

**VALUE-PLURALIST MULTICULTURALISM:
BETWEEN ECONOMIC RATIONALISM AND CULTURAL RELATIVISM**

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‘Multiculturalism’ means different things to different people. There is agreement on its general definition: public recognition of cultural differences and their effects within a society. But when it comes to explaining what purpose is properly served by multiculturalism – and consequently the precise form that multicultural policy should take – opinions are divided. There is on the one hand a more conservative view that multiculturalism should properly amount to no more than a pragmatic vehicle for integrating new migrants into the cultural mainstream (Galligan and Roberts 2004: ch. 4). Within this conservative position there are those, especially representing business interests, who see the principal purpose of immigration, and therefore of multiculturalism, as the promotion of economic growth. On this view, cultural diversity enhances the skilled labour pool, multiplies contacts for overseas trade, and expands domestic markets.¹ On the other hand, some people conceive of multiculturalism in more radical terms, as a vehicle for the rejection of dominant norms that pretend to universality but that are in reality parochially Western (Tully 1995; Parekh 2000). This radical position is, in turn, condemned by its detractors as political correctness run riot, based on a romanticising of indigenous and non-Western cultures, and implying a foolish abandonment of the standards of liberal democracy and even reason itself (Sandall 2001).

I propose a rationale for multiculturalism that is located between these conservative and radical poles. The view I shall defend is intended to avoid both the complacent acceptance of current norms (in particular, narrowly economic conceptions of well-being) and the radical relativising of all standards. The ethical

basis of my argument is the concept of ‘value pluralism’. This is the idea, associated in particular with the work of Isaiah Berlin, that there are at least some generic universal values, but that these (and other more local values) are irreducibly multiple, frequently conflicting, and sometimes ‘incommensurable’ with one another. Pluralism in the Berlinian sense thus contains elements of moral universality and diversity. It also seems, immediately, to intersect with multiculturalism. If there are many distinct human goods, then one would expect that different combinations of these would constitute many genuinely valuable ways of life that are worthy of public recognition.

However, I shall also argue that the kind of multiculturalism that is supported by Berlinian pluralism is distinctly ‘moderate’. By this I mean to identify a form of multiculturalism that is more than a mere instrument of integration, but less than a demand for cultural sovereignty. In particular, I shall argue that pluralist multiculturalism is subject to liberal principles, rather than a radical view in which liberal values represent only one legitimate cultural perspective on a moral par with others. Further, those liberal principles include a strong public commitment to the ideal of individual autonomy that will usually override toleration of individual and group practices. I thus take issue with much of the existing literature in which pluralists have touched on multiculturalism. A dominant current within that literature has identified value pluralism with cultural pluralism in a strong sense, thus suggesting a link between pluralism and unrestricted multiculturalism – unrestricted, that is, by liberalism. This tendency, I shall argue, rests on a misunderstanding of pluralism and its political implications.

My discussion is divided into three sections. First, I review the concept of value pluralism as it is found, in particular, in the work of Berlin. Second, I argue that Berlinian pluralism suggests a form of multiculturalism that is not unrestricted but subject to liberal principles. These principles include a public commitment to the ideal of individual autonomy, in contrast with alternative, toleration-based models of liberal multiculturalism. Third, I list some qualifications to the view I defend.

Berlinian pluralism

Value pluralism is a theory of morality that emphasises the necessity of hard choices among conflicting goods. As Berlin puts it, ‘the world that we encounter in ordinary experience is one in which we are faced with choices between ends equally ultimate, and claims equally absolute, the realization of some of which must inevitably involve the sacrifice of others’ (Berlin 2002: 213-214).² Some goods are universal – that is, they contribute to the good life for any human being. As to the content of these universals, different pluralists give different accounts, although all agree that the universal goods must be highly generic. Berlin includes liberty, equality and courage in this category; Martha Nussbaum and John Kekes provide more extensive and systematic lists (Berlin 1990: 12; Jahanbegloo 1992: 37; Nussbaum 2000b: 78-80; Kekes 1993: 39-42). Whatever the precise content of the universals, however, the more distinctive pluralist claim is that these and other goods are likely to come into conflict with one another, so that we must often choose between them. Liberty, for example, can sometimes be promoted only at the expense of equality. Further, and most distinctively of all, pluralists stress that these choices are sometimes difficult, because the values concerned may be ‘incommensurable’ with one another. That is, fundamental goods possess their own ‘voice’ or weight or logic, such that they cannot

be made subject to a common measure or ranked in a single hierarchy that applies in every case. For example, when liberty and equality come into conflict in particular cases, there is no single formula that will resolve all such collisions. Choices in such cases may be hard – both in the sense that they will inevitably involve real and uncompensated loss, and in the sense that they must be made without the guidance of any single, universally authoritative decision procedure.

