, yet very few critics have examined it. To the questions 'Is there a common human nature in Berlin's theory? Does he believe in a set of characteristics that are common to all human beings?' the answer is yes. In this section I will demonstrate why and how this is so.

There may be an apparent paradox in Berlin's liberalism. Indeed, he criticises the natural law tradition and the rationalist vision of human nature because they are fixed theories of immutable and perennial moral orders, while still claiming that there is such a thing as a common human nature. There is a danger in holding such a claim because it can lead to the belief that there is one true pattern of life which corresponds to our human nature, and only by living in accordance to this pattern will we fully develop our human capacities or attain our human *telos*. Berlin rejects this monist and organic view while still holding that we have a human nature in common. But he replaces the fixed or static view, which dominated western thought from Plato until the Enlightenment and even beyond, with a much more dynamic model which ". . . is superior to monist theories, in that it fits with both our knowledge of historical development and our present understanding of moral life and the cultural differences amongst civilizations."[2] It is thus not immutable and perennial, but is bound to change as we gain knowledge as to what men and women are. In short, Berlin's model fits with the narrative of our days, one which nevertheless echoes a much older account, that of Vico. As Michael Ignatieff remarked, "it was Vico who pointed Berlin's way to a reconciliation between the Enlightenment's faith in the universality of

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[2] C. J. Galipeau, *Isaiah Berlin's Liberalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 49.

human nature and the romantic movement's insistence on the historicity of human culture."[3]

Berlin's conception of human nature has three facets, each corresponding to his three main influences or sources of his thought: (1) Kantianism, (2) Romanticism, and (3) historicism, which we will now examine in turn.

(1) The first aspect of Berlin's conception of human nature rests on his belief that individuals are rational, moral, and purposive agents endowed with free will. To begin with rationality. In the unjustly neglected essay 'From Hope and Fear Set Free', Berlin makes an important distinction in attributing to someone a behaviour. If we say of someone that he is a thief, for instance, we give rationality to him, because he bears responsibility for his actions. If, however, we call that person a kleptomaniac, we attribute him a phobia, which by definition is an irrational behaviour, and we therefore deny rationality to that person.[4] But psychologically speaking, we know that only a relatively small percentage of people suffer from phobias, so we can safely say that individuals are rational, unless they suffer from a mental condition that prevents them from making sound decisions. Moreover, such phobias can be cured, so it is not a definite condition. (I will come back to the question of debilitating mental conditions in the account of the 'positive' liberty).

As moral agents, individuals rely on their personal moral codes to shape their opinions and negotiate situations of conflict when values collide. And being endowed with free will, they can choose freely amongst any set of opportunities offered to them, in order to shape what they deem is a good life for them and pursue their conception of the good.

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[3] M. Ignatieff, "Understanding Fascism?" in *Isaiah Berlin: A Celebration*, eds. E. and A. Margalit (London: The Hogarth Press, 1991), 140.

Indeed (and this is the second dimension of the first aspect of Berlin's conception of human nature), man is endowed with free will. Kant was amongst the first thinkers to argue that there is no determined pattern of life and that men and women are, by nature, moral agents free to choose between different alternatives.[5] He made a clear distinction between the data on the one hand, and perception on the other - what Berlin calls the categories in terms of which we sense, imagine and reflect.[6] Kant thought these categories to be universal and immutable, but Berlin, along with others who wished to give greater weight to history, saw differences and changes and therefore rejected this universalistic view. This is a crucial point for the facts themselves – the data – might change over time, as might our knowledge or perception of them. What the Greeks knew about the world and its functioning and their ideal of a good life was, for example, very different from what the Christians in the Middle Ages knew and held to be the true conception of a good life. Gains in objective knowledge change our perception of the world, of the role we play in it, and of our alternatives as we get rid of our *idola mentis*, whether it is for good or merely to replace them by others. That said, total self-knowledge is impossible to attain for then we could predict all events and all behaviours, which we know is logically impossible. This is why Berlin, along with Karl Popper[7] (though in a different way), rejects determinism, "for if all is determined, there is nothing to choose between, and so nothing to decide."[8] So before Kant and the German rationalists this fallibility in self-knowledge was not admitted. All ethical and metaphysical systems - the Egyptian, the Greek, the Christian, that of the Enlightenment, and later on the Marxist - sought after one correct answer, and once this answer is discovered, individuals can live the correct pattern of life in accordance with it. We know that Berlin rejects this monistic

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[4] See "From Hope and Fear Set Free," in *CC*, 175.

[5] See "The Apotheosis of the Romantic Will," in *CTH*, 216-17 for Kant's emphasis on "the [human] capacity for free commitment to rationally chosen ends."

[6] See "The Purpose of Philosophy," in *CC*, 7.

[7] In K. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 2 vols. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963).

[8] "From Hope and Fear Set Free," in *CC*, 198.

view because he believes in a plurality of patterns of life and in the freedom of individuals (gifted with reason and free will) to choose between them: ". . . the necessity of choosing between absolute claims is . . . an inescapable characteristic of the human condition."[9] It is a constitutive part of human nature. In this respect, Berlin is at one with Kant: "as for Kant, I fully accept his view that the ability to choose . . . belongs to men as such."[10] And as John Gray remarked, "the human capacity for choice supports Berlin's conception of freedom in that he designates as 'basic freedom' the capacity for choice itself . . . ."[11]

(2) The romantic aspect of Berlin's conception of human nature lies in the fact that he conceives man as a creative, expressive, reflective, and self-transforming creature, "the author of himself and not subject comprehensively to any natural order."[12] Individuality and originality are good as opposed to sameness and mimesis. Variety is valuable, uniformity is boring. The romantics, in rejecting a vision of art as being a mere copy of nature, of man as being a tool in the hands of God, or of a mirror reflecting the world as created by a Supreme Being, have paved the way to a revolution in the way in which we define and understand ourselves, our actions, society, and the role we play in it. After this revolution, human nature became a work in progress, constantly changing, re-inventing itself through actions and creations. The romantic revolution brought the idea that men and women can create their own ends, and do not merely choose amongst what is made available to them.

The romantic movement brought a dramatically new and original conception of the mind and its workings. Traditionally, "the mind was something totally different in kind from the

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[9] "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *FE*, 169.
[10] I. Berlin, "Reply to Robert Kocis," *Political Studies* 31 (1983): 388.
[11] J. Gray, *Berlin* (London: Fontana, 1995), 15.
[12] Ibid., 9.

body which contained it like a box . . . ."[13] Locke, in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, set up a theory of the mind which most subsequent Enlightenment-inspired liberal theorists endorsed. It is a theory according to which the mind mimics, forms ideas, and gains knowledge by the means of sensation and reflection, "but it is not in the power of the most exalted wit, or enlarged understanding, by any quickness or variety of thoughts, to invent or frame one new simple idea in the mind . . . ."[14] On the contrary, the mind forms ideas that are "received in by his senses from external objects, or by reflection from the operations of his own mind about them."[15] In Locke's theory, the mind is a "passive receptacle,"[16] a *tabula rasa*, a *camera obscura*.

The romantics have a completely different view of human nature, arts and philosophy. They worship variety and it has

> . . . led to something like the melting away of the very notion of objective truth, at least in the normative sphere. However it might be in the natural sciences, in the realm of ethics, politics, aesthetics it was the authenticity and sincerity of the pursuit of inner goals that mattered . . . . This is most evident in the aesthetics of romanticism, where the notion of eternal models, a Platonic vision of ideal beauty, which the artist seeks to convey, however imperfectly, on canvas or in sound, is replaced by a passionate belief in spiritual freedom, individual creativity. The painter, the poet, the composer, do not hold up a mirror to nature, however ideal, but invent; they do not imitate . . . , but create not merely the means but the goals that they pursue . . . .[17]

Romanticism changed the role played by the mind in perception and its role in nature from passiveness and inert reception to activity. Kant and the English poets Coleridge and Wordsworth believed that "the mind imposes the forms of time, space, and the categories on the 'sensuous manifold,' [and] apply it to the general concept that the perceiving mind

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[13] "Locke," in *AOE*, 47-8.
[14] J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London and New York: George Routledge and Sons, 1905), 71.
[15] Ibid.
[16] "Locke," in *AOE*, 57.
[17] "Giambattista Vico and Cultural History," in *CTH*, 57.

discovers what it has itself partly made."[18] The mind, and by extension, man, became an expressor. From a mind in perception, it became a "poetic mind in composition."[19] This revolution in the conception of human nature was in part a reaction to Descartes' and Hobbes' mechanist view which was said to have alienated man from the world and created an abyss between subject and object. Romantic writers saw themselves as healing this abyss by stressing the contribution of the creative mind to the private experience, and reanimating the dead *cosmos* of materialist thinkers.

Also, Enlightenment-inspired individualism does not tend to recognise the subjective and specific. It rather draws attention to the common and invariant characteristics of persons.[20] In traditional but also in recent liberal thought, individualism does not mean individuality, except perhaps in Mill's *On Liberty*.[21] In Romanticism, on the contrary, "it is just this individuality that is the primary and eternal element in man."[22]

(3) Finally, human beings live and develop in specific social and historical conditions for they belong to particular communities. According to Berlin, all men share a disposition that is universal and immemorial, namely "the disposition to develop a specific and particularistic identity."[23] In the same vein, Yael Tamir stresses the fact that "there is no human nature independent of circumstances. Human beings have developed in close interaction with culture."[24] It has been an increasingly highlighted view among liberals that

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[18] M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: The Norton Library, 1958), 58.

[19] S. T. Coleridge, cited in M. H. Abrams, Ibid., 61.

[20] This is especially true of Rawls' emphasis on impersonality in *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[21] See N. L. Rosenblum, *Another Liberalism: Romanticism and the Reconstruction of Liberal Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 53-6 and W. E. Connolly, "Identity and Difference in Liberalism," in *Liberalism and the Good*, ed. R. Bruce Douglass, G. R. Mara, and H. Richardson (Routledge: New York and London, 1990), 59-85, the former for a romantic and the second for a post-modern critique of Enlightenment-inspired liberal individualism.

[22] F. Schlegel, cited in N. L. Rosenblum, Ibid., 55.

[23] J. Gray, Ibid., 100.

[24] Y. Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 16.

individuals are free agents who regard their society as the context they live in and within which their ends become meaningful, but they do not necessarily let the context dictate their ends since they are reflective agents: "human nature includes the capacity to reflect on, and compare, aims and ideals, and to reflect on this reflection, which in turn demands the capacity to evolve conventions of behaviour."[25]

This view reconciles both the need of human beings to pursue their individuality and their need to belong. Particularistic characteristics are constitutive of one's identity and it is another feature of human nature that is met with Berlin's view of history and cultural pluralism. This was also well-expressed by Stuart Hampshire:

> A stable feature of human nature . . . is the need to possess a distinct history, which is one's own and not that of all mankind, and also to cultivate that which is particular and that is believed to be the best of this time and of that place, alongside and within the universal and moral claims that are common to all people as such.[26]

However, John Gray and Richard Wollheim argue that, according to Berlin, there is no common human nature. Gray claims that ". . . there is in Berlin no account of a common human nature that is universal and the same for all . . . ."[27] I have been claiming, of course, that this is untrue. Human nature is changing and self-transforming, but Berlin does claim universality when he says that all human beings are moral free agents endowed with free will. It is not all of them that are be free and exercising their free will at this very moment, but they all certainly have this potential within them, one that could be expressed if they lived under the appropriate circumstances. And they all have a moral code of their own, which is nevertheless not entirely independent from the context they live in. Whether or not it is dictated by external forces is an altogether different matter that I shall discuss later. Also universal is the need to belong, to be member of a group (any

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[25] S. Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 155.
[26] Cited in Y. Tamir, Ibid., 57.
[27] J. Gray, Ibid., 23.

group and more than one at a time is permissible, even desirable) that gives meaning to one's life. And to this can be added man's ability to create and invent, even though it does not translate in all societies and cultures into the possibility to make free choices and to choose one's own plan of life.

