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Candidate session number

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Examination session (May or November)

May

Year

2012

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered:

Philosophy

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay:

To what extent is Isaiah Berlin's
value pluralism a weaker version of
relativism?

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This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a grade may not be issued.

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

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Candidate session number

Achievement level

Criteria	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	2 ✓	2	2 ✓	2	
B introduction	1 ✓	2	2 ✓	2	
C investigation	4 ✓	4	4 ✓	4	
D knowledge and understanding	4 ✓	4	4 ✓	4	
E reasoned argument	4 ✓	4	4 ✓	4	
F analysis and evaluation	3 ✓	4	3 ✓	4	
G use of subject language	4 ✓	4	4 ✓	4	
H conclusion	1 ✓	2	1 ✓	2	
I formal presentation	4 ✓	4	3 ✓	4	
J abstract	2 ✓	2	2 ✓	2	
K holistic judgment	3 ✓	4	3 ✓	4	

Total out of 36 32 32

Name of examiner 1: _____ (CAPITAL letters) Examiner number: _____
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 Name of examiner 3: _____ (CAPITAL letters) Examiner number: _____

IB Cardiff use only: B: 1
 IB Cardiff use only: A: 094580 Date: 11/5/12

✓

A Fox in a Hedgehog's clothing

To what extent is Isaiah Berlin's value pluralism a weaker version of relativism?

Session: May 2012

Candidate name:

Candidate number:

I.B. Subject of Essay: Philosophy

Supervisor's Name:

Word Count: 3,989 ✓

Abstract

This essay examines the relationship between value pluralism, relativism, and monism in order to answer the question ‘To what extent is Isaiah Berlin’s value pluralism a weaker version of relativism?’ The essay’s textual focus is on Berlin’s *The Pursuit of the Ideal* and *Two Concepts of Liberty*, although other writings are considered.

Arguments supporting the notion that value pluralism is a form of relativism are considered alongside those claiming the contrary. The introduction places Berlin in historical and academic contexts and outlines his importance to twentieth century thought. It further examines the relationship between the Enlightenment and Romanticism as well as that between monism, relativism, and value pluralism. Thereafter, the essay explores the degree to which the core elements of value pluralism—incommensurability, Common Goods, and the Human Horizon—are entrenched in relativist thought. Lastly, the essay considers how Berlin’s liberalism and nationalism influence his value pluralism. The essay concludes that Berlin’s value pluralism is not a weaker form of relativism, but a distinct (albeit related) theory of ethics.

All necessary components included.

Word Count: 169

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It reflects formal division
of the essay

Introduction

Isaiah Berlin was a prominent twentieth century thinker who reintroduced the concept of value pluralism to western philosophical discourse at a time when universalist human rights were being developed, self-determination was the right of all nations, and the United States of America and the former Soviet Union competed for the greatest sphere of influence. This fostered an environment in which philosophers and citizens could debate whether or not a global value system was possible.

One of the prevalent arguments against the existence of universal values and human rights is that they are not 'universal' or 'human', but western constructs¹. Thus, the promotion of human rights as universal truths is a chimera hiding the expansion of empire, or at the very least, a process which leads to the homogenisation of the great welter of human values².

Opponents of human rights, such as anthropologist Franz Boas, urged the international community to consider a pluralist approach to morality, abandoning western standards and recognising the value of diversity³.

Interestingly, Isaiah Berlin was a pluralist who consistently supported human rights even though the aforementioned point raised by harsh critics of human rights echoes the sentiments Berlin himself expressed:

'[pluralism is] the conception that there are many different ends that men may seek and still be fully rational, fully men, capable of understanding each other and sympathising and deriving light from each other...'⁴.

¹ "Human Rights". *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford University. 2010. Web. 4 March 2012 <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights-human/>>

² O'Neill, Onora. "A Question of Trust." Reith Lectures. BBC Radio 4. 27 April 2002. Lecture.