In rejecting the authority of a single formula, value pluralism sets itself in opposition to moral ‘monism’, which is precisely the idea that a single rule or principle or ideal will answer all ethical questions. According to Berlin, moral monism (and monism more generally) is the dominant stream, the ‘perennial philosophy’, of the Western tradition of thought (Berlin 2000a: 5-7). Its manifestations include Plato’s Form of the Good, Aristotle’s ideal of the contemplative life, Hegel’s notion of the rational state at the end of history, and Marx’s goal of the emancipation of the proletariat. Some of these names suggest what it is that Berlin most fears in the monist outlook, namely its potential for underwriting utopian political ideals that turn into authoritarian political nightmares. The single correct ethical formula suggests a single true way of life, hence a single legitimate political regime dedicated to enforcing that way of life and suppressing all alternatives.

Some pluralists would say that monism also harbours dangers that are more mundane than those of totalitarianism, but perhaps more pervasive in the twenty-first century. Examples include utilitarianism and cost-benefit analysis, the language of contemporary public policy (Nussbaum 2000a; Richardson 2000). Along similar

lines another critical target for pluralists is what is known in Australia as ‘economic rationalism’ – the assumption that economic prosperity and efficiency (usually national) is the sole or overriding criterion for any question of public policy.

Pluralists will allow that economic efficiency is a genuinely important value, but they will add that this should not blind us to the claims of other genuine goods, such as justice in distribution, equality of respect, and a sense of community. As Michael Walzer writes, ‘money is insidious, and market relations [tend to] transform every social good into a commodity’ (Walzer 1983: 119-20). Pluralism, then, sets its face against one of the most powerful social tendencies of our time, the domination of public policy by the values of the market.

However, it is not only the narrowness of monism that pluralism opposes. At the opposite extreme, pluralists also reject another powerful current in contemporary thought and politics, namely the ‘anything goes’ mentality promoted by various forms of relativism, of which cultural relativism is perhaps the most influential. Cultural relativism is essentially the view that all cultures are morally equal, that each possesses its own sovereign and unassailable perspective on right and wrong. Berlin sometimes came close to such a position, but his more considered view was that pluralism and relativism are distinct and opposed.³ For relativists, cultures are morally (and perhaps cognitively) incommensurable, each with its own incomparable ethical perspective. For Berlin, it is values that are incommensurable, not cultures.

Cultures cannot be wholly incommensurable on Berlin’s view, because if they were we would have no understanding of other cultures or periods. We would be imprisoned within the ‘impenetrable bubble’ of our own cultural mindset (Berlin

1990: 11). But, for Berlin, we are capable of such intercultural or transhistorical understanding, however partial, and what makes this possible is a common 'human horizon' of moral experience (Berlin 1990: 11, 80). Within the human horizon different cultures pursue many different goods, but these are often divergent interpretations of fundamental values that are common to all human societies. Cultures therefore overlap on the generic goods of universal experience, and if that is so then they cannot be wholly incommensurable. If they are not wholly incommensurable, then they are not morally sovereign, since there are common standards according to which one can understand and appreciate the practices of other peoples. The same common standards also make it possible – although Berlin does not emphasise this corollary – to judge those practices critically. Aztec human sacrifice may express the same valuing of life and regeneration accepted by all cultures, but it does so in a way that is less defensible than alternative expressions of the same fundamental value.

Pluralism is therefore distinguished from cultural relativism by its acceptance of universals and, by implication, its rejection of 'culture' as a decisive ground of moral authority. In general, the emphasis in value pluralism is on the plurality and incommensurability of values rather than cultures. But the incommensurability of values might seem to leave pluralists with a problem not unlike that raised by relativism. When incommensurables collide, why should we privilege one set of values rather than another? For example, how can liberals like Berlin justify their commitment to the values distinctive of liberalism?