Wollheim, in a more sophisticated fashion, holds that there are two ways of denying a common human nature: first, there are too great discontinuities and discrepancies in the 'genealogy of human psychology' from group to group as well as from age to age, so he thinks that there are different human natures instead of one.[28] Second, the very idea of a common nature can be understood as but the production of a 'discourse' that is indoctrinated into us to serve a specific purpose. This discourse is man-made and may, indeed might, change over time given the purpose it is meant to fulfil:

> A conception of human nature, or a narrative of the subject, is indoctrinated into us, at (presumably) some sensitive age, by external or (in some broad sense of the term) 'social' factors, and, once this has happened, once the indoctrination has taken, it fixes how we regard ourselves and others. Human nature is, in the accompanying terminology, 'constituted' by a 'discourse' of human nature, and different societies, different ages, different historical moments, generate their own discourses, and they do so in a way that admits of functional explanation. As to what function this discourse serves, today's answer is that it serves the ends of powers . . . . Tomorrow's answer might well be different.[29]

The two arguments overlap. If human nature is only a narrative that suits a purpose, there will be as many narratives as there are groups, races, nations, etc. So we could say that there is indeed not one unique human nature but many and that these human natures are actually only a discourse. But I think that this view is mistaken.

There are sad historical evidences that point to the existence of a universal set of core values about moral claims:

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[28] See R. Wollheim, "The Idea of a Common Human Nature," in *Isaiah Berlin: A Celebration*, Ibid., 68.
[29] Ibid., 69.

> If the Nazis and Soviets proved anything, Berlin tells us, it is that there are absolute limits to political action. To transgress these limits is to fall into barbarism and inhumanity. If Stalinism offers us any lessons, surely one of them must be that the ruthless and total management of human beings falls outside any justifiable moral behaviour. When moral limits are transgressed, the moral unity of the species is violated, and we properly recoil in horror.[30]

This leads us to the second argument. For mankind to 'recoil in horror' at such moral transgressions there must be communication between different groups. So there is commonality of human nature because no matter how different two individuals or two groups are from one another through their form of life they invent for themselves individually or collectively (or, for that matter, through their discourse of human nature), they are not, in Berlin's account, inaccessible or incommunicable to one another. They are mutually intelligible.[31] In Berlin's conception, men and women are "bounded by the fact that [their] nature . . . entails the possibility (indeed, the necessity) of communication between them."[32] The same goes for different generations living at different times, as we have seen with Vico's historicism. Indeed, this is how we can get a 'total impression' that tells us what it might have been like to live in a particular society at a particular time, to 'enter into' a given group or a specific age to better understand a political regime or fully appreciate a work of art. So in Berlin's account, there must be commonality – at least a very minimal core set of shared characteristics and values - for human beings to be able to understand each other and make sense of beliefs and ways of life different from one's own.

> . . . there must be enough that is common to all such beings for it to be looked like to creatures, remote in time or space, who practised such rites, and used such words, and created such works of art as the natural means of self-expression involved in the attempt to understand and interpret their worlds themselves.[33]

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[30] C. J. Galipeau, Ibid., 114.
[31] RR, 145.
[32] I. Berlin, "Reply to Robert Kocis," Ibid., 390.
[33] "Giambattista Vico and Cultural History," in CTH, 60.

Sharing core values is required for two persons coming from two completely different cultures to understand each other, or 'recoil in horror' at the same events. Or again, for the international community to condemn a practice or celebrate a victory when an oppressive regime falls apart or some important technological or medical achievement is made.

This conception of human nature reconciles the empirical and romantic elements in Berlin's theory. Robert Kocis argued that they come into conflict in Berlin's theory[34] but, on the contrary, I think that, as the above discussion shows, they are complementary rather than conflicting. Indeed, I do not believe that a Kantian conception of man as being rational is at odds with a romantic conception of man as being "torn from within, . . . subjected to divisive forces."[35] This interaction of the two first dimensions that I have identified is what makes it possible to live in the conditions that are ours, i.e. conditions under which there is no definite answer to moral conflicts, no one true pattern of the good life. Kant placed immense value upon rationality, which after the romantic revolt will be re-thought in terms of the Aristotelian practical reason. Robert Kocis mistakenly ignores this transformation from rationality to practical reason and it undermines his argument in that he does not see the complementarity between Kantianism and Romanticism. I shall expand more on this important transformation from rationality to practical reason in the next chapter.

My aim in this section was to present Berlin's model of human nature on which is grounded his defence of negative liberty. In the next section, I will thus present Berlin as a value pluralist liberal who defends a negative concept of freedom. And I will show that this is not inconsistent with his historicist/romantic conception of human nature.

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[34] See R. A. Kocis, "Toward a Coherent Theory of Human Moral Development: Beyond Sir Isaiah Berlin's Vision of Human Nature," *Political Studies* 31 (1983): 370-87.

III.

In this section I will proceed to the critical examination of Berlin's 'Two Concepts of Liberty'. We should keep in mind that his main concern was to avoid tyranny at all costs. It is in the quality of a witness to the most morally abhorrent events of the past century that he became interested in understanding and being clear about what opens the door to totalitarianism in our age so as to block it.

Negative freedom is concerned with "the area within which the subject – a person or group of persons – is or should be left to do or be what he wants to do or be, without interference by other persons."[36] This physicalist definition refers to civil freedom, or the movement of people in civil society. It means that there must be a private area of life preserved from state intervention as opposed to a public life, which is regulated by laws. The justification for this dichotomy between the private and public spheres of life originated in England after the Glorious Revolution and in France after the excesses of the Jacobin dictatorship showed that there must be room for a private life where liberty of religion, opinion, expression, and property are guaranteed against arbitrary invasion.[37]

But how wide shall this area of individual freedom be? Berlin wrote that "if I am prevented by others from doing what I could otherwise do, I am to that degree unfree; and if this area is contracted by other men, I can be described as being coerced."[38] Many political philosophers agree that this area should not be unrestricted because then this unbridled freedom would lead to complete chaos. They recognise the valuation of other goals – justice, equality, or social order, for instance – which inevitably curtail liberty. Thinkers

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[35] Ibid., 373.
[36] "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *FE*, 121-2.
[37] Ibid., 126.
[38] Ibid., 122.

such as Locke, Hobbes, and Mill disagreed on what the width of the area of individual freedom should be. Nevertheless, they all believed that laws should limit the area of men's free action. Berlin simply stated that

> no doubt every interpretation of the word liberty must include a minimum of what I have called negative liberty. There must be an area within which I am not frustrated. No society literally suppresses all the liberties of its members; a being who is prevented by others from doing anything at all on his own is not a moral agent at all, and could not either legally or morally be regarded as a human being.[39]

And "the wider the area of non-interference, the wider my freedom."[40] This area, for Berlin, is wider than that presented by most communitarians such as Charles Taylor and Michael Sandel, but not as wide as that presented by other liberals such as Locke and Mill, or by a libertarian such as Robert Nozick.

For Berlin, "when we speak of the extent of freedom enjoyed by a man or a society, we have in mind . . . the width or extent of the paths before them, the number of open doors, as it were, and the extent to which they are open."[41] So not only does freedom mean an area within which I am not coerced, it also means the existence of different available options and conceptions of the good amongst which I can choose. These options are determined by the context. Political organisations, social arrangements, and institutions must offer an acceptable range of significant options to choose from, and I must be left free to choose as I please. Negative freedom is thus a necessary condition to my expressing my human nature.

It is in a neglected passage (a footnote) that Berlin tells us the logic behind the maximisation of negative liberty:

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[39] Ibid., 161.
[40] Ibid., 123.
[41] "From Hope and Fear Set Free," in *CC*, 191.

The extent of my freedom seems to depend on a) how many possibilities are open to me; b) how easy or difficult each of these possibilities is to actualize; c) how important in my plan of life, given my character and circumstances, these possibilities are when compared with each other; d) how far they are closed and opened by deliberate human acts; e) what value not merely the agent, but the general sentiment of the society in which he lives, puts on the various possibilities.[42]

Here Berlin gives more texture and depth to his account of negative freedom. In a), negative freedom appears to be a quantitative rather than qualitative concept. In b), Berlin links it to one's actual physical and socio-economical capacities. In c), he emphasises one's rationality, capacity to self-reflection and choice. In d), he stresses the fact that since we live in society, different options will vary in their openeness. And in e), Berlin shows that the context, which gives meaning and value to available possibilities, will play an important role in the action of choosing. His definition of negative freedom in thus not independent from his historicism and conception of human nature.

However, as Hayek remarked, "we must recognize that we may be free and yet miserable. Liberty does not mean all good things or the absence of all evils. It is true that to be free may mean freedom to starve, to make costly mistakes, or to run mortal risks."[43] Liberty is one value among others, which may conflict with justice and equality for instance, and in a pluralist society, under some circumstances, freedom may well be sacrificed at the expense of other competing goods or values. This is why thinkers such as John Gray[44] and George Crowder[45] think that pluralism does not support liberalism. But one may argue that in a pluralist society, liberty must have priority over other competing values so as to preserve the area of social conflict and the capacity of human beings to choose amongst alternatives. This is the view Berlin favours. This debate as to whether or not pluralism supports liberalism will be the main discussion in chapter 5.

[42] "Two Concepts of Liberty," in FE, 130.
[43] F. A. Hayek, The Constitution of Liberty (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960), 18.
[44] See J. Gray, Ibid., chapt. 6, 141-68.

Positive liberty, on the other hand, is concerned with the source of control, as opposed to negative liberty, which is concerned with the area of control. Being free in the positive sense means being the master of one's own life. What matters is self-direction and self-realisation, ". . . the realisation by the individual's own activity of the true purposes of his nature . . . ."[46] Hence, there is a strong emphasis on autonomy. Men are rational and capable of bearing responsibility for their choices and actions, and of explaining them by referring to their goals. Having goals and wanting to attain them is the wish of an autonomous and rational individual. In Berlin's words, liberty in this sense "consists, therefore, in self-direction: a man is free to the degree that the true explanation of his activity lies in the intentions and motives of which he is conscious."[47]

At this point there does not seem to be a great logical distinction between negative and positive liberty, but they truly are two distinct concepts. The fact is that individuals are also subjected to their nature, which is made of desires and passions, which are, in turn, non-rational. The positive account of liberty thus implies a splitting of the self – the 'true' or 'ideal' self as opposed to the 'lower' self. Being free in this sense comes to mean being liberated from one's fears, phobias, passions, addictions, pains, and so on, so as to unravel the rational 'true' self from its irrational elements. But there is a great danger in splitting man into two distinctive parts, one being the transcendent, rational and controller, and the other half being the mere empirical bundle of desires and impulses to be tamed and kept in guard, for it opens the way to any despot, sage, enlightened technocrat, social reformer, and so on, to say something like: 'I know better than you do what is good for you', or 'you are blinded by your fears and ignorance, let me liberate your true self'. To liberate or make free here means, at best, to educate, to make rational; or worse, to 'condition', perhaps to brainwash, oppress, torture, collectively as well as individually. But

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[45] G. Crowder, "Pluralism and Liberalism," *Political Studies* 42 (1994): 293-305.
[46] "From Hope and Fear Set Free," in *CC*, 173.

in any case, I cannot be said to be coerced, for my 'true' self wants to be liberated, whether I am aware of it or not, and even if "my poor earthly body and foolish mind bitterly reject it, and struggle against those who seek however benevolently to impose it, with the greatest desperation."[48]

Berlin gives two examples as excesses of the logic of positive liberty: "I have a wound in my leg. There are two methods of freeing myself from the pain. One is to heal the wound. But if the cure is too difficult or uncertain, there is another method. I can get rid of the wound by cutting off my leg."[49] This is the ideal of the Stoics: training oneself not to want something that one cannot afford, or obtain, or keep. Thus, if I successfully convince myself that I do not need my leg, I shall not feel the lack of it.

The second example is better still in illustrating the absurdity to which positive freedom may lead:

> If I save myself from an adversary by retreating indoors and locking every entrance and exit, I may remain freer than if I had been captured by him, but am I freer than if I had defeated or captured him? If I go too far, contract myself into too small a space, I shall suffocate and die. The logical culmination of the process of destroying everything through which I can be possibly wounded is suicide.[50]

What am I left free to do in such a position?

To reiterate, what does positive freedom entail? There are four premises: (1) all men have one true purpose; rational self-direction; (2) the ends of all rational beings must fit into a single universal and harmonious pattern, that few enlightened people see more clearly than common people; (3) all conflicts are due to the clash of reason with irrational or immature elements in life, and; (4) when all men have been made rational through

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[47] Ibid., 175.
[48] "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *FE*, 134.
[49] Ibid., 135.

enlightenment and education, they will 'voluntarily' obey the rational laws and be wholly free. This is the authoritarian turn that thinkers such as Rousseau, Kant and Burke, who certainly started off as being individualist, took in their most illiberal moments; to be restrained in our own interest, since freedom is not freedom to do what is irrational, or stupid, or wrong. This leads to despotism, totalitarianism, and to a perfectly ordered, harmonious and organic society composed of 'liberated' individuals.