³ "Human Rights". *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford University. 2010. Web. 4 March 2012 <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights-human/>>

⁴ Berlin, Isaiah. *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*. London: Pimlico, 2003. Print.

Acknowledging the inherent problems within relativism—a theory which may have been popular amongst anthropologists and anti-colonialists of the twentieth century, but has been on unstable philosophical grounds since Protagoras of Abdera wrote that ‘man is the measure of all things’⁵—Berlin takes the stance that truth is not universal nor relative, but plural. As a result of this plurality, some value disagreements cannot be resolved. This is a compelling notion because it calls upon us to question the extent to which two or more subjects can disagree (both/all being right) and *not* live in a relativist world. In other words, what features of pluralism distinguish it from relativism?

Focused R.Q.

This essay argues that although pluralism is related to relativism and potentially an outcome that has arisen as a result of problems within relativism, it is not a weaker version of relativism. In order to establish the scope of the essay, relativism and monism are defined and situated in philosophical context. The core elements of pluralism, namely incommensurability, Common Goods, and the Human Horizon, are then compared to relativism in order to determine how far relativism enables pluralism. Importantly, links between pluralism and monism are also considered. Following this, Berlin’s work on nationalism and liberalism is examined for the purpose of supporting the thesis that value pluralism is distinct from relativism. This thesis, that pluralism is not a weaker form of relativism, is reiterated in the conclusion.

Why is the topic significant?

Background context of relativism

⁵ “Human Rights”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford University, 2010. Web. 4 March 2012. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights-human/>>

The Hedgehog and the Fox: Understanding Value Pluralism

Isaiah Berlin is fond of comparing his brand of pluralism to foxes that, in this allegory, celebrate the ‘vast variety of experiences and objects for what they are in themselves’⁶. By extension, the fox comes to symbolise the appreciation of difference and the inclusion of the other, and is the opposite of the systemising hedgehog. The hedgehog seeks to ‘relate everything to a single vision’⁷, and in doing so validates the belief that the universe is harmonious.

The hedgehog and the fox pose a telling parallel to the concepts of monism and relativism (although Berlin prefers to consider the fox a pluralist), the former underpinning the Enlightenment age and the latter having roots in Romanticism. The Enlightenment, appropriately known as the Age of Reason, marks the shift from the prevalent view that religion is the source from which truth originates to the view that truth must be found by means of logic, reason, and empiricism. It did, however, cultivate an ‘either/or’ mentality by highlighting the indivisibility of reason. As such, many of the Enlightenment thinkers (albeit not all) hold that the ‘Truth is One’ and only error is plural⁸.

Characterised by its denial of an objective order, Romanticism was a revolt against the orthodox. Most significantly, liberty as a value was particularly emphasised. Romanticism also facilitated the move from the objective to the subjective, a transformation propelled by thinkers, including Immanuel Kant, conveying the notion that human beings do not see the world directly but through multiple categories. As such, the self, imagination, and nature are all of utmost importance and should not be deemed inferior to reason, logic, and empiricism⁹. The world can only be understood through the (always subjective) human point of view,

⁶ Crowder, George., and Henry Hardy, eds. *The One and the Many: Reading Isaiah Berlin*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2007. Print.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Berlin, Isaiah. *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*. London: Pimlico, 2003. Print.

⁹ Berlin, Isaiah. *Political Ideas in the Romantic Age*. London: Pimlico, 2007. Print.

leading to what Louis Macneice, in his poem *Snow*, described as the ‘drunkennes of things being various’¹⁰. This is a notion onto which Berlin latches. Arguing for the beauty and shere humanity in disagreement, Berlin writes that he does not want the world to be too tidy, too sterile¹¹. Using an expression coined by Kant, Berlin stresses his point by reiterating that ‘Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing was ever made.’¹² A parade of examples can be found in Berlin’s work that demonstrate the impact of Romanticism on Berlin’s theories; importantly, Berlin’s conception of nationalism stems from Romantic thought¹³.

