Species of Pluralism in Political Philosophy

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1. Introduction

'Pluralism' is a familiar name in political philosophy. From John Rawls's worries about reasonable pluralism and its implications for the legitimate institutionalization of principles of justice,1 to Isaiah Berlin's and G.A. Cohen's radical plurality of conflicting values,2 the name 'pluralism' frequently rears its head. However, though they use the same term, theorists often have different things in mind. Whereas reasonable pluralism is largely *inter*personal, i.e., it's concerned with different citizens possessing different conceptions of justice and the good; value pluralism is largely *intra*personal, i.e., it's about the structure of practical reasoning and the need to balance conflicting fundamental considerations when deciding what ought to be done, all things considered.3

In this paper, I argue that value pluralism is, or more precisely, is an important part of, the best explanation for reasonable pluralism. I claim that if the elements of practical reasoning are not reducible to one fundamental value, then it's only natural that different people will find different ways to reasonably balance them, thereby leading to different conceptions of justice and the good.4

The explanatory relationship between value pluralism and reasonable pluralism has not gone entirely unnoticed by political philosophers. Like me, George Crowder and William Galston argue that value pluralism is needed to explain reasonable pluralism.5 Unlike me,

however, they take the argument a step further. They claim that this explanatory relationship suggests that liberalism relies upon value pluralism - a controversial moral view - for its justification, and that it (the explanatory relationship) therefore challenges the political liberal view that state coercion must be justified to citizens without relying upon controversial moral premises.[6] Against Crowder and Galston, I argue that explaining reasonable pluralism via value pluralism is compatible with political liberalism's commitments. Though it would be problematic if value pluralism were accorded a *justificatory* role in political liberalism, according it an *explanatory* role is quite different.[7]

In the final section, I argue that the fact that much reasonable disagreement is traceable to there being multiple reasonable ways to weigh competing values suggests that direct appeals to substantive values are not always as worrisome as political liberals sometimes imagine.[8] In particular, promoting a substantive political value when doing so does not conflict with other values is unproblematic. There's no reasonable disagreement to address, and thus it is legitimate for the state to directly appeal to the relevant value when justifying coercion.

2. Species of Pluralism

Value pluralism is a view present in both moral and political philosophy. Prominent proponents in moral philosophy include W.D. Ross and Michael Stocker,[9] but in political philosophy the view is best exemplified in the work of such philosophers as Isaiah Berlin and G.A. Cohen.[10] These philosophers hold that political morality is comprised of a plurality of political values, e.g., fairness, efficiency, community, autonomy, etc.; and that these values, or at least many of them, are fundamental: they cannot be reduced to some other value. Irreducibility implies that putative value conflicts are not merely putative, e.g., they do not merely represent alternative choices whose expected utility must be calculated and then compared in order to resolve the

conflict. When two or more values conflict with each other in a particular set of circumstances, it's necessary to strike an appropriate balance. Sometimes the appropriate balance will not be obvious, as more than one of the possible weightings may be intuitively plausible. Even when it is obvious, though, taking the correct all-things-considered course of action involves some moral loss. Unlike choosing a higher amount of expected utility over a lesser amount, sacrificing one irreducible value for another (or some amount of each for the sake of the other) is reason for moral regret.[11]

Reasonable pluralism isn't a moral view so much as a fact. Even a brief glance reveals that a plurality of conceptions of justice and the good exist both within and across contemporary liberal democracies. Stated this way, moral diversity is merely an empirical fact: a sociological truth that requires no moral analysis for verification. In political philosophy, however, moral diversity is more than empirical. Political philosophers are not, for the most part, concerned with the entire set of existing conceptions. They are concerned with a subset of those conceptions, specifically *reasonable* conceptions, and whether a conception is reasonable is not a sociological question but a moral one. For a view to be reasonable, holding it must presumably be consistent with cooperating with one's fellow citizens. It should also be consistent with recognizing the reasonableness of views that oppose it, or in other words, consistent with respecting points of views that one nonetheless considers to be incorrect.[12] That there is a reasonable plurality is something most contemporary political philosophers accept. The extent to which this fact is taken seriously is something which varies from one philosophical perspective to another, though. Ostensibly political liberals are those who take it the most seriously, as they maintain that state coercion is only legitimate when it respects reasonable pluralism. Some political liberal methods

for addressing reasonable pluralism include Rawls's idea of an overlapping consensus,[13] as well as democratic decision-making procedures.[14]

One of my paper's claims is that value pluralism and reasonable pluralism are closely related to each other. More specifically, I argue that value pluralism is part of the best explanation for reasonable pluralism. In making this argument, I take myself to be offering an argument in support of value pluralism. Insofar as it is indeed appropriate to treat reasonable pluralism as a kind of phenomenon: as a fact that can be taken for granted but which we should nonetheless hope to better understand, then successfully showing that value pluralism provides a compelling explanation is also a powerful justification. Much like a theory in theoretical physics is justified to the extent that it successfully explains physical phenomena; the pluralism of Berlin and Cohen is justified to the extent that it successfully explains relevant moral phenomena. So far, value pluralists have mostly looked at moral phenomena other than reasonable pluralism.[15] One phenomenon I've already mentioned is rational moral regret. For example, breaking a promise when one must do so in order to save a life is right, but it is also regrettable that one had to break one's word. Value pluralism explains this by claiming that the moral reason one has to keep a promise is trumped but not extinguished by one's more powerful reason to save a life. Honesty and beneficence are two separate kinds of moral consideration, and when someone sacrifices one for the other, there's a moral remainder of sorts (unlike when one chooses 10 units of utility over 5 units of utility).[16] Value pluralism handles cases of moral regret quite well, and I hope to successfully argue that reasonable pluralism should be added to the list of phenomena that value pluralism is well suited to explain.

Before proceeding to the next section, it's worth noting that not all political philosophers understand reasonable pluralism as a fact about existing liberal societies. In particular, Jonathan

Quong has argued that political liberals ought to understand reasonable pluralism as a fact about the character of an ideal liberal society. Quoting Rawls