However, such a coerced man cannot be said to be autonomous. For Hayek, "coercion is evil precisely because it . . . eliminates an individual as a thinking and valuing person and makes him a bare tool in the achievement of the ends of another."[51] Also, a society, being composed of a plurality of persons, each with their own goals, interests, and conceptions of the good that they invent for themselves and choose freely, is best arranged when it is governed by principles that do not presuppose any particular conception of the good, and on this view, respect for the others demands that we refrain from imposing our view of the good life on them.[52] Advocates of negative freedom such as Mill, its most celebrated champion, are in favour of diversity, spontaneity, originality, genius, and even eccentricity, as opposed to collective conformity and mediocrity. "All the errors which a man is likely to commit against advice and warning are far outweighed by the evil of allowing others to constrain him to what they deem is good"[53] if we are to protect a society from totalitarianism. This is the spirit of the Harm Principle; no one is to be coerced or constrained neither by any other nor by the society. Mill was a liberal, and even though he was an advocate of democracy, he detested its tendency to uniformity and warned us against the tyranny of the majority. Berlin is at one with Mill's fear of the tyranny of the majority. To him, the most fundamental unfreedom is a restriction of choice amongst

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[50] Ibid., 140.
[51] F. A. Hayek, Ibid., 21.
[52] See M. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1-7.
[53] "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *FE*, 127.

options by other individuals. The private sphere of life, the personal area within which an

individual is free to do or be what he pleases and wants is of primordial importance:

> No matter whether they're reasonable or unreasonable, educated or uneducated,
> good or bad: that's no business of the state's . . . . Everyone must be able to enjoy
> life in his own way, but not at other people's expense or by getting in the way of
> *their* enjoyment.[54]

Many important points have been made. First, positive and negative freedom have a

common root: the power of choice. It need to be said here that Berlin does not completely

reject positive freedom on the ground that it is illiberal. Indeed, "there is certainly no

necessary connection between the negative view of liberty and liberalism"[55] that says that

negative freedom is superior to positive freedom on the ground that it is more faithful to

classical liberalism. But the core argument for keeping authority at bay is that a minimum

area of personal freedom must be preserved "if we are not to degrade or deny our human

nature."[56] He rejects positive liberty because of the metaphysical division of the person

that it entails and which paves the way to totalitarianism. And "such a division . . . results

in a destruction of our chances to choose our own purposes; in other words, it destroys

our humanity."[57] In Berlin's conception of human nature, the action of choosing, of

negotiating our way through incommensurable values and ways of life, is primordial to the

formation of a personal identity. When the person is metaphysically divided in two

distinctive parts, the possibility of forming a personal identity is thwarted.

At this point one may argue that Berlin was totally wrong in distinguishing between two

concepts of liberty. One may claim that liberty is, on the contrary, one unique concept

with different conceptions. There is an important distinction in political theory between

'concept' and 'conception'. While the first means a common core on which everybody

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[54] Hérault in *Danton's Death*, a play by Goerge Büchner, *Georg Büchner: Complete Plays, Lenz and Other Writings*, trans. J. Reddick (London: Penguin Classics, 1993), act I, scene I, 7.
[55] J. Gray, Ibid., 21.
[56] "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *FE*, 126.

agrees, the second means the different interpretations of the concept on which there may be disagreement. One concrete example of this is given by Jeremy Waldron and his concept of private property, which he calls 'the idea of ownership', and the detailed rules of a system of private property, which constitute various conceptions of this same concept of private property.[58] But I argue that Berlin does not commit this normative mistake. Indeed, by the way in which he has defined both concepts of liberty, he clearly shows that they are concerned with different matters, they lead to two diametrically opposed world-views, thus their splitting into two different concepts: "these are not two different interpretations of a single concept, but two profoundly divergent and irreconcilable attitudes to the ends of life."[59]

Along the same line, one may add that Berlin's distinction is useless and philosophically insignificant. Tim Gray states that Berlin's argument is flawed because based on a historical evolution of the two concepts: ". . . they developed in divergent directions . . . until, in the end, they came into direct conflict with each other."[60] Indeed, historically speaking, the logic of the positive concept of liberty has led to a split between the 'actual' and 'lower' self as opposed to the 'rational' or 'true' self which, if imposed upon the 'actual' self, forces people to be free. And this division introduces the danger of totalitarianism in our societies. The same critic argues that there is nothing inherent to either concept to differentiate them from one another.[61] Following Galipeau, I believe, on the contrary, that both concepts are inherently distinct because

> . . . they pull in opposite directions . . . and it is useful to distinguish these two senses. For to equate both senses is to confuse matters. It is quite appropriate to speak of the importance of negative freedom in political society. However, it is inappropriate to include the goal of rational self-direction when formulating constitutional rules to determine the relationship between subjects and their

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[57] R. A. Kocis, Ibid., 377.
[58] See J. Waldron, *The Right to Private Property* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 51-2.
[59] "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *FE*, 166.
[60] Ibid., 131-2.
[61] See T. Gray, *Freedom* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 8.

sovereign. We do not speak of constitutional liberty from neuroses. Nor do we speak of rights to reason . . . .[62]

Another critique of Berlin's two concepts of liberty comes from MacCallum who posits a triadic concept of liberty: "such freedom is . . . always *of* something (an agent or agents), *from* doing something, to do, not do, become, or not become something; it is a triadic relation", which takes the form "*x* is (is not) free from *y* to do (not do, become, not become) *z*."[63] MacCallum goes on to identify three cases where this triadic formula cannot be applied. A case where agents (*x*) are not mentioned. And he gives the following example: "the sky is free from clouds."[64] Fair enough, this is not the kind of freedom we are concerned with here. The second case is one where the second term (*y*) is not clearly defined. One example of such a case would be "freedom to choose as I please."[65] In other words he does not acknowledge that someone might want to be free just for freedom's sake. And finally, the third case is one where it is not clear what corresponds to the third term (*z*). To illustrate such a case MacCallum gives the following example: "freedom from hunger"[66] and he argues that such a case is confusing because someone might want to starve in a Ghandi-like manner to defend a social cause or civil rights, or again, someone who is dieting might perceive the hunger as a sign of loss of weight, which is an effect that was sought by the agent.

As we can see, the triadic formula, in aiming at a better definition and rationalisation of the concept of freedom, becomes too exclusive of a good many cases that are taken into account in Berlin's dyadic relation. Here I thus agree with John Gray, who argues that "an agent may wish to be without constraint, and yet have no specific action he wishes then to

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[62] C. J. Galipeau, Ibid., 96.
[63] G. C. MacCallum, "Negative and Positive Freedom," *Philosophical Review* 76 (1967): 314.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 316.
[66] Ibid., 317.

perform; . . ."[67] simply because civil liberties are open-ended. For example, we are all free to leave the country to go on a holiday and to come back at any time, but we might not want to travel, or may not be able to afford it. Yet we possess that freedom to go as we please and this is good and valuable in itself. So in this case someone is said to be free despite the absence of the second term (y). The statement remains meaningful and proves the triadic formula to be inapplicable.

The reason why I think MacCallum misses Berlin's point is mainly because he does not acknowledge that one can desire freedom in itself. Indeed, Berlin is concerned with the protection of negative freedom and civil liberties first and foremost, and if we take the example of people and nations struggling against oppression or colonisation, we clearly see that what they want is freedom plain and simple: "a man struggling against his chains or a people against enslavement need not consciously aim at any definite further state. A man need not know how he will use his freedom; he just wants to remove the yoke."[68] This example refutes MacCallum's third exception and makes his triadic formula irrelevant.

Charles Taylor is another strong critic who attacks Berlin's two concepts of liberty. He does not agree with Berlin on the way in which he built his defence of negative freedom. Indeed, positive freedom means, to Taylor, "the exercising of control over one's life" i.e. "one is free only to the extent that one has effectively determined oneself and the shape of one's life."[69] This is why he calls positive freedom an 'exercise-concept', as opposed to an 'opportunity-concept', which refers to negative freedom. However, Berlin's argument against positive freedom clearly shows that an agent might have internalised a behaviour

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[67] J. Gray, Ibid., 18.
[68] Clarification Berlin made in "Introduction" to FE, xliii, following MacCallum's critique.
[69] C. Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," in The Idea of Freedom: Essays in Honour of Isaiah Berlin, ed. A. Ryan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 177.

or norm and think it its own creation when in fact it is the result of the work of the most skilled despot.

Taylor criticises negative liberty for being too simple and atomistic.[70] In 'What's Wrong With Negative Liberty' he gives the famous comparison between the degree of freedom enjoyed by people in Albania and in Britain to illustrate that negative freedom, defined in a physicalist manner, can be quantified and thus is flawed. Indeed, there are fewer traffic lights in Albania than in Britain, and if freedom is freedom of movement, Albanians are in this respect freer than Britons.[71] Since in reality it is not true that people enjoy more freedom in Albania than in Britain, we cannot soundly defend a negative concept of freedom. According to Taylor, an exercise-concept of freedom is superior to mere absence of external obstacles because it forces the agent to identify his desires and discriminate among his motivations.[72] I do not see how these two activities are exclusive to positive freedom only and points to weaknesses in Berlin's argument. Indeed, negative freedom, in opening opportunities and alternatives, requires from the part of the individual a reflection on what he thinks is the good life for him. And the exercise of choosing includes identifying desires and discriminating among motivations. Reflection and discrimination are not intrinsic to negative freedom like they are to positive freedom, but for Berlin they are none the less necessary to one's living a fulfilling life, as I have demonstrated by examining the 5 steps to the maximisation of negative liberty.

A better example from Galipeau illustrates the primary character of negative freedom:

> A constitutional liberty of self-expression is obviously without value for the person who cannot speak in public or write a coherent sentence because he suffers from a neurotic condition. Yet it remains true that a polity is significantly free when its laws and institutions assure the liberty of self-expression; and unfree when the polity

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[70] C. Taylor criticises the atomist character of liberalism in "Atomism," *Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 187-210.
[71] See C. Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," Ibid., 183.
[72] Ibid.

does not. Neurotics can be educated and helped with therapy; once cured they will come to enjoy, if they choose, the liberty of self-expression that all can equally enjoy by law. But they will remain unfree in a significant sense if they are restricted by the authorities from expressing themselves in public, in print or on the airwaves.[73]

This example sheds light on the different implications of the conditions of liberty and liberty itself. It shows that the absence of conditions to liberty is not the absence of liberty itself. It also shows that negative and positive freedom are not mutually exclusive. But what is the use of good oratory skills if one is silenced by law? Or conversely, what is the use of freedom of speech if one stammers and stutters? It shows that if one is concerned with civil liberties like Berlin is, freedom of speech will prevail over the capacity one has to express oneself in public, which can be improved by diverse means, but which is of no use if the negative civil liberty of speech does not come first. Positive freedom is a luxury to which negative freedom is a necessary condition.

The conditions to negative freedom are different from those to positive freedom. Indeed, knowledge or independence of mind might be necessary, although not sufficient conditions to positive freedom, but not to negative freedom: "if I am ignorant of my rights, or too neurotic (or too poor) to benefit them, that makes them useless to me; but it does not make them non-existent; . . . ."[74] To be free in the negative sense, these fundamental rights and liberties must exist, different alternatives must be available to me and this availability must be protected by law in the society in which I live for me to exercise my freedom when I choose to do so or when I become able to do so. These are both necessary and sufficient conditions to freedom for Berlin.

Taylor's critique rests on a misunderstanding of Berlin's position. One focuses on autonomy and the other focuses on problems of public authority:

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[73] C. J. Galipeau, ibid., 95.

Berlin could accept all that Taylor says and still maintain that in modern polities it is imperative to have negative liberties. The latter are often a condition for autonomy. It is the protection of spheres of non-interference that assures people the freedom to debate and discuss amongst themselves about what may or may not be the best course in life.[75]

In short, both Berlin and Taylor are concerned with keeping authority at bay, but Berlin sees the danger of totalitarianism in adopting a positive concept of freedom whereas Taylor still holds to that concept while trying to demonstrate that totalitarianism can be avoided. Berlin's is a "slippery slope' argument": once theorists start defending positive freedom, they "are not able to prevent the slide down to oppression."[76] One may argue that negative freedom alone is inadequate, that a good measure of positive freedom is also required to live fulfilling lives, but since this opens the door to totalitarianism, Berlin would rather reject it, instead of endorsing it and trying to develop arguments (which may fail) to prevent the slide towards oppression.