Despite the clear contrasts between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, the former enabled the latter by laying the fertile soil from which ideas that challenged the status quo and hegemonic powers could grow. Foremost, Berlin fought against the adoption of a ‘procrustean lens’—that is, a diluted, systematic vision of humankind—as he learnt from the Romanticism that there is not *one* way, but a plurality of ways¹⁴.

As Berlin is a product of both epochs, it is important to appreciate how they shape his understanding of monism and relativism and influence his construction of pluralism. The multitude of definitions for these concepts renders it difficult to pinpoint precisely to which type Berlin is referring when he writes of pluralism, monism, and relativism. As such, the chosen definitions of relativism and monism for this essay are those which are most appropriate in the context of discussing Berlin’s work on value pluralism. ✓

Berlin uses monism and the Platonic Ideal almost interchangeably, and therefore this essay will define monism in relation to the Platonic Ideal. With the Platonic Ideal as the point of reference, strong monists believe that 1) all genuine questions have a true answer; 2) a reliable path toward true answers exists, even if the said answers or paths are currently unknown; and

¹⁰ Macneice, Louis. “Snow”. *Art of Europe*. Art of Europe. 2009. Web. 9 Feb 2012. <<http://www.artofeurope.com/macneice/mac5.htm>>

¹¹ Crowder, George., and Henry Hardy, eds. *The One and the Many: Reading Isaiah Berlin*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2007. Print.

¹² Kant, Immanuel. *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*. Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis, 1983. Print.

¹³ Berlin, Isaiah. *Political Ideas in the Romantic Age*. London: Pimlico, 2007. Print. where?

¹⁴ Ibid.

3) all true answers are compatible with one another, which in turn creates a universal synthesis¹⁵. Some critics, such as Berlin's most avid supporter, Henry Hardy, go as far as to argue that 'monism is the enemy of pluralism'¹⁶. Although the three pillars of the Platonic Ideal contrast with Berlin's brand of pluralism, to claim that pluralism is the antithesis of monism, or more dramatically, the 'enemy', is to ignore the various ways in which monistic ideas support elements of pluralism like the Common Goods and the Human Horizon.

Relativism, in direct conflict with monism, is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of differing views. Whether or not pluralism can be distinguished from relativism often depends upon the definition of relativism. As a response to charges that equate his value pluralism with relativism, Berlin inadvertently defines his version of relativism as a form of subjectivism when he writes 'I prefer coffee, you prefer champagne.'¹⁷ On a related note, Berlin argues that relativism hinders the possibility of moral communication whereas his value pluralism promotes open dialogue and open-mindedness.

Defining Berlin's brand of pluralism proves to be more difficult than judging the merit of such a theory. Essentially, Berlin's pluralism is founded upon the notion that irreducible and (often) conflicting values exist. A constellation of Commons Goods, from which values are selected, provides subjects with the option to lead fulfilling lives that may or may not be distinct to those of another subject¹⁸. There is a limit, however, to the extent to which two groups that have chosen different values can differ, with the parameters determined by the Human Horizon.

A survey of Berlin's work would suggest that his ideas regarding the origin of values derive from Romanticism; Berlin holds that values are not deduced or derived from the objective

¹⁵ Berlin, Isaiah. *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*. London: Pimlico, 2003. Print. *where?*

¹⁶ Crowder, George., and Henry Hardy, eds. *The One and the Many: Reading Isaiah Berlin*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2007. Print.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

world but are human creation.¹⁹ This belief lends itself to the defence of liberty, a value upon which Berlin constructs his arguments against monism, and against which he judges his own theory of value pluralism.

Berlin's view that values are human inventions does not equate with the belief that values are 'subjective'. Rather, Berlin insists that values are objective, even referring to his position as 'objective pluralism'²⁰. Although Berlin never clarifies his position, it is plausible that he believes the pursuit of certain values is a consequence of objective realities in human nature, meaning that justice is an objective value because particular attributes of human nature make justice right and/or good for human beings²¹. This distinction is important as it will later be used to explore the extent to which Berlin's brand of pluralism is an extension of relativism.