There are three main responses to this problem in the work of Berlin and other pluralists. First, pluralists have sometimes embraced a ‘subjectivist’ view, in which choices among conflicting incommensurables must be ultimately non-rational, or unguided by any reason that is decisive over others (Berlin 1979: 74; 1997: 320; Gray 1993: 291, 295; 1995a: 61; 1995b: 69-70). When we have to choose among incommensurables, we just ‘plump’ for one or another according to personal preference. If this were true then neither liberalism nor any other political position would be rationally justifiable under pluralism. But the problem with this subjectivist view is that it fails to account for what seems to be a feature of our moral experience, namely that, even if deeply plural values cannot be ranked or commensurated in the abstract, we do seem capable of ranking them, for good reason, in particular cases. For example, equality may not outrank liberty in the abstract, or in every case, but there may be good reason to sacrifice a degree of liberty for taxpayers in exchange for greater equality for those unable to afford housing, health or education. Consequently, most pluralists have now distanced themselves from the subjectivist view of pluralist choice (Berlin and Williams 1994; Gray 1995a: 154-5, 2000a: 36).

This suggests a second, ‘contextualist’, view of choice under pluralism: reasoned choice among incommensurable values is possible within a particular context. But although this view amounts to an improvement on the crude subjectivism of the first position, it still comes close to the cultural relativism that Berlin and other pluralists are supposed to reject. What sort of context should we look to for guidance? One obvious candidate is cultural context, and indeed Berlin sometimes speaks in just those terms, referring to the possibility of resolving hard choices by appeal to ‘the general pattern of life in which we believe’ (Berlin 2002:

47), or ‘the forms of life of the society to which one belongs’ (Berlin 1990: 18; 1997: 15). In these passages cultural convention seems to be authoritative.

Berlin’s texts contain a third response to the problem of pluralist choice, and this is the possibility that interests me most. This may be called the ‘universalist’ interpretation, because it appeals beyond particular contexts to principles of universal scope. These universal principles Berlin finds implicit in the concept of pluralism itself. His main argument along these lines turns on the idea and value of choice. If pluralism is true, then ‘the necessity of choosing between absolute claims is then an inescapable characteristic of the human condition. This gives its value to freedom ...’ (Berlin 2002: 214). The pluralist outlook emphasizes moral plurality and conflict. On this view choice moves to centre-stage in moral experience. If we must choose, Berlin argues, we must value freedom of choice, hence by implication a liberal order based on negative liberty.

Unfortunately, this argument from choice, at least in the form in which Berlin presents it, contains a logical gap (Crowder 1994: 297-9; 2002a: 81-2; Gray 1995a: 160-1). To say that choice is unavoidable is not to say that choice, or freedom of choice, is desirable. Consistently with the fact that hard choices are often necessary, someone might respond that we should therefore avoid them as far as possible, perhaps passing the burden of making them to an authoritarian leader. The necessity of moral choice alone is compatible with authoritarian as well as with liberal politics.

It does not follow, however, that Berlin’s argument from choice should be rejected entirely – shortly I shall argue that it can be resuscitated and improved. For

the present, I note that the argument is important because it hints at the idea that the concept of pluralism itself might generate principles to frame and guide our choices among conflicting incommensurables. Such principles would cut across the claims of specific cultures, and qualify or condition the kind of multiculturalism that is acceptable from a pluralist point of view.

From pluralism to liberal multiculturalism

How does Berlinian pluralism bear on multiculturalism? My answer is that pluralism is supportive of multiculturalism in a moderate form – that is, a form that is neither narrowly conservative nor radically relativist. First, pluralist multiculturalism cannot be merely the conservative instrument of a monist outlook like economic rationalism. The multiculturalism commended from a pluralist point of view must be more than just a device for integrating new migrants into the workforce the better to maximise the overriding goal of economic efficiency. Rather, pluralism points to cultural diversity as possessing an intrinsic value linked to the many intrinsic goods that are likely to be promoted in a multicultural society. Under pluralism there are many legitimate human goods, and these can be legitimately combined in many different ways. Pluralism implies, therefore, that there are likely to be many valid cultures and cultural practices within a single political society. However, a second dimension of pluralist moderation places limits on the range of this legitimate cultural diversity. Pluralist multiculturalism values and promotes a substantial range of goods, but not all cultures equally and regardless of content. Rather, it values and promotes a range of cultures that is subject to, or contained within, the basic principles of liberalism.