Taylor thinks it possible if, from a 'positive' standpoint, the despot dictating our conduct is replaced by a good friend. This view is inspired from Herder for whom individuals are unique and no politician or distant ruler can claim knowing us, knowing what is in our best interest and what should be the true pattern of life that fits our true nature. Being unique, only very close relatives or friends, for instance, could hold such a claim. This is how Taylor thinks totalitarianism could possibly be avoided while still holding a positive concept of freedom.[77] I find it inconclusive because it does not solve the problem of the metaphysical division of the self. On the contrary, it argues that it can be admitted and even made legitimate that someone dictates my conduct. The furthest Berlin goes in that direction is to admit, following Mill, that a man can be prevented to walk on a bridge if it is

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[74] "From Hope and Fear Set Free," in *CC*, 192.
[75] C. J. Galipeau, Ibid., 95.
[76] R. A. Kocis, Ibid., 378.
[77] See C. Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," Ibid., 184-91.

on the brink of collapse thus provoking the possible death of the wanderer. Freedom may only be curtailed in such critical cases.

True, the freedom Berlin defends is freedom from obstacles: "freedom is to do with the absence of obstacles to action."[78] It can indeed be quantified: "negative liberty varies according to the number of doors through which one may pass"[79] and "some doors are much more important than others."[80] But Berlin never claimed that negative freedom is the only true sense that captures all the subtleties of being free or not and to what degree. Negative freedom can also be twisted and lead to the exploitation of children under conditions of unbridled capitalism, for instance. But it is the one Berlin defends because it is the most efficient to warrant pluralism (as I will argue in chapter 5) and prevent the slope down towards totalitarianism: "positive and negative liberty are both perfectly valid concepts, but it seems to me that historically more damage has been done by pseudo-positive than by pseudo-negative liberty in the modern world."[81]

IV.

It is impossible to understand and appreciate Berlin's defence of negative liberty and the way in which it supports his idea of value pluralism with what is comprised in the essay 'Two Concepts of Liberty' alone. His other works have to be appreciated as well too since the essay is a defence of a liberal conception of freedom at times when a substantial part of the world was under communist, socialist and Marxist influence and control. His thesis is thus historical first and foremost, but works on different levels too, i.e. philosophical and sociological. His defence of negative liberty is a logical continuation of his conception of

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[78] "From Hope and Fear Set Free," in *CC*, 190.
[79] C. J. Galipeau, Ibid., 90, and "From Hope and Fear Set Free," in *CC*, 191
[80] "From Hope and Fear Set Free," in *CC*, 191.
[81] R. Jahanbegloo, *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1991), 41.

human nature, which is like a riverbed having accumulated the sediments of centuries of thought, thus its complex and multi-layered quality.

What Berlin is concerned with is

> to establish . . . that, whatever may be the common ground between them, and whichever is liable to graver distortion, negative and positive liberty are not the same thing. Both are ends in themselves. These ends may clash irreconcilably.[82]

In such a situation where they come into conflict, if Berlin were to choose between negative and positive freedom, he would be most likely to favour the former, in most cases, but not systematically and blindly for it is not a hard-and-fast rule. The impediment of choice is an inescapable aspect of human nature which results in the sacrifice of other competing value(s). The outcome depends on the people's moral code, their personal conception of the good that they create and shape for themselves, and the context in which the negotiation takes place.

In the next chapter I will describe the spirit of the romantic movement and show how it has influenced twentieth-century liberalism and provided solid foundations for Berlin's defence of value pluralism. The movement has inspired a renewal of spontaneity, variety, and diversity in a liberal tradition that was oriented more towards utilitarianism. In this respect, John Stuart Mill is probably the one who was the most influenced by romantic ideals in his reformulation of utilitarianism. And in our times the effects of Romanticism in the liberal tradition come into conflict with neutralism and legalism.

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[82] "Introduction," in *FE*, xlix.

THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

I.

In this chapter I will present the most characteristic features of the romantic movement and its long-lasting effects in modern liberalism, more precisely in pluralism. The origins of pluralism are not to be traced in Romanticism only (indeed, Berlin found it in Machiavelli first). However, I believe that it is the romantic movement that has most deeply influenced the way in which we conceive of politics nowadays. Machiavelli may have lit the fuse,[1] but it is Herder who made the classical arch crumble.[2]

II.

Romanticism is a notoriously elusive and luxuriously evocative concept. The many attempts at circumscribing it in the literature are either too broad or too narrow; they leave out or include too much. I do not pretend being able to avoid the same trap here. I shall however proceed by steps in identifying the main characteristics of the romantic movement, when and where it emerged, and its enduring effects in the Western world.

In general terms, Romanticism is an attitude or intellectual orientation that characterised many works of literature, painting, music, and criticism in Europe over a period from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. It can be seen as a rejection of the precepts of order, calm, harmony, balance, idealisation, and rationality. Romanticism emphasises the individual, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous,

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[1] "The Originality of Machiavelli," in *AC*, 68.
[2] "Herder and the Enlightenment," in *VH*, 207.

and the emotional. It is characterised by a deep appreciation of the beauties of nature; a general exaltation of emotion over reason and of the senses over intellect; a turning inward and a heightened examination of human personality and psychology, a preoccupation with the genius, the hero; a new view of the artist as a supremely individual creator, whose creative spirit is more important than strict adherence to formal rules and traditional procedures; an obsessive interest in folk culture, national and ethnic cultural origins, and the medieval era; and a predilection for the exotic, the remote, the mysterious, the weird, the occult, the monstrous, the diseased, and even the satanic. Schenk adds

> . . . the strange lack of commitment, so characteristic of Romanticism . . . ; the intellectual Don Juan's restless search for new adventures of the mind; the sadistic desire to cause pain; the self-torturing Byronic longing for his own perdition (Zarathustra calls himself "self-executioner) . . . .[3]

These are, in general terms, some characteristics of the romantic movement. It is not an exhaustive list. Berlin tried to avoid the trap of defining Romanticism when he realised that it was an almost impossible task. He did not want to speak of it in general terms, but wished to convey its spirit. In the quite entertaining introduction of his Mellon Lectures on *Some Sources of Romanticism*,[4] he pointed out the contradictory nature of the topic:

> Stendhal says that the romantic is the modern and interesting, classicism is the old and the dull . . . . Goethe says that romanticism is disease, it is the weak, the sickly, the battle-cry of a school of wild poets and Catholic reactionaries; . . . . Nietzsche says it is not disease but a therapy, a cure for a disease . . . . Heine says romanticism is the passion-flower sprung from the blood of Christ, a re-awakening of the poetry of the sleepwalking Middle Ages . . . . Marxist would add that it was indeed an escape from the horrors of the Industrial Revolution . . . . But Taine says that romanticism is a bourgeois revolt against the aristocracy after 1789 . . . . Romanticism is the primitive, the untutored, it is youth, life, the exuberant sense of life of the natural man, but it is also pallor fever, disease, decadence . . . . Also it is the familiar, the sense of one's unique tradition, joy in the smiling aspect of everyday nature . . . . Also it is the pursuit of novelty, revolutionary change, concern with the fleeting present, desire to live in the moment, rejection of knowledge, past and future . . . . It is nostalgia, it is reverie, it is intoxicating

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[3] H. G. Schenk, *The Mind of the European Romantics: An Essay in Cultural History* (London: Constable, 1966), 244-5.

[4] Six Mellon Lectures, *Some Sources of Romanticism*, given at the National Gallery, Washington DC, June and July 1965, tape recordings now held in the National Sound Archive at the British Library, London.

dreams, it is sweet melancholy and bitter melancholy, solitude . . . . But it is also happy co-operation in a common creative effort, the sense of forming part of a Church, a class, a party, a tradition . . . .[5]

Contradictory conceptions of the same thing indeed. How can admiration for the beautiful and fascination for the monstrous be characteristics of the same movement? How can exaltation of the individual lead to the giving of the individual to all as in Rousseau's *Contrat Social*[6] or Fichte's collectivism?[7] Because Romanticism is precisely this: variety, diversity, "confusion of ideas and words."[8] Of course to be called a movement it seems that Romanticism must have some kind of organisation. And the *dénominateur commun*, the link that unites all these different and contradictory conceptions, is the rejection of the Enlightenment's rationalism, hence the going in all directions: "Whither do we move? Away from all suns? Do we not dash on unceasingly? Backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions?"[9]

To set the date of the beginning of the romantic movement is like "to mark the point at which orange becomes yellow in the colour spectrum. . . . The year 1800 is a good round number, however."[10] In the English literature, it began in the 1790s with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth's 'Preface' to the second edition (published in 1800), in which he described poetry as being "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,"[11] became the manifesto of the English romantic movement in poetry. William Blake was the third principal poet of the movement's early phase in England. The first phase of the romantic movement in Germany, which roughly began in the 1770s with the *Sturm und Drang*, was marked by innovations in content and literary style and also by a

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[5] *RR*, 14-5.
[6] See J.-J. Rousseau, *Du contrat social* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966).
[7] See J. G. Fichte, Addresses to the German Nation (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).
[8] A. O. Lovejoy, "The Meaning of Romanticism for the Historian of Ideas," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 2 (1941): 259.
[9] F. Nietzsche, *Joyful Wisdom*, cited in H. G. Schenk, Ibid., 237.

preoccupation with the mystical, the subconscious, and the supernatural. Goethe, the Schlegel brothers, and Friedrich Schelling belong to this first phase. In Revolutionary France, Chateaubriand and Mme de Staël were the chief initiators of Romanticism.

This was the first phase of Romanticism and its influence in writings and poetry. The second phase, comprising the period from about 1805 to the 1830s, was marked by a quickening of cultural nationalism and a new attention to national origins, as attested by the revival and imitation of native folklore, folk ballads and poetry, folk dance and music, and even previously ignored medieval and Renaissance works. In this second phase, Romanticism began to have serious political consequences. Indeed, the movement became less universal and more particularistic in approach and concentrated more on exploring each nation's rich past and cultural heritage, and on examining the passions and struggles of exceptional individuals, which led to the very romantic cult of the national hero. A good example of this is Ossian, Irish or Scot bard (the sources do no agree on his origins and not being easy to identify or trace is a good romantic quality!) whose poems quickly became best-seller in Europe.

> L'Europe des années 1800 ossianise, tandis que Napoléon la tourmente. Un Napoléon qu'Ossian accompagne dans sa bibliothèque de campagne. Une Europe dont les nations en gésine se récitent elles-même à travers Ossian, chacune croyant reconnaître dans le brouillard ses ancêtres mythiques, ici Germains, ailleurs Slaves ou Celtes. [12]

At about this same time English romantic poetry had reached its zenith in the works of John Keats, Lord Byron, and Percy Bysshe Shelley. A notable by-product of the romantic interest in the emotional were works dealing with the supernatural, the weird, and the horrible, as in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and works by Marquis de Sade in France.

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[10]M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: The Norton Library, 1958), 22.

[11] W. Wordsworth and S. T. Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads* (London: Methuen and Co., 1963), 240.

III.

I think that we might now have captured the spirit of Romanticism. But it goes beyond that. Romanticism is a reactionary movement. Isaiah Berlin refers to it as the counter-Enlightenment precisely because it is a counter-reaction to the excessive optimism and rationalism of the *Lumières*:

> The Enlightenment was characterized by a burgeoning confidence in the human ability to make sense of the world, to grasp its regularities and fundamental principles, to predict its future, and to manipulate its powers for the benefit of mankind.[13]

There are four fundamental dimensions that characterised the Enlightenment: (1) The confidence in the advancement of knowledge; (2) that all problems can be solved by one final answer; (3) that the future is predictable; (4) and the possibility to fashion the future of mankind, or mankind itself, at any rate individuals and nations, which will be dealt with in due course as a *dérapage* of Romanticism (section V.)

(1) The thinkers of the Enlightenment, especially in France, regarded with much enthusiasm the progress made in the natural sciences. They began to think that human nature and human psychology could be observed, examined, analysed, and dissected all the same. And this would lead to a complete understanding, which once is achieved would unravel the one true way of life that fits with the one true pattern of life. Rapidly enough though, ". . . this great wave or rationalism led to an inevitable reaction."[14] This is what Berlin refers repeatedly to as a "backlash" or a bent twig snapping back, which take the form of an "emotional resistance."[15]

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[12] J. Plumyène, *Les nations romantiques: Histoire du nationalisme, le XIXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1979), 130.
[13] J. Waldron, "Theoretical Foundations," in *Liberal Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 43.
[14] "The Decline of Utopian Ideas in the West," in *CTH*, 34.
[15] Ibid.