¹⁹ "Human Rights". *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford University, 2010. Web. 4 March 2012
<<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights-human/>>

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

The Confused Fox: Incommensurability, Common Goods, and the Human Horizon

Berlin fetishises the idea of being a fox, what he deems a proud and consistent pluralist; the fox, however, initially seems more relativist than pluralist. This can be taken as an indicator that although Berlin considers himself to be a pluralist, he is in fact a relativist. This notion is additionally supported by Berlin's confusion over incommensurability. However, Berlin's brand of pluralism is different to the quicksand that is relativism because pluralism incorporates universalistic claims to truth in the form of Common Goods and boundaries to what is acceptable human behaviour through the Human Horizon.

The relativist tang is most pronounced in Berlin's point that differing truths should be 'understood, (but) not necessarily evaluated'²². The idea that there are no objective criteria against which moral codes can be judged complements Berlin's own definition of relativism as subjectivism. A significant element of Berlin's value pluralism is that it stresses that disagreements are not necessarily, as monists would assume, the result of misunderstandings or of one party being wrong and the other right. Rather, value clashes occur because a multiplicity of values exist and when they come into conflict with one another, resolving the conflict is logically impossible because it cannot be said, a priori, that one value is always more important than another²³. In addition to some values being incompatible, they can also be incommensurable.

The notion of incommensurability refers to the lack of common measure, 'common currency', with which to compare or judge two competing values. Berlin's understanding of incommensurability is based upon empirical grounds, writing '(on) the world that we encounter in our ordinary experience...we are faced with choice between ends equally

²² Berlin, Isaiah. *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*. London: Pimlico, 2003. Print. *with*

²³ *Ibid.*

ultimate, and claims equally absolute.’²⁴ As a result of the lack of empirical grounds, there is no available procedure following which one can either confirm or reject any value.

Berlin calls attention to the difference between ‘understanding’ values and ‘evaluating’ values. Importantly, Berlin’s claim that values do not need to be evaluated because they are, in his words, ‘incommensurable’, raises the question of whether or not all understood values should be accepted. If this is the case, and all values are ‘irreducible’ and ‘incompatible’, then it is impossible to determine the validity of a value as there is no point of reference; therefore, all values are valid. Does this mean that choosing between conflicting values is subjective? If so, then incommensurability directly correlates with Berlin’s own strong definition of relativism. Though it is unclear as to whether Berlin believes in weak, moderate, or strong incommensurability, any of these three streams of incommensurability provide a definition of incommensurability that coincides with the relativist stance of ‘I prefer coffee, you prefer champagne.’²⁵ As such, the way in which Berlin deals with incommensurability erases the boundary between pluralism and relativism.²⁶

Ironically, Berlin’s pluralism depends upon axioms in the form of Common Goods, a matrix of values from which individuals and cultures can derive their own chosen values.²⁷ This nexus houses an immeasurable number of values and is thus the reason, in Berlin’s eyes, for the richness in culture, religion, political convictions, and many other essential elements of human life.

²⁴ Crowder, George., and Henry Hardy, eds. *The One and the Many: Reading Isaiah Berlin*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2007. Print.

²⁵ Berlin, Isaiah. *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*. London: Pimlico, 2003. Print. *which?*

²⁶ “Relativism”. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford University, 2010. Web. 1 March 2012
<<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/relativism/>>

²⁷ Berlin, Isaiah. *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*. London: Pimlico, 2003. Print.

In justifying the existence of Common Goods, Berlin writes that 'If we did not have any values in common...each civilisation would be enclosed in its own impenetrable bubble.'²⁸

This argument fails to explicitly identify the inherent, persisting values and from where they come. Despite his firm stance as a non-monist, Berlin uses the same mechanism (i.e. unproven universals) as monists use to provide the basis for pluralist views. Berlin's case for Common Goods is synonymous with monist claims to universal truths.