This second point calls for more attention than the first, because it requires me to take issue with something of an orthodoxy among pluralist writers. The basic assumption in much of the literature is that Berlinian pluralism is virtually synonymous with radical cultural pluralism. Pluralist writers have tended to assume that the incommensurability of values is equivalent to the incommensurability of cultures, with the consequence that all cultures are, in effect, moral equals and cannot be subject to reasoned criticism except on their own terms. In other words, the tendency has been, in effect, to equate value pluralism with cultural relativism.

This tendency has been especially pronounced in the highly influential writings of John Gray, but is present in other pluralist thinkers too. For Gray, pluralism implies ‘an irreducible diversity of worthwhile forms of life whose goodness is not commensurable by any universal standard’ (Gray 1995a: 143). Consequently, liberalism is merely the political voice of one form of life among others, with no valid claim to superiority. Other pluralists, although allowing more substantial conceptions of universal standards than Gray does, similarly stress the moral authority of cultures and the limits of liberalism. Bhikhu Parekh, for example, holds that the legitimate cultural diversity implied by pluralism cannot be contained by liberalism. A fair framework for a multicultural society can be arrived at only through ‘an institutionalised dialogue’ to which the liberal outlook is only one party among others (Parekh 2000: 14). William Galston argues that liberalism is universally valid as a political container for multiculturalism, but adds that this must be a form of liberalism that tolerates non-liberal cultures and practices within its jurisdiction (Galston 2002).

These views are mistaken because they tend to elide the distinction between pluralism and cultural relativism. To see cultures as indefeasible sources of value is to assume that they are morally incommensurable. But, as I have already argued, Berlinian pluralism refers primarily to the plurality and incommensurability of values or goods, not of whole cultures. This is not to say that pluralism does not imply valid cultural diversity at all. On the contrary, pluralism does imply valid cultural diversity, within a certain range, since if goods are plural and incommensurable, then (as Berlin suggested and Gray, Parekh and Galston, for example, accept) there are many legitimate ways of ranking or combining them as general ideals or norms. To that extent different rankings or combinations of goods yield different legitimate cultural patterns. The point I want to stress, however, is that this legitimate cultural diversity should be qualified by attention to the implications of *value* diversity.

What are those implications? The key line of thought here is one I raised earlier: the possibility that the concept of pluralism itself implies normative principles that apply across cultures. In that earlier discussion I rejected the particular argument proposed by Berlin, but I also promised to make some suggestions of my own. The principles I propose can be summarised under three main headings: value diversity, reasonable disagreement, and personal autonomy. My claim is that these are norms that are implicit in the concept of pluralism, that they qualify or condition the kind of multiculturalism that pluralism endorses, and that they do so in a broadly liberal direction.⁴

First, value pluralism implies a norm of value diversity. The general idea is sketched by Bernard Williams: ‘if there are many and competing values, then the

greater the extent to which a society tends to be single-valued, the more genuine values it neglects or suppresses. More, to this extent, must mean better' (Williams 1978: xvii). Pluralism implies respect not simply for cultural diversity, but for cultural patterns that are themselves internally diverse. That imperative cuts across respect for cultures, which may themselves promote the plurality and diversity of human goods to varying degrees. The principle of value diversity gives pluralists critical leverage against existing cultures; it does not underwrite their authority.

This diversity argument is clearly in need of refinement and qualification. Pluralist diversity cannot simply be a matter of 'more values rather than fewer' in the sense of maximising units of value, since it is part of the core pluralist message that value does not come in measurable units. Further, pluralists know that to pursue some values, or packages of value, is necessarily to forego others – to seek a life of adventurous travel, for example, is unavoidably to miss out on the benefits of home and hearth. The diversity sought by pluralists raises questions not only of multiplicity but also of coherence among values (Crowder 2002a: 138-45). Still, it is clear enough that some societies can be richer than others in value diversity. This is true of liberal democracies in comparison with, say, communist societies of the Soviet era, with their de facto prohibitions on freedom of speech and religion.