(2) The *Lumières* thinkers thought that

> by the scrupulous use of genetic psychology . . . the functioning of everything in man and in nature could be explained, and an end put to all those dark mysteries and grotesque fairy tales . . . with which unscrupulous knaves had for so long befuddled the stupid and benighted multitudes whom they murdered, enslaved, oppressed and exploited.[16]

Indeed, they despised myths, folk songs, fairy tales, superstitions and mysteries as being a testimony of man's irrationality. In Romanticism, on the contrary, "the mythology of every people is an expression of their own distinctive way of viewing nature."[17] But it was not in these common people's kind of language, way of thinking and of expressing themselves that the ultimate answer and remedy to cruelty, injustice, misery, diseases and failures of mankind is to be found, according to the rationalist doctrine:

> After millennia of ignorance, terror, and superstition, cowering before forces it could neither understand nor control, mankind faced the prospect of being able at least to build a *human* world, ...[18]

This echoes optimism in building a better world in which human beings would see their needs fulfilled and ends met. Only the abolition of ignorance and superstition could bring this *human* world about, world in which human beings could at least be human, i.e. true to their human nature as understood by the rationalists. Romantics have a very different conception of human nature, which is not entirely rational, empirical, oriented towards increasing utility, happiness, and perfection. Romantic plays and operas are full of torn, tragic, dark, even suicidal characters, which is representative of the abomination people were beginning to resent towards the successful, the glorious and the arrogant.

(3) Berlin denies the validity of determinism and the possibility to predict the future. Being a pluralist and rejecting the possibility of agreement on one single value which will

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[16] "Voltaire," in *AOE*, 113-4.
[17] J. G. Herder, *J. G. Herder on Social and Political Culture*, trans. F. M. Barnard (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 300.
[18] J. Waldron, Ibid., 43.

constitute the theoretical foundation of a system, such as Rawls does with justice or Dworkin with equality, Berlin goes as far as saying that in a case of conflict, we cannot predict which value(s) will win over the other(s), or which over-arching principle will produce a general agreement. He also rejects determinism because it is incompatible with his conception of human nature. Indeed, the determinism that reigns in the natural world does not apply to human affairs for if all were determined, man could not exercise his free will and would not truly be an agent:

> . . . it seems to me patently inconsistent to assert, on the one hand, that all events are wholly determined to be what they are by other events . . . , and, on the other, that men are free to choose between at least two possible courses of actions – free not merely in the sense of being able to do what they choose to do . . . , but in the sense of not being determined to choose what they choose by causes outside their control.[19]

To demonstrate this thesis - that actions and behaviours are not determined by antecedent actions or events - he appeals to our common habit of praising or blaming men and women for their actions, with the obvious suggestion that we recognise that they could have acted differently, or chosen a different course of action. Since they acted as they did and we attribute a moral value to the action, and since only free, autonomous, and responsible agents can be held accountable for their actions, it seems that determinism does not hold. Actions are however not independent of the context in which they take place, which is a dimension of Berlin's conception of human nature influenced by Herder. But from actions that are influenced by a context to actions that are determined by antecedents there is a theoretical abyss that Berlin never bridges.

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[19] "Introduction," in *FE*, xi.

IV.

What was it that brought about such a dramatic change from rationality, optimism in the sciences, reason, and harmony and order, on the one hand, to the reign of the emotional, spontaneous, intuitive, unpredictable, in so many different spheres of life, on the other? It is disenchantment in the infinite potential of man-made progress towards ever-increasing happiness in this world that caused the first breach. Berlin is driven by

> the urge to pinpoint the weaknesses of the monism of the Enlightenment by consulting the thoughts of its most dangerous and implacable enemies, to discover the sources of pluralism in all their exuberant variety, sometimes in surprising places, ...[20]

He found these sources in thinkers not *a priori* romantics such as Montesquieu, Hume, and Kant.

Hume's influence on Romanticism is indubitable. The empirical Scottish thinker put a strong emphasis on feelings: "in Hume's moral theory, . . . , moral judgements are expression of feeling. . . . passions are universal."[21] His attack on the ideal of Enlightenment went further still. His proposition that knowledge and belief ultimately rest on acquaintance with the data of direct perception[22] fatally hit the ideal of the *Lumières* at the heart because it refutes the postulate that the laws of natural sciences can be applied to human affairs. It is possible to demonstrate things in mathematics, in physics and geometry, but the same is not possible when it comes to human feelings and actions. For instance, how can I demonstrate the existence of my headache, my talent, or my eating an egg logically in the same manner in which I demonstrate a mathematical proposition?

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[20] S. Lukes, "The Singular and the Plural: On the Distinctive Liberalism of Isaiah Berlin," *Social Research* 61 (1994): 702.

[21] N. L. Rosenblum, *Another Liberalism: Romanticism and the Reconstruction of Liberal Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 48.

[22] See D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 214-17.

By stating that deductive certainty cannot be applied to matters of fact, Hume broke the ideal that rationalism could solve all problems. His scepticism, "the denial of the existence of necessary connections in nature,"[23] delighted Hamann and the first champions of anti-rationalism.

Another fatal coup, one that hit the universalistic claims of the Enlightenment, came from Montesquieu when he observed that men are actually not all the same everywhere. This observation was deduced from his reading of the literature of travel[24] and led to a cultural relativism. Montesquieu certainly remains a *philosophe des Lumières* in that he held that all human beings were after the same goals – happiness, justice, harmony, order – except that he believed that what was fit for a Persian might not be for a Parisian or a Londoner. In other words, a Persian ideal of happiness could be somewhat different from a Parisian one, so that all was not the same in all places. Hence the denial that there are universal truths, universal institutions, universal values, suitable for all, everywhere.

As for Kant, although he was an adversary of emotional turbulence and enthusiasm, he did open a Pandora's box with his moral philosophy and affirmation of the creativity of the human will which fed the conception of autonomy and "such notions as the immortal soul, a personal God, freedom of the will, ..."[25] In the same spirit, Berlin finds the origin of Romanticism in the German pietist movement, which

> . . . was a branch of Lutherianism, and consisted in careful study of the Bible, and profound respect for the personal relationship of man to God. There was therefore an emphasis upon spiritual life, contempt for learning, contempt for ritual and for form, contempt for pomp and ceremony, and a tremendous stress upon the individual relationship of the individual suffering human soul with her maker.[26]

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[23] "Hume and the Sources of German Anti-Rationalism," in *AC*, 172. Also See D. Hume, "Why a cause is always necessary?" in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Ibid., 78-81.

[24] Which is profusely quoted in *De L'esprit des lois* (Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1969).

[25] "The Apotheosis of the Romantic Will," in *CTH*, 218.

[26] In *RR*, 36. See also "Hume and the Sources of German Anti-Rationalism," in *AC*, 165.

These are the three precursors of the romantic movement. But its true fathers are Hamann and Herder. The former is responsible for introducing anti-rationalism, and the latter for attacking the universalism of the Enlightenment with notions such as cultural pluralism and a new conception of the role and function of language.

Anti-rationalism is perhaps one of the most obvious feature of the romantic movement. It is the reactionary drive of the Counter-Enlightenment. Hamann, the Magnus of the North, was a pietist who conceived of rationality as being unable to demonstrate the existence of anything. To him, it is a poor instrument for arranging things into sophisticated patterns to which nothing really corresponds. Hamann was interested in dreams (or "the journey to the Inferno of self-knowledge"),[27] and believed in mystical revelation; he believed in a world "where every event is a miracle, and where God speaks to us through the Bible, through Nature, through history, ..."[28] and that is why faith is superior to rationality to him. He believed that ". . . to understand is to be communicated with, by men or by God."[29] And this leads to Herder's theory of language.

Herder was a pietist too. His thought has three dimensions; populism, expressionism, and pluralism. At this point I shall concentrate on the first two only. To begin with populism. It consists in "the value of belonging to a group or a culture, ..."[30] but it is not endorsed by any political project. Herder's populism is derived from the fact that "the natural state of man is society. He is born and brought up in it, ..."[31] It is a fundamental human need to live in a society in which men and women feel at home, in a culture that speaks to them. The same goes for language, or expressionism. Like society, it is not chosen, it is

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[27] H. G. Schenk, Ibid., 8.
[28] R. Jahanbegloo, Ibid., 111.
[29] "The Counter-Enlightenment," in *AC*, 7.
[30] "Herder and the Enlightenment," in *VH*, 153.
[31] J. G. Herder, Ibid., 317.

inherited. And it is not merely an instrument, but "an integral part of our life-form"[32] and

the means by which we express our human nature. Language is a body, or rather a

network of inextricably interlinked meanings and concepts that cannot be understood

independently from one another. It is like the storehouse of unconscious historical

memory. This Herderian conception of language has changed the political dialogue and

supports pluralism as Berlin explained in an early essay:

> . . . where it is obvious that types of proposition or sentence cannot be 'reduced' or 'translated' into one another without torturing the language until what was conveyed idiomatically before can no longer be conveyed so fully or clearly or, at times, at all in the artificial language constructed to conform to some imaginary criterion of a 'logical perfection', such attempts should be exposed as stemming from a false theory of meaning, . . . – a view of the universe as possessing an 'ultimate structure', as being constructed out of this or that collection of combination of bits and pieces of 'ultimate stuff' which the 'language' is constructed to reproduce.[33]

This passage shows how the first German romantics revolted against the language of the

Enlightenment, French mainly, which was civilised, scientific, and tidy. The writing and

prose of Hamann, conversely, is a shocking contrast. And the same goes for values.

They are not content-free atoms in a pool from which we choose. They are in relation to

one another, conflictual relation but none the less inter-relation. Consequently, each way

of life available to us is a partially-ordered system of values like words are partially

arranged together to make sentences.

In the next section I will examine the heritage of the romantic movement, both negative

and positive. The negative effects were more immediate and had short-lived

consequences, which nevertheless count amongst the worst testimony of human

madness in recent history. On the other hand, the positive legacy of Romanticism took

the shape of a critic of legalist and disengaged liberalism and produced modern pluralism.

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[32] C. Taylor, "The Importance of Herder," in *Isaiah Berlin: A Celebration*, eds. E. and A. Margalit (London: Hogarth Press, 1991), 54.
[33] "Logical Translation," in *CC*, 80.

worship not merely of the painter or the composer or the poet, but of that more sinister artist whose materials are men — the destroyer of old societies and the creator of new ones - . . . .[36]

Indeed, in worshipping the artist and its creative capacities, some people came to think of politicians as being artists moulding material to create works of art, and conceiving of man as stuff which can be moulded at will. Such a doctrine drove entire groups towards positive liberty, where the politician, moral guide or enlightened leader, just like the artist, knows what we can be moulded into, knows what the material we are made of can be shaped into, thus we must submit to its creative power and then only, as a group (or as individual members of a group) will we thrive and flourish and reach our full capacities.

Herder's cultural pluralism also suffered a deep distortion. The observation that human cultures and ways of life differ, that they are nonetheless all good and valid in themselves, led to a denial that all human beings are the same everywhere, which should have resulted in increased tolerance. Instead, it was turned into a doctrine whose logic went from denial that all human beings are the same everywhere to "the denial that they deserve to exist."[37] Berlin's response to that danger is his conception of a common human nature which grants individuals and minorities a core set of basic values. The pluralism Berlin draws from the history of Western culture shows that basic human rights must be respected and he limits the liberal tolerance towards individuals or groups that do not respect other's basic fundamental rights.

In Romanticism also are to be found the roots of the kind of nationalism Berlin rejects. It is a reactionary nationalism of wounded pride. The case of Germany is perhaps the best example. It is at any rate Berlin's favourite, because Germany was indeed deeply wounded after the Thirty Years and Napoleonic Wars. During the romantic period, an

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[36] I. Berlin's preface to H. G. Schenk, Ibid., xvii.

adoration of the Middle Ages began. It was a return to an era when the German Empire

was artistically, military, and politically more prominent and "this retrospective pride helped

to console many Germans . . . ."[38] This romantic nostalgia for the Middle Ages was not

exclusively German, but it was especially noticeable in German literature and poetry due

to the fact that these remote times appeared to them as a cultural and political golden

age.