It is clear that Berlin appropriates relativism in order to make it more palatable for those who fear the infinite number of moral codes which could exist within a relativist world, as the constellation of Common Goods—uncounted and undefined—can potentially have a limitless number of such goods. The most effective and contentious way in which Berlin constructs pluralist borders in the otherwise relativist sphere is by claiming a shared Human Horizon.

The Human Horizon refers to the shared human field in which all individuals, cultures, and societies, despite the vast differences between them, exist. Within the Human Horizon, it is still possible to grasp an understanding of the other by being empathetic²⁹ to Berlin, this is because all cultures are subject to a finite number of basic human needs and although they respond in unique ways, these commonalities allow for an open dialogue. Individuals outside of the Human Horizon are associated with either 'perverseness or mental sickness or madness.'³⁰ Berlin summarises this by claiming:

²⁸ Ibid. 7.

²⁹ Crowder, George., and Henry Hardy, eds. *The One and the Many: Reading Isaiah Berlin*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2007. Print.

³⁰ Berlin, Isaiah. *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*. London: Pimlico, 2003. Print. w 7

Even he (Montesquieu) did not deny that all men wanted peace rather than war, warmth rather than cold, food rather than starvation, sexual procreation rather than celibacy...The goals of men are not all that different.³¹

The Human Horizon presents a limit to human freedom inasmuch as anything beyond the Human Horizon is deemed 'inhumane' or 'non-human'. Such ideas separate value pluralism from relativism, and provide a boundary between expressions of human freedom and expressions of human freedom that can lead to human suffering. Relativism, as defined earlier, does not include any limitation as tangible as Berlin's Human Horizon.

Berlin classifies the key points of departure from relativism to pluralism as a) the allowance of moral communication and b) the citizens' ability to empathise, i.e. existence within the Human Horizon. As with the Common Goods, Berlin relies upon the unproven existence of universal values for his justification of the Human Horizon.

On a superficial reading of Berlin, the notion of the Human Horizon—the assumption that there is a universal perspective from which all humans can see—would seem to undermine Berlin's emphasis on the plurality of truths. At a deeper level, however, it becomes clear that the notion of the Human Horizon, however monistic, distinguishes pluralism from its hunchbacked cousin, relativism.

Without the limits placed by the Human Horizon, all moral codes would be acceptable. Additionally, with no objective criteria against which to decide the worth of a particular value, attitude, or behaviour, the enforced moral codes of Nazi Germany are in theory no better or worse than those of present day India or Swaziland or New Zealand. By sign posting what is 'inhumane' or 'non-human', Berlin allows for diversity in values without conflating human freedom with human error.

³¹ Crowder, George., and Henry Hardy, eds. *The One and the Many: Reading Isaiah Berlin*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2007. Print.

Berlin acknowledges himself, however, that determining what is within and what is outside of the Human Horizon is problematic because:

A desire to dominate, to exert authority, to pursue power for its own sake – that these were forces historically at least as strong as the desire for peace, prosperity, liberty, justice, justice happiness, equality.³²

Does a shared human lens exist? The distinction between human error and human freedom, however arbitrarily drawn, is significant because it too distances pluralism from relativism. Where relativists would argue that there is no such universal point of view because each set of human eyes is subjective, pluralists would argue that there must be a limit beyond which a value can no longer be open for discussion in a moral dialogue.

Isaiah Berlin's pluralism is a weak form of relativism insofar as it is subjectivist. This is evident in Berlin's treatment of incommensurability. Berlin's brand of pluralism differs from relativism as a result of Berlin's introduction of Common Goods and the Human Horizon. The next layer of Berlin's value pluralism is more closely connected with his liberalism and nationalism. The relationship between liberalism and nationalism will be analysed with the aim of demonstrating that Berlin holds liberty above all other values, which in turn solidifies pluralism's status as a separate theory to relativism. ✓

³² Ibid.