A second principle implicit in the concept of pluralism, providing a criterion by which pluralists can question the authority of cultures, is summed up in Charles Larmore's phrase 'reasonable disagreement' (Larmore 1996: 122). This refers to the fact of widespread divergence among human beings concerning the content of the good life. Reasonable disagreement may be especially evident in modern societies,

but on the pluralist view the problem is rooted in the moral experience of humanity at large: it is a permanent possibility in all human societies because of the deep structure of human value. Conceptions of the good life are essentially generalised rankings of values, including incommensurable values. Although pluralists should not accept that all such conceptions are automatically on a moral par, nevertheless the wide range of genuine human goods implies a wide range of legitimate permutations of those goods, that is, of reasonable rankings. Many such rankings will be reasonable, and concerning these there is consequently room for people to disagree on reasonable grounds. Where disagreements are reasonable in this sense they are likely to be permanent in the absence of overwhelming force. A realistic and prudent form of politics will accept and accommodate reasonable disagreement rather than trying to overcome it. Liberalism, its defenders may fairly claim, is just such a realistic and prudent political form. Here again, pluralists have reason to contain their multiculturalism within liberal bounds.

A third pluralist principle singles out the cross-cultural value of personal autonomy. If pluralism is true, then we are unavoidably faced with hard choices when incommensurable goods come into conflict. To choose *well* among conflicting incommensurables – that is, to choose for good reason – is to choose autonomously. This, in turn, points to a liberal framework for multiculturalism – indeed, to a particular kind of liberal framework, based on the promotion of personal autonomy as a goal of public policy. In the terminology developed by William Galston, this is liberalism in its ‘Enlightenment’ form, in contrast with a ‘Reformation’ liberalism based on toleration, including toleration of non-liberal practices (Galston 2002: ch. 2). In this debate, Galston supports Reformation liberalism, arguing that Enlightenment

liberalism is too sectarian: modern societies include many conservative or tradition-based groups that do not accept personal autonomy as an ideal. In his recent work, Galston seeks to ground his position in value pluralism. But I believe that pluralism points to liberalism in its Enlightenment rather than Reformation version.⁵ One way of supporting that claim is to revive Berlin's argument from choice. That argument failed in its attempt to pass directly from the necessity of choice under pluralism to the valuing of choice under liberalism. But the argument can be restated to emphasise not merely the inescapability of hard choices but the desirability of an autonomous response to those choices.

Why does choosing well among incommensurables require personal autonomy? First, it requires rational choice in the sense of practical reasoning. Arbitrary or non-rational choice is not an adequate response from a pluralist point of view, because it does not take the plurality of values seriously. By this I mean that pluralists must acknowledge the full range of human goods as intrinsically valuable, and worthy of implementation so far as possible. We cannot, of course, actually pursue all such goods simultaneously, and hard choices will have to be made. But in choosing which goods to pursue, pluralists cannot be merely indifferent to, or careless about, any genuine good. Consequently, they must think as carefully as they can about which goods they should pursue, and in which combinations. Taking the plurality of goods seriously means organising one's choices, so far as possible, in a rational way. It involves, that is, a commitment to practical reasoning (Nussbaum 2000b: 82; Kekes 1993: 97-8).

Second, practical reasoning under pluralism involves autonomous judgement – that is, judgement made for reasons that are one’s own in a strong sense. For one thing, conflicts among incommensurable goods cannot be decided for good reason merely by the mechanical application of a standard monist rule. Pluralists cannot rely on any ready-made monist procedure, such as utilitarianism, to resolve deep moral conflicts. Rather, they must go behind such perspectives to weigh for themselves the values those procedures embody. Nor can pluralists answer such questions merely by appealing to the authority of local tradition, since that would ignore the prevalence of reasonable disagreement.