Here is how wounded pride operates:

> This sense of relative backwardness, of being an object of patronage or scorn to
> the French with their overweening sense of national and cultural superiority,
> created a sense of collective humiliation, later to turn into indignation and hostility,
> that sprang from wounded pride.[39]

A natural reaction is to turn inward, to contract oneself into the tiniest possible vulnerable

area, to retreat to the inner citadel, thus the emergence of political doctrines founded on

positive liberty.

This is the result of monist doctrines, from social Darwinism to authoritarian regimes, from

aggressive nationalism to Fascism and Nazism. The romantic movement is not

responsible for all of them, but it certainly played a role in some. These were the

immediate short-lived consequences of Romanticism, which made the last century

perhaps one of the worst in recorded history. Yet, Romanticism has produced some truly

positive consequences from which modern liberal societies benefit.

The romantic response to liberalism is intuitive and immediate, based on individual

sensibilities. It is a response to the legalist aspect of liberalism, which inhibited to a large

degree self-expression and spontaneity. Traditionally, the disaffected and disengaged

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[37] M. Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life*, Ibid., 248.
[38] H. G. Schenk, Ibid., 37.

liberalism perceived man as being the bearer of rights and a moral agent capable of rationality. But modern liberalism has many faces and Romanticism can be seen as a prism through which liberalism appears to be more rich and nuanced than the cold legalism of neutralist theories. For example, it gives meaning to individualism and transforms it into individuality. Romantic thinkers such as Herder have had a pervasive influence in the celebration rather than the management of differences. Diversity tends to make people more aware of their uniqueness and it communicates itself from individual to individual and group to group. Romanticism, and by extension pluralism, also accepts self-doubt, contradictions, conflicts. It recognises that not all of them can be solved and that it is not a negative aspect of politics. Rather, it warrants that everybody gets a voice if they want to speak, or a private sphere where they can retreat to pursue more personal goals. Berlin's definition of negative freedom is in this sense very romantic:

> The freedom of which I speak is opportunity for action, rather than action itself. If, although I enjoy the right to walk through open doors, I prefer not to do so, but to sit still and vegetate, I am not merely rendered less free.[40]

Very romantic indeed is this vision of a private area in which I can choose not to act. It is self-detachment from one's social duties, it is a personal sanctuary away from the external demands that impinge on one's personal life. According to Rosenblum, Berlin

> . . . indicates the possibility of a real opening to romanticism within liberalism. In his work, detachment is inspired by suspicion of external claims. He can countenance the thought that men and women may feel a genuine revulsion at public life. For Berlin, it is not only the political principle of limited government that informs privacy, but also the sense that privacy is a fundamental personal need.[41]

If they choose to participate, individuals, with their cultural background, plural allegiances and divergent conceptions of the good will communicate in a dialogue. And this is

[39] "The Apotheosis of the Romantic Will," in *CTH*, 218-9.
[40] "Introduction," in *FE*, xlii.
[41] N. L. Rosenblum, Ibid., 76.

possible only if "one has a sense of oneself as a personality with a history of errors, disappointment, imagination, and change."[42]

Also, in defending negative freedom, Berlin allows more room for the emotional, and to a certain extent to irrationality too, since freedom is not freedom to do only good but also evil: "liberty provides opportunities to make mistakes and rectify them, to remember, evaluate, correct, and complete wants in an endless process of education and self-development."[43] Herder adds, ". . . even when he most despicably abuses his freedom, man is still king. For he can still choose, even though he chooses the worst."[44] This is liberty as presented by Mill and Berlin, and it is preferable to conformity and constraints on one's freedom to do only what the society he belongs to values as being the one true good.

Moreover, the romantic outlook

> . . . bred respect for individuality, for the creative impulse, for the unique, the independent, for freedom to live and act in the light of personal, undictated beliefs and principles, of undistorted emotional needs, for the value of private life, of personal relationships, of the individual conscience, of human rights.[45]

This brings us to the two themes I have identified as being the keystones of pluralism: tolerance and practical reason.

To begin with tolerance. An important distinction has to be made. The kind of tolerance Berlin talks about is different from the kind of tolerance Locke was talking about in seventeeth-century England. Liberalism has defended tolerance for at least three centuries, but it was tolerance amongst people of the same colour, the same language,

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[42] Ibid., 135.
[43] Ibid., 135.
[44] J. G. Herder, Ibid., 266.
[45] I. Berlin's preface to H. G. Schenk, Ibid., xvii.

the same religious confession. The tolerance Romanticism brought about is broader. It is based on diversity and sprang from the emergence of a new and typically romantic virtue, namely sincerity.

> . . . what Catholic in, let us say, the sixteenth century would say 'I abhor the heresies of the reformers, but I am deeply moved by the sincerity and integrity with which they hold and practise and sacrifice themselves for their abominable beliefs'? On the contrary, the deeper the sincerity of such heretics, or unbelievers – Muslims, Jews, atheists – the more dangerous they are, the more likely to lead souls to perdition, the more ruthlessly should they be eliminated, since heresy – false beliefs about the ends of men – is surely a poison more dangerous to the health of society than even hypocrisy or dissimulation, which at least do not openly attack the true doctrine.[46]

Before Romanticism sincerity and the virtues of diversity in life were concepts totally unheard of. They deeply changed the basis and justification of tolerance but more importantly, made its case stronger. Indeed, once we acknowledge the incompatibility of values and ways of life,

> . . . human beings sooner or later realise that they must make do, they must make compromises, because if they seek to destroy others, others will seek to destroy them; and so, as a result of this passionate, fanatical, half-mad doctrine, we arrive at an appreciation of the necessity of tolerating others."[47]

Tolerance also plays an important role in the second romantic theme I want to examine. Practical reason is a response to the rationalism of the Enlightenment and depends to a large degree on the extent of people's tolerance to incompatible and incomparable ways of life. The rationalism that prevailed during the Enlightenment was a belief that everything must rationally fit in a fixed hierarchy of needs and ends. But there is no such thing. There is no harmonious order in pluralism. It is a recurrent theme in the literature that once monism is rejected, "we are thrown back on our own resources as human beings when it comes to making judgements about what is valuable."[48] It is no longer

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[46] "The Apotheosis of the Romantic Will," in *CTH*, 208. See also *RR*, 9.
[47] *RR*, 147.
[48] K. Graham, "Coping with the Many-Coloured Dome: Pluralism and Practical Reason," in *Pluralism and Philosophy*, ed. D. Archard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 136. This disenchantment is also discussed by J. Kekes in *The Morality of Pluralism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 3-8.

possible to infer what is right and what is wrong from one single immutable system of values.

This romantic anti-rationalism is an emotive response to the optimism of the Enlightenment in discovering the single and ultimate solution to the puzzle of the cosmos. Hamann showed that this kind of rationalism is useless to the intelligibility of human affairs. Seen by many as the irrationalist thinker *par excellence*, he forced liberals to rethink rationality in different, more flexible, and emotional terms, for rationality could not be rejected at once. "This counter-Enlightenment movement is anti-rationalist, but its teachings are not for that irrational."[49]

Let us imagine a conflict between two incompatible and incommensurable values. If I rely on my own preferences and desires, or on past experiences when I had to make a similar choice, would that be non-rational of me? Are judgements of importance non-rational? For pluralists they are not. Such choices based on judgements of importance are underdetermined by reason but they are not less rational when "guided by an assessment of particular circumstances."[50] Indeed, within the same way of life, it is possible to reason about values, to order or even rank them, following contextual considerations, matters of taste, traditions and cultural preferences. When values conflict within the same way of life, individuals belonging to a same community have a common background against which they can reason about what value, say, national security or economic growth, should predominate over the other. It is a different kind of rationality, which is practical and Aristotelian in nature, and does not appeal to some immutable priority rule.[51] Practical intelligence, or *phronēsis*, means "good deliberation about things towards one's

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[49] C. J. Galipeau, *Isaiah Berlin's Liberalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 67.
[50] W. A. Galston, "Value Pluralism and Liberal Political Theory," *American Political Science Review* 93, no. 4 (December 1999): 769.

own happiness in general, resulting in a correct supposition about the end."[52] But when two completely different ways of life collide, when there is no common background between them to resort to because their values, or even the content of their values, is incompatible and incommensurable, there is no "possibility of rational arbitration"[53] and tolerance of each other becomes crucial for a political deliberation to take place.

Tolerance becomes crucial for two reasons. First, it implies that we recognise the validity of different conceptions of the good life. Second, that we recognise that it makes no sense to impose any conception on people so as to exclude the availability of other ways of life to them. It is thus reasonable to be tolerant, and it is a necessary tolerance based on diversity.[54]

VI.

I suggest that Berlin's pluralism is a romantic response to monist liberal theories. In conclusion to this chapter, I want to stress the fact that even though Berlin is very sympathetic to the romantic contributions to liberal theory, he does not reject all aspects of the Enlightenment. As he pointed out, "this great structure was not overthrown, but it was cracked, as it were, by the romantics. As for us, we inherit both these traditions, ..."[55] Berlin is an inheritor of the Enlightenment in that he makes universal statements about human nature and the human need for freedom and basic rights. His political liberalism is founded on a conception of human nature that is common and universal and thus is protected from the dangerous distortions of Romanticism.

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[51] Practical reason is also discussed by S. Hampshire in *Morality and Conflict* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 71.

[52] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. T. Irwin (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co., 1985), 411.

[53] "The Originality of Machiavelli," in *AC*, 74.

[54] See S. Lukes, "Making Sense of Moral Conflict', in *Moral Conflict and Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 141.

The positive and negative heritage of Romanticism – on the one hand contempt for opportunism, regard for individual variety, scepticism of oppressive general formulae and final solutions, and on the other self-prostration before superior beings and the exaltations of arbitrary power, passion and cruelty – these tendencies all at once reflected and promoted by Romantic doctrines have done more to mould both the events of our century and the concepts in terms of which they are viewed and explained than is commonly recognized in most histories of our times.[56]

Berlin recognises this contribution and puts it at the centre of his value pluralism, which will be the topic of the next chapter.

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[55] R. Jahanbegloo, *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1991), 159.

[56] I. Berlin's preface to H. G. Schenk, Ibid., xvii-xviii.

THE IDEA OF VALUE PLURALISM

I.

In this chapter I will explore the connection between value pluralism and liberalism. I said that Berlin is a value-pluralist liberal (along with Stuart Hampshire and Bernard Williams), implying that there is indeed a connection and compatibility between pluralism and liberalism. But other theorists, such as John Gray and George Crowder, argue that there is no such thing. Rather, they argue that once is recognised the validity of incompatible and incommensurable goods, it is incoherent to hold a commitment to one ideology (here, liberalism) ". . . , since it is always open to the pluralist to ask, why not the illiberal option?"[1] I will attempt to show that, on the contrary, pluralism, even though it cannot be derived from liberalism, provides a solid support to it.

II.

I shall begin the demonstration by going back to where Berlin found the origin of pluralism, i.e. in Machiavelli's *Principe*.[2] In all of Berlin's work, it is this passage that best epitomises the idea of value pluralism:

> If Machiavelli is right, if it is in principle . . . impossible to be morally good and do one's duty as this was conceived by common European, and especially Christian ethics, and at the same time build Sparta or Periclean Athens or the Rome of the Republic or even of the Antonines, then a conclusion of the first consequence follows: that the belief that the correct, objectively valid solution to the question of how should men live can in principle be discovered is itself in principle not true. . . . The idea of the world and of human society as a single intelligible structure is at the root of all the many various versions of natural law - . . . . This unifying monistic pattern is at the very heart of traditional rationalism, religious and atheistic,

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[1] C. Crowder, "Pluralism and Liberalism," *Political Studies* 42 (1994): 304.