The Importance of Choice to Pluralism: Liberalism and Nationalism

For Berlin, the importance of adopting pluralism lies not in the fact that this philosophical ideal is an alternative to other less worthy options (because in a strictly plural world, all options—including non-plural ones—would be equally valuable); rather, pluralism should be adopted because it fosters an environment in which liberty can be exercised to the greatest degree.³³ Liberty is at the core of Berlin's work inasmuch as it influences his attitude toward pluralism, relativism, and monism as well as restricts his nationalism. To expand, Berlin contrues his brand of pluralism with the purpose of situating relativism within a liberalist context. Most other types of relativism do not favour liberalism above other values or value packages such as socialism, with liberalism holding the status of a locally ranked good like any other.³⁴ Berlin, however, is a liberalist first and a relativist second, and therefore a pluralist always. In competition with this is Berlin's nationalism. The interplay between liberalism and nationalism reveals the degree to which pluralism is distinct from relativism.

Liberty is the area within which the subject—a person or a group of persons—should be left to do or be, without interference by other persons.³⁵ Berlin's view on liberty is clear when he writes that 'one of the most valuable things in human life is choice for the sake of choice, not merely choice of what is good, but choice as such.'³⁶ Significantly, this stress on choice pegs Berlin as a negative liberalist who believes in the absence of State control. This contrasts with positive liberalists who hold that liberation involves liberating subjects from their 'lower' selves, potentially through coercion.³⁷ The notion that choice is innately good, regardless of the consequence of that choice (i.e. whether it engenders positive or negative effects), is linked to the relativist stance in that 'goodness' is a construct determined by a

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ "Berlin, Isaiah", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2010. Web. 28 Feb. 2012 <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/berlin/>>

³⁶ Crowder, George., and Henry Hardy, eds. *The One and the Many: Reading Isaiah Berlin*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2007. Print.

³⁷ Berlin, Isaiah. "Two Concepts of Liberty." University of Oxford, Oxford, 31 October 1958. Lecture.

given individual or culture. Berlin's position, however, is made distinct from the relativist as he places weight upon choosing between competing values taken from the constellation of Common Goods. Additionally, Berlin's view is different from that of monists' because although the choice is between a proscribed set of options, the choice nevertheless exists. Monists are absolutist in their approach and for them, there is as much freedom of choice in ethics as in mathematics.

Following the liberal tradition, the pluralist model is understood to mean that communities, developed as a result of different values being adopted from the matrix of Common Goods, exist in isolation and follow their respective truths. This leads to a plurality of truths in the world, but not within an individual community. The multiculturalism model, therefore, would be inappropriate within this closed system universe.

An underlying trend in Berlin's writing is his reiteration that communal identity is essential to the development of the person. This idea forms the core of Berlin's nationalism, a flexible theory that states collective recognition of a group to which an individual is a member is a basic human need for that individual.³⁸ Berlin's stance is that the amalgamation of cultures and truths, and thus the dilution of prominent cultural features, within a community is an inferior system to his appropriated model of 'self-determination'. In the context of value pluralism, self-determination refers to each distinct group having the right to self-govern.³⁹ Berlin feels that each community of individuals who share the same notion of truth should have the opportunity—the choice—of living together and not having to compromise their values in order to coexist with other groups. This is because one group's values could infiltrate the sphere of autonomy of the other; even more worrying, one group could dominate another. As a Russian living outside of his motherland and a Jewish person whose mother was

³⁸ Berlin, Isaiah. *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*. London: Pimlico, 2003. Print.