Pluralism, in short, imposes on us choices that are demanding to a degree such that they can be made rationally only by autonomous agents. If pluralism is true, then the best lives will be characterised by personal autonomy. But one further step is required to complete the pluralist case for Enlightenment liberalism. Even if we accept that the best lives under pluralism are autonomous, it may still be asked why personal autonomy should be promoted as a goal of public policy. The answer lies in contemplating the alternatives. Without positive state intervention to promote its conditions, personal autonomy will be under threat from two main sources. The first is the market. A genuinely autonomous life requires material and other resources – income, education, health care, for example. The market is a powerful generator of these goods, but its distribution of them, unless corrected by state action, tends to be uneven and morally arbitrary (Rawls 1971; Dworkin 2000). Second, cultural traditions, as Galston observes, are not always (indeed they are relatively seldom) strongly supportive of individual autonomy. Like economic *laissez-faire*, cultural *laissez-faire* can allow people to remain imprisoned within patterns of life that are not

of their own making, and that they would revise or repudiate if they could. Individual autonomy needs cultural as well as economic conditions in order to flourish, and these are no more likely to emerge automatically than are material resources. Their provision needs to be a goal of state policy.

I conclude, then, that pluralist multiculturalism will be framed by Enlightenment liberal principles that include a public commitment to the facilitation of personal autonomy among all citizens. This conclusion is similar to that reached by Will Kymlicka, who supports special rights for cultural minorities, but subject to the prior value of individual autonomy (Kymlicka 1989, 1995, 2001, 2002). For Kymlicka, the chief value of cultural membership is that it provides a context within which people can make sense of their life choices – that is, cultures are valuable not intrinsically but instrumentally to the good of individual choice. Consequently, there is a limit to the extent to which cultures should be protected: there should be no in-principle protection for those practices that actually undermine individual autonomy. Indeed, Kymlicka sees his argument as justifying the liberalisation of non-liberal cultures. Value pluralists, I suggest, should occupy a similar position, although they will arrive at it, I have argued, by way of a number of different considerations in addition to the value of choice.

3. Some qualifications

Value pluralists should support a moderate form of multiculturalism, in which the claims of cultures are subject to liberal principles – in particular, respect for the value of personal autonomy. However, pluralists will also place several qualifications on this conclusion.

First, liberalisation of cultures cannot be understood by pluralists to mean the promotion of personal autonomy as an *absolute* or overriding goal. Under pluralism no value is absolute or overriding. There will be cases where the good of individual autonomy ought to yield to other important considerations, such as social unity or equality. But this does not prevent liberal pluralists from commending personal autonomy in general terms that allow exceptions. As Galston argues, pluralism is compatible with strong commitments in the form of presumptions that can be rebutted in particular circumstances (Galston 2002: 69-78). Galston offers the notion of ‘rights’ as an example. Similarly, the commitment to personal autonomy can be presented as just such a rebuttable presumption.

Second, individual autonomy need not be conceived as the central feature of a way of life, a substantial good in conflict with the goods distinctive of traditional cultures. In this connection Harry Brighouse draws a useful distinction between two kinds of liberal education: ‘autonomy-*promoting*’ and ‘autonomy-*facilitating*’ (Brighouse 1998: 733-4; 2000: chs 4 and 5). Unlike autonomy-promoting education, autonomy-facilitating education ‘does not try to *ensure* that students employ autonomy in their lives, any more than Latin classes are aimed at ensuring that students employ Latin in their lives. Rather it aims to enable them to live autonomously should they wish to’ (Brighouse 1998: 734). That is, the Enlightenment-liberal state need only facilitate autonomy, not promote it. Such a state need only ensure, principally through the education system, that its citizens have the capacity to live autonomously; it need not demand that its citizens’ lives be comprehensively autonomous in content, like the energetically innovative lives

celebrated by J. S. Mill (1974: ch. 3). People may legitimately use their capacity for autonomy to opt for tradition-based ways of life in which individual self-direction is not highly valued, as in many religious traditions. I concede that even in this minimal sense, the introduction of the capacity for autonomous judgement can bring changes to a traditional society; conversely, the capacity for autonomy can atrophy if it is not exercised (Reich 2002: 102-3). My point is, however, that the relation between traditional practices and liberal facilitation of people's capacity for autonomy need not be understood as a simple relation of mutual exclusion. Rather, we should recognise the possibility that personal autonomy and adherence to group norms may be combined in varying degrees and ways, depending on the particular circumstances.