[2] N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. and ed. A. M. Codevilla (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1997).

metaphysical and scientific, transcendental and naturalistic, that has been characteristic of western civilisation. It is this rock, upon which western beliefs and lives had been founded, that Machiavelli seems, in effect, to have split open. So great a reversal cannot, of course, be due to the acts of a single individual. It could scarcely have taken place in a stable social and moral order; many besides him, . . . , doubtless supplied their share of the dynamite. . . . it was Machiavelli who lit the fatal fuse.[3]

What Berlin observed while reading Machiavelli was not the clash of incompatible values, but a collision between two whole systems of values that are incompatible and incommensurable between them. On one side, Christianity, which values faith and loyalty to God. On the other side, Republicanism, which values glory and power. They are both utterly divergent, they promote different values and conceptions of the good life and there is no comparison between them. Men still had to make a choice - build the perfect *polis* or contemplate the world beyond – but after Machiavelli they were dispossessed of that universal standard that would enable them to choose rationally. Moreover, they were faced with a tragic choice, for choosing one value or system of values would entail the sacrifice of the other.[4] Conflict and significant loss are recurrent themes in pluralists writings. John Kekes explains that "whatever we do, . . ., it remains a fact of human life that as we seek one of two conflicting values, so we must put up with missing out on the other."[5]

What Machiavelli uncovered was a profound and inescapable dualism, and once it is admitted that two systems may collide, there can be more. Thus the obviousness of pluralism. Moreover, Machiavelli established that if the one single true moral order had not been discovered yet by monists, it was not because of our "lack of skill or stupidity or

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[3] "The Originality of Machiavelli," in *AC*, 66-68.
[4] "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *FE*, 168.
[5] J. Kekes, *The Morality of Pluralism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 54.

bad fortune."[6] It was because there was not such one single true moral order, for the normal human situation is plural.

The second influential thinker to have dwelt on pluralism and that, following Berlin, I will now highlight, is Herder. I have already presented the two other dimensions of his thought (populism and expressionism) and I shall now concentrate on pluralism. Herder asked "what is the best life for men? What is the most perfect society?"[7] And he found it in natural communities where men and women are happily integrated and not held together by an artificial contract or institutions imposed upon them by a despot or a foreign power. Since these natural communities are diverse and numerous, there will be at least as many different conceptions of the good as there are communities. And according to Herder, this diversity is a good in itself and must be celebrated rather than managed or levelled. He made the classical arch crumble because ". . . if each of the civilizations into which he infuses so much life . . . are widely different, and indeed uncombinable – then how could there exist, even in principle, one universal ideal, valid for all men, at all times, everywhere?[8] The obvious diversity, uniqueness, and validity of each culture render this postulate untenable.

Berlin found in Herder the idea that "judgements of comparative value" between civilizations are impossible "for that is measuring the incommensurable."[9] Incompatibility and incommensurability are two crucial concepts for pluralists; they are two logically different notions, they complete each other, and are indispensable to the narrative. Incompatibility alone does not rule out monism, "since even if values were incompatible – even if they did conflict – they could still be ranked or traded off according to some

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[6] "The Originality of Machiavelli," in *AC*, 78.
[7] "Herder and the Enlightenment," in *VH*, 206.
[8] Ibid., 207.
[9] Ibid., 208.

overarching principle and thus be fitted into an all-things-considered order."[10] Incompatibility of values and ways of life is necessary for a conflict to occur but not alone sufficient for pluralism. There must also be incommensurability, or incomparability, for monism to be ruled out. Raz, in his book *The Morality of Freedom*, explains what incommensurability means, and this is highly illuminating of Berlin's thought: ". . . where there is incommensurability, it is the ultimate truth. There is nothing further behind it, nor is it a sign of an imperfection. . . . Incomparability does not ensure equality of merit and demerit. It does not mean indifference. It marks the inability of reason to guide our action, not the insignificance of our choice."[11]

The 'inability of reason to guide our action' has been discussed in the previous chapter. If we cannot rationally rank values, compare and measure the goodness of ways of life, we can nevertheless reason on them thanks to *phronēsis* and make judgements of importance in situations of "rationally inarbitrable conflicts."[12] Also, pluralists do not reject the idea of ordering values: they ". . . are prepared to acknowledge that the relationships among values may be structured in specific ways,"[13] which result in partial orderings. Pluralists insist that these rankings "are reasonable only in particular situations because they depend on the variable and individual conceptions of a good life."[14] Thus, these reasonable partial rankings do not fit into a rational order governed by one single encompassing and overriding value. Moreover, partial orderings of values are not different paths towards the achievement of some pre-determined goal (justice, happiness, utility, and so on). They are temporary, *ad hoc* structures based on the necessity of conflict resolution.

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[10] G. Crowder, Ibid., 294.
[11] J. Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1988), 327, 334.
[12] J. Skorupski, "Value-Pluralism," in *Pluralism and Philosophy*, ed. D. Archard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 107, 109.
[13] W. A. Galston, "Value Pluralism and Liberal Political Theory," *American Political Science Review* 93, no. 4 (December 1999): 770.

All pluralists insist on the inevitability of conflicts. It is a condition of our moral life which logically follows from the incompatibility and incommensurability of values and ways of life. Stuart Hampshire writes that "our everyday and raw experience is conflict between contrary moral requirements at every stage of almost everyone's life."[15] Bernard Williams adds that ". . . value-conflict is . . . something necessarily involved in human values, and to be taken as central by any adequate understanding of them."[16] Berlin also insists that "human goal are many, . . . , and in perpetual rivalry with one another."[17] But this is not to be taken as a moral and social pathology. On the contrary, it gives reasons for action and self-reflectiveness. Self-reflectiveness was best described by John Kekes: being reasonable, we step back "from the immediacy of the conflict in which we participate in order to reflect on what would be best not here and now but in the long run, given the values of our tradition or our conception of a good life."[18] For this to take place, two requisites are absolutely indispensable: tolerance of the disputant's difference and a good deal of practical reason to reflect on long-term consequences rather than on immediate results. It is by reflection also that we can make moral judgements when analysing ideologies, human behaviour and actions, to see if they fit the cultural and historical narrative of the time and place.

As for the question of choice, which is central in pluralism, it also logically follows from incompatibility and incommensurability. However, pluralists disagree amongst themselves about its theoretical implications and whether or not it constitutes a supporting argument towards liberalism. In the next section, I will present the centrality of the action of

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[14] J. Kekes, Ibid., 23.
[15] S. Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 151.
[16] B. Williams, "Conflict of Values," in *The Idea of Freedom: Essays in Honour of Isaiah Berlin*, Ibid., 222.
[17] "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *FE*, 131.
[18] J. Kekes, Ibid., 25.

choosing, its connection with liberalism and Berlin's defence of negative liberty, which is, in short, "the goal of the fox."[19]

III.

Choice introduces this sought-after indeterminacy in human affairs. Not only does it support Berlin's argument against the validity of determinism, it also supports his defence of negative freedom. Indeed, in order to be free individuals must have options available to them, or , to use a familiar metaphor, individuals must have open doors before them.

These options must satisfy two conditions: they must differ and be morally valuable to the individual.[20] The diversity of options is imperative; the pursuit of incompatible and incommensurable values asserts the existence of value pluralism. The moral content of the options available is influenced by the context and time. And the community one belongs to will give meaning to one's choice. Indeed, what is morally blame- or praiseworthy will differ from one society or from one age to another, so choice will not be context-free or independent. However, man, being a free moral agent endowed with free will, will not let the context dictate his choices because there is a private area within which neither the state nor any other individual is allowed to intervene much less coerce:

> The defence of liberty consists in the 'negative' goal of warding off interference. To threaten a man with persecution unless he submits to a life in which he exercises no choices of his goals; to block before him every door but one, no matter how noble the prospect upon which it opens, or how benevolent the motives of those who arrange this, is to sin against the truth that he is a man, a being with a life of his own to live.[21]

[19] P. Gay, "Freud and Freedom: On a Fox in Hedgehog's Clothing," in *The Idea of Freedom: Essays in Honour of Isaiah Berlin*, Ibid., 56.
[20] J. Raz, Ibid., 398.
[21] "From Hope and Fear Set Free," in *CC*, 191.

Berlin seems to make a direct connection between the inevitability of choice and the value of freedom. Indeed, he claims that once people realise that choice amongst incomparable and incommensurable values and ways of life is inescapable, they will place ". . . immense value upon the freedom to choose,"[22] which is best promoted by liberal institutions.

This poses a major problem to Crowder. His critique takes the following form: "to recognise the plurality of values is to have a reason to value X, which is a good best advanced by the institutions of liberalism."[23] The six values he explores are, respectively, tolerance, choice, humaneness and humanity, diversity, truth and truthfulness, and personal autonomy. In each case, he argues that it is unreasonable to claim that what pluralism values, say tolerance, is also best promoted by liberal institutions, because

> . . . the mere fact that values are 'plural', . . . , tells us nothing about which of the vast range . . . are the values we ought to choose for ourselves and our social institutions. Pluralism tells us that we must choose but not what to choose. . . . . We have no reason, as pluralists, not to prefer order and hierarchy to liberty and equality.[24]

But considering Berlin's concern with 'what fits where' I agree with Galston who believes that "a strong case can be made that pluralism is the most nearly adequate account of the moral universe we happen to inhabit, and liberal democracy is the most nearly successful effort to cope decently with the vicissitudes of political life."[25] In the same vein, Galipeau adds:

> There are many ways to live a good life, no one standard can appraise all goods, and no society can unite all good ways of life. If this model is true – and Berlin believes that there is sufficient empirical cause to accept it, . . . – then it offers strong support for an open political order; in fact, support for a liberal polity.[26]

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[22] "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *FE*, 168.
[23] Ibid.
[24] G. Crowder, Ibid., 303.
[25] W. A. Galston, Ibid., 769.
[26] C. J. Galipeau, Ibid., 108.

This is exactly what Crowder disputes. But it is from a historical and political reality that we can infer a connection between pluralism and liberalism, not at the abstract level at which he chooses to attack that connection. Williams, taking Berlin's historicist standpoint, says that this ". . . intense consciousness of the plurality of values and of their conflict is itself a historical phenomenon, a feature of some ages (for instance, ours) rather than others."[27] And so "the greater the extent to which a society tends to be single-valued, the more genuine values it neglects or suppresses."[28] This is how we can make a connection between pluralism and liberalism, because if there is a plurality of values, which are all valid in different ways, we must prefer the political arrangement which offers the widest range of options to choose from. For if it is not possible to pursue all valid values within a same coherent way of life, we can choose from all possible and meaningful options so as to create our own conception of the good to live a decent and fulfilling life.

It is in the section entitled 'The One and the Many' at the end of 'Two Concepts of Liberty' that Berlin strongly links value pluralism with negative liberty and liberalism. For Berlin, pluralism is a fact of our moral condition, our human knowledge and experience.[29] From this observation, it follows that liberty - negative liberty - must hold a fundamental place in moral life, for without liberty it is impossible to choose between goods. He believes that liberalism is better suited to ordinary experience than any other ideology because it is the more tolerant of differences. Earlier in life Berlin used to think that pluralism entails liberalism.[30] This was the Berlin who wrote 'The Originality of Machiavelli' and parts of 'Two Concepts of Liberty'. But in later works, he came to realise that

> Pluralism and liberalism are not the same or even overlapping concepts. There are
> liberal theories which are not pluralistic. I believe in both liberalism and pluralism,

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[27] B. Williams, "Introduction," in *CC*, xviii.
[28] Ibid., xix.
[29] "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *FE*, 168.
[30] M. Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (London: Viking, 1998), 286.

but they are not logically connected. Pluralism entails that, since it is possible that no final answer can be given to moral and political questions, or indeed any questions about value, and . . . that some answers that people give, and are entitled to give, are not compatible with each other, room must be made for a life in which some values may turn out to be incompatible, so that if destructive conflict is to be avoided compromises have to be effected, and a minimum degree of toleration, . . . , becomes indispensable.[31]

In other words, liberalism is ". . . an ideological position distinct from any support for pluralism as a moral and political philosophy."[32] But it is still possible to argue that liberal institutions best promote the pluralism of values and ways of life. To fill the gap in Berlin's political thought, Galipeau suggests that we look at it as working on two levels: "the first deals with universal statements about human nature, human interests, and the foundations of morality."[33] This is the level at which we find moral pluralism. The second level "deals with histories, conventions, practices, and mores."[34] This is the level at which a defence of liberalism is possible, since historically speaking, our human ordinary experience tells us that it is the nearly most successful under our conditions. In short, "Berlin offers a fitting way to do political theory."[35]

To reiterate, pluralism does not entail liberalism and liberalism cannot be logically or theoretically derived from moral pluralism, but it is possible to believe in and support both if our ordinary human experience tells us that liberalism is the political arrangement within which the minimum "measure of negative liberty"[36] required to live decent lives in society — i.e. reflect about one's own ends, make choices, pursue personal goals — is best protected.

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[31] R. Jahanbegloo, *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1991), 44. See also I. Berlin and B. Williams, "Pluralism and Liberalism: A Reply," *Political Studies* 42 (1994): 306-9.
[32] C. Blattberg, *From Pluralist to Patriotic Politics: Putting Practice First* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 41.
[33] C. J. Galipeau, Ibid., 113.
[34] Ibid.