³⁹ Crowder, George., and Henry Hardy, eds. *The One and the Many: Reading Isaiah Berlin*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2007. Print.

a prominent Zionist, Berlin's personal context explains why nationalism is a persisting theme in his work.⁴⁰

The first point of tension between liberalism and nationalism occurs when Berlin writes of State-enforced truths. His criticism of the former Soviet Union government's interference in the choices of individuals leads to his denial of the State's right to impose truths. Berlin's stance on State interference coincides with his arguments in *Two Concepts of Liberty* against positive liberals. However, if States do not have the right to determine truth, then the 'motley amalgam of highly diverse and quasi-autonomous communities'⁴¹ should allow a plurality of truths to exist within their individual communities. Berlin makes a superficial distinction between 'State' and 'community', and consequently indulges himself by imposing double standards upon communities more closely monitored by the government because he trusts those governments which allow more extensive civil liberties for citizens. Ironically, this conflict between Berlin's liberalism and nationalism (two systems built upon different values) facilitates the development of value pluralism. ✓

Berlin's condemning attitude toward states that limit the personal autonomy of individuals is a result of his belief that liberty is more significant than other values, and by extension, more important than nationalism. This is in contrast to relativism, which does not deem any value or approach more important than another.

The interaction between liberalism and nationalism is clearest when Berlin's personal context is considered. It is first important to know that Berlin was a prominent Zionist who contributed intellectually to the creation of the state of Israel. In both legal terms and in the mind of the western world's consciousness, Israel exists as a 'Jewish state' (though the

⁴⁰ "Berlin, Isaiah". *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2010. Web. 28 Feb. 2012. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/berlin/>>

⁴¹ Crowder, George., and Henry Hardy, eds. *The One and the Many: Reading Isaiah Berlin*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2007. Print.

accuracy of such a description is questionable) that gives all Jewish people the choice of living with and being governed by people from their own religious and/or cultural group. This is a form of nationalism, linked to Romanticism, of which Berlin approves.

Is that to mean, however, that all people who identify as 'Jewish' should migrate to Israel? Profoundly, Berlin decided not migrate to Israel once it was created in 1948, *choosing* to stay in the United Kingdom.

The key point in this context, and in all contexts according to Berlin, is that every subject should have the opportunity to choose how he or she should live, in what truths he or she believes, and how far he or she is willing to compromise his or her personal liberty for the sake of the community. This is the heart of pluralism. This is Berlin's notion of pluralism in the post-World War II world in which both monism and relativism are inappropriate. This is what distinguishes pluralism from other theories of ethics, and allows it to claim its own name rather than being considered a weak form of relativism. Liberty is the marking feature of pluralism which separates it from relativism.

Implications have been discussed

Conclusion

Isaiah Berlin's explanation of value pluralism is incoherent, sometimes to the point that it seems as if he were a monist masquerading as a pluralist or even a relativist afraid to admit his genuine stance. An analysis of Berlin's work, regardless of how much it borrows from relativism and even monism, reveals that Berlin's brand of pluralism is, however, unique. As such, using Berlin's definition of relativism as subjectivism, value pluralism is not a weaker version of relativism. The emphasis placed upon a) the limitations to what is human, and b) the importance of choice separates pluralism from relativism.

That is not to say, however, that Berlin's arguments are cogent or logical. Berlin employs unjustified universals when expounding upon his theories of Common Goods and the Human Horizon. This is problematic because these elements serve as the primary boundary between relativism and pluralism, and by failing to support these ideas, Berlin's boundary between relativism and pluralism may seem to be just another line in the sand. This flaw renders Berlin's pluralism unclear, and as such it is possible to mistake it for a weak form of relativism. ✓

Value pluralism is not relativism. The primary idea behind value pluralism is that having the liberty to choose amongst competing values is good in and of itself; universal truths do not exist and cultural truths are only important if the individual belonging to that culture chooses to ascribe them importance. That the choice exists, even if it is limited by the Human Horizon, is what allows us to be human.

It summarizes most of motives touched in the essay.

Bibliography

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Well-written analysis following
the research question since
analysis of assumptions to
implications.

A 2

B 1

C 4

D 4

E 4

F 3

G 4

H 1

I 4

J 2

K 3

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quite content agent. Partially based

on direct facts which are not equally

referred.