Third, state liberalisation of non-liberal cultures need not be coercive or intrusive, since there is room for prudence and restraint in determining the means by which such an end is pursued (Kymlicka 1995: 167-71). This caveat is reinforced by the pluralist outlook, which draws attention to the typically high costs, in terms of incommensurable goods foregone, of coercive action (Crowder 2002a: 172-4).

Finally, liberalising policies can include a role for intercultural dialogue. Parekh is one among several recent writers who have argued that a genuinely multicultural society must be organised on terms acceptable to all its members, and that consequently minority cultures must have an active role in deciding those terms (see also Shachar 2001; Benhabib 2002; Ivison 2002). Pluralists should be sympathetic to this view. They will recognise that not all situations of conflict among incommensurable considerations yield decisive reasons for action, that some cases

can be resolved only through compromise, and that compromise is best achieved through deliberative negotiation (Bellamy 1999).

Indeed, pluralism has its own contribution to make to discussions of multicultural dialogue. As Parekh points out, dialogue needs structure if it is to be useful (Parekh 2000: 267). Plausible candidates for structuring multicultural dialogue include the kind of dispositions of character, or 'virtues', that are typical of the pluralist outlook (Crowder 2002a: ch. 8). First, pluralists must possess a degree of generosity or open-mindedness in order genuinely to appreciate the full range of human values and legitimate ways of life. Second, they should approach their task with what Berlin called 'a sense of reality', or feeling for the real costs of moral and political decisions, conditioned in particular by the implications of incommensurability (Berlin 1978: 111, 207). Third, pluralists' rejection of neat abstract rules and insistence on the particularity of moral solutions should make them attentive to the relevant details of the choice situation, including the claims and circumstances of those people affected by the choice (Nussbaum 1992: 101). Finally, in the absence of authoritative rules or traditions, pluralists need to be flexible in tailoring their judgement closely to the situation to which they attend. These dispositions are similar to the conditions for fair deliberation listed by deliberative democrats like Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson (1996: cp. Crowder 2002a: 253-4).

What of the scope or limits of dialogue on the pluralist view? Negotiation within the framework of Enlightenment liberalism is not a problem, but what happens when parties to the dialogue want to challenge the framework itself? If the challenge

takes the form of reinterpretation, this too can be accommodated easily enough. If, on the other hand, a group wants to reject or seriously qualify fundamental principles like respect for individual autonomy, that is another matter. On the whole, pluralists should be prepared to resist such moves. Yet even here, they need not adopt a position of rigid resistance regardless of context. For one thing, flexibility and attention to context are among the pluralist virtues. And again, pluralists will see even the strongest principles as presumptions rather than rules that apply under all circumstances. It follows that pluralists cannot entirely curtail the reach of dialogue, even when it affects their own dearest principles. Nevertheless, they may fairly claim that presumptions like that in favour of personal autonomy are extremely strong, because held for good reasons. Such norms are rebuttable in principle, but only for better reasons still.

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Notes

1. See Parkin and Hardcastle 1997: 494. These factors are emphasized by the Australian federal government in its principal policy documents on multiculturalism: Commonwealth of Australia 1999, 2003.
2. It should be conceded that Berlin's account of the truth of value pluralism, resting on our 'ordinary experience' of moral conflict, is not conclusive. Monists could reply that our perception of these conflicts is superficial and compatible with there being an

underlying monist order we have not yet understood. But this logical possibility seems hollow given that the monist order is still undiscovered after many centuries of inquiry. On the case for value pluralism in general, see Nussbaum 1986, 1992; Raz 1986; Stocker 1990; Lukes 1991; Nagel 1991; Kekes 1993; Chang 1997; MacKenzie 1999; Crowder 2002a.

3. For example, Berlin's account of pluralism in the work of Vico and Herder (Berlin 2000b) is hard to distinguish from relativism: see Momigliano 1976. But he insists on the distinction in 'Alleged Relativism in Eighteenth-Century European Thought' (in Berlin 1990), and in 'The Pursuit of the Ideal' (in Berlin 1990, 1997). For further discussion, see Crowder 2004b: chs 5-6.

4. The arguments I present here summarise a case made in greater detail in Crowder 2002a, 2002b, 2004b.

5. For a more detailed critique of Galston, see Crowder 2004a, 2004b.

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