But John Gray holds that if we are to take pluralism seriously, we must recognise that liberalism is one form of political arrangement among many others, equally valid, forms of political associations.[37] A counter-argument is that Berlin's historicist/romantic account is more solid than any metaphysical theory about what is the best political organisation to fit our moral condition. Indeed, history is man-made; if our conditions change, the concepts and categories in terms of which we think are bound to change too, and so must our forms of political arrangement. Thus the question remains open to revision. Berlin is a value-pluralist liberal but he "refuses to radicalize value pluralism so as to put negative liberty on all fours with other human goods."[38]

> Because values can be both incompatible, and upon certain occasions, incommensurable, it follows for Berlin that political society ought to value liberty above all else it values. He believes that liberal society is the political arrangement best suited to the fact that human beings disagree about ends, and that there are many plausibly good ends that they can choose to serve.[39]

Pluralism is a truth-claim about our present moral condition for human beings are faced with incommensurable values, they form their conception of the good, they choose what they deem is a good life, they shape their identities, and are self-reflective.

It is also a circular process that begins with negative freedom and culminates with a denial of authoritarianism: the value of negative freedom is primordial as a condition for making choice among goods and evils that are rationally incomparable. There are even more painful choices: indeed, "the most difficult political choices are not between good and bad but between good and good."[40] Pluralism supports negative liberty for individuals to negotiate their way among incommensurable values. It also supports liberalism in that if

[35] C. J. Galipeau in the abstract of "Isaiah Berlin's Liberalism: An Exposition and Defense" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1990).
[36] "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *FE*, 171.
[37] J. Gray, *Berlin* (London: Fontana Press, 1995), 146.
[38] W. A. Galston, Ibid., 773.
[39] M. Ignatieff, "Understanding Fascism?" in *Isaiah Berlin: A Celebration*, eds. E. and A. Margalit, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1991), 139.

no rational and definite choice can be made among goods and evils or even between two goods, then no political authority has any valid and legitimate reason to impose any particular conception on its citizens. The last strand of Berlin's thought is denial of authoritarianism because it rules out negative freedom. This is what distinguishes Berlin's liberalism from other liberal theories of our time; the acknowledgement of a multiplicity of rivalrous goods that *cannot* and *must not* be reconciled so as to preserve individual negative freedom. Value pluralism is superior to other monist liberal theories (neutralism and libertarianism) because it fits our present knowledge of what men and women are, our historical development and the transformation in western self-consciousness from uniformity to diversity.

This transformation, or "mutation in western thought and feeling,"[41] occurred thanks to the romantic movement which led to a redefinition of two liberal themes, rationality and tolerance. In conclusion of this chapter I want to expand on the limits of these two themes.

IV.

As I have explained in the previous chapter and the above discussion, when facing incomparable and incommensurable ways of life, rationality can fail in guiding our choices and actions. We must then resort to our practical intelligence to reason about our values, which will result in their partial ordering. Practical reason also permits a reflection on what would be the best compromise given our circumstances. This communication with others is feasible thanks to a Herderian conception of language. Moreover, there are two conditions for communication to take place. First, different and unique groups and

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[40] W. A. Galston, Ibid., 771.
[41] "Nationalism: Past Neglect and Present Power," in *AC*, 333.

individuals must recognise the validity of incomparable and incommensurable values and ways of life; second, they must tolerate each other. This romantic redefinition of tolerance place "an intrinsic value" on "the concepts of liberty and human rights as they are discussed today."[42]

But Eric Mack does not believe in such communication. After alleging that Berlin relativises intellectual norms and all of the positive teachings of the Enlightenment, he claims that it

> . . . renders impossible all rational dialogue or understanding across communities of thought and feeling. If norms of agreement and evidence are themselves relative to national, cultural, racial, or gender enclaves, then any attempt at rational communication across the boundaries of these enclaves manifests either supreme naivety or the will to domination in disguise.[43]

Berlin always had to defend his pluralism against accusations of moral relativism. It is precisely because human beings share a common core a basic values and that communication is possible between them that we can make comparative moral judgements:

> intercommunication between cultures in time and space is only possible because what makes men human is common to them, and acts as a bridge between them. But our values are ours and theirs are theirs. We are free to criticise the values of other cultures, to condemn them, but we cannot pretend not to understand them at all . . . .[44]

This makes the case for tolerance stronger and permits, to a certain extent, tolerance of intolerant groups, which is encouraged in liberal societies so as to keep open and as wide as possible the range of options to choose from, including the option to choose a way of life or a cultural form of life that does not place immense value on the freedom of choice.

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[42] Ibid.

[43] E. Mack, "Isaiah Berlin and the Quest for Liberal Pluralism," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (July 1993): 218.

[44] "The Pursuit of the Ideal," in *CTH*, 11.

Since options remain open, it is also possible for an individual to leave a community of cultural form which he no longer identifies to. In the same vein,

> there are some genuine goods whose instantiation in ways of life allows or even requires illusion. (For example, it is impossible for contradictory religious creed to be equally true, but many help undergird important individual and social virtues). While self-aware value pluralists cannot lead such lives, they must recognize their value. To demand that every acceptable way of life reflect a conscious awareness of value pluralism is to affirm what value pluralism denies: the existence of a universally dominant value.[45]

In other words, to be consistent with its rejection of monism, pluralism cannot impose its truth-claim about our moral universe on others. But it does not prevent us to adopt a moral attitude towards particular practices, for example female circumcision.[46] This can indeed be condemned on the ground that it violates the security of the person, and if the abolition of the practice does not cause a substantial damage to the traditional culture and can be replaced by a different rite of passage that is more respectful of the integrity of the person.

There are thus absolute limits to tolerance for Berlin:

> . . . if we meet someone who cannot see why . . . he should not destroy the world in order to relieve a pain in his little finger, or someone who genuinely sees no harm in condemning innocent men, or betraying friends, or torturing children, then we find that we cannot argue with such people, not so much because we are horrified as because we think them in some way inhuman – we call them moral idiots.[47]

This passage shows the connection between tolerance and the need for practical thinking, two liberal concepts redefined in romantic terms, and the conception of human nature Berlin deduced from his account of our moral universe, which is pluralistic. It calls for political prudence and contingency, and "a romantic sense of indeterminacy and

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[45] W. A. Galston, Ibid., 774.
[46] I owe this example to C. J. Galipeau, Ibid., 67.
[47] "European Unity and its Vicissitudes," in *CTH*, 203-4.

possibility,"[48] which leaves open an area of action, protected by negative liberty, within which is expressed "the deep and creative role various values can play in human life."[49]

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[48] N. L. Rosenblum, *Another Liberalism: Romanticism and the Reconstruction of Liberal Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1987), 135.

[49] B. Williams, "Introduction," in *CC*, xx.

CONCLUSION

I.

I have dealt in this thesis with highly porous concepts and terms. Romanticism and pluralism are not unified trends in the history of ideas and political thought. My aim was to explore Berlin's pluralism as being a romantic response to monist theories, but I also wanted to highlight the diversity in both Romanticism and pluralism.

Romanticism has taken many forms and has had an influence in many fields, beyond all that the first romantic poets could have ever imagine. In psychology, for example, where romantics became increasingly interested in the world of dreams, as opposed to Enlightenment rationalists, who tended to ignore this aspect of human psychology. Romanticism is also a very elusive notion. For this reason, some authors, such as Nancy Rosenblum, refuse to identify it with a particular period and location.[1] I chose not to follow this path because like Berlin, Schenk, and Abrams, I rather think that Romanticism is a reaction to the Enlightenment and excesses of rationalism in political thought, cultural historiography, and theory of criticism,[2] and thus can be seen as a historical and typically western phenomenon.

Pluralism is equally diverse. There are pluralists who, contrary to Berlin, defend a positive account of freedom (Joseph Raz belongs to this category). And there are those who

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[1] N. L. Rosenblum, *Another Liberalism: Romanticism and the Reconstruction of Liberal Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1987), 2.

[2] M. H. Abrams calls it a "deliberate reaction" in his preface in *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: The Norton Library, 1958), vii. And in H. G. Schenk, *The Mind of the European Romantics: An Essay in Cultural History* (London: Constable, 1966), part one is entitled 'The Revolt Against the Eighteenth Century.'

believe that pluralism undermines liberalism, or does not provide any support for it. In this thesis, I defended Berlin's standpoint and showed how a connection between pluralism and liberalism can be made, in practice if not in theory.

In order to do so, I began with Berlin's conception of history because most of his thought, although it operates at philosophical and sociological levels too, is founded on an historical and cultural account of what best fits each time and civilisation. Following this, it was logical to present a very brief and succinct history of liberalism so as to expose pluralism as a criticism of traditional liberal theory.

In the second chapter I presented a historicist/romantic model of human nature, which inherited, on the one hand, commonality and universality from the Enlightenment doctrine and, on the other, diversity, creativity, reflectiveness and indeterminacy from the romantic revolt. Equipped with such a model, I set up to defend negative liberty as being a condition for making choices, as opposed to positive liberty which, historically speaking, has been more prone to pave the way to totalitarianism.

Then I explored the romantic movement as being a revolt against the *Lumières*. It was a revolution because it forced a redefinition of the leading concepts and categories in western thought. I identified two concepts as being central to pluralism which Romanticism has transformed significantly: rationality, redefined in terms of practical reason, and the necessity of tolerance based on diversity and uniqueness.

In developing this thesis I often times implied a connection between pluralism and liberalism and in the last chapter I presented different arguments that support or undermine such a connection. My claim was that pluralism supports liberalism, not

because one is logically derived from the other or because one entails the other, but simply because our ordinary experience tells us that liberalism is the political organisation that best fits our present knowledge of human nature and moral universe as understood in pluralistic terms.

II.

Berlin's pluralism is not prescriptive. It does not offer procedures and rules on how to solve conflicts. As Rosenblum remarked, "romantic recastings of liberalism may not address immediate political issues, but they do offer a perspective from which to consider questions."[3] Moreover, Berlin's work lacks "the *esprit de système*"[4] old but also recent liberal theories are built on. Rejecting systematisation and believing in value pluralism as he does

> . . . means believing that human beings will never have solved all their problems, overcome all their difficulties, or settled all their quarrels; but that they need never lack the wits, the power, or the good will to solve the problems which at any given moment they most urgently need to solve.[5]

I find this outlook optimistic and empowering. As John Kekes remarked, the fact that

> . . . our pursuits are plural is worthy of celebration because it makes life interesting, rich, full of possibilities, and provides one of the strongest motives why we should be interested in each other. It is also of great evolutionary value, for in the struggle for survival we do not, as it were, place all our eggs in one basket. The more various our lives are, the better are our chances of being able to cope with a variety of circumstances.[6]

Berlin's contribution and relevance to modern political theory can only grow in force. The political context within which 'Two Concepts of Liberty' was published has changed significantly. Nevertheless, its content still speaks to us: the "attention has shifted from its

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[3] N. L. Rosenblum, Ibid., 189.
[4] S. Lukes, "The Singular and the Plural: On the Distinctive Liberalism of Isaiah Berlin," *Social Research* 61(1994): 694.
[5] R. G. Collingwood, *Essays in Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 193.

antitotalitarian political thrust to its underlying moral theory" presented in 'The One and the Many', the concluding section ". . . which sparked what may be called a value-pluralist movement in contemporary moral philosophy."[7] Let us not forget though that even in 1958 pluralism was not a newly emerged concept. In the first quarter of this century, before World War II, the Holocaust, Stalinism, and the Cold War, a French professor of philosophy was writing about *The Pluralist Philosphies of England and America*[8] based on a reading and interpretation of thinkers not stranger to Berlin. But what sets Isaiah Berlin apart is his original interpretation of the romantic movement and his many-faceted model of society and human nature, which is at the root of his value-pluralist liberalism and has been breeding an ever-increasing literature, including books, articles and scholarly research, in the past few decades. Only the test of time will truly tell the relevance of his work, and whether or not his target, monism, will remain in the bull's-eye for theorists who share his view of our present plural moral universe.

[6] J. Kekes, *The Morality of Pluralism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 30.

[7] W. A. Galston, "Value Pluralism and Liberal Political Theory," *American Political Science Review* 93, no. 4 (December 1999): 769.

[8] J. A. Wahl, *The Pluralist Philosophies of England and America*, trans. F. Rothwell (London: The Open Court Company, 1925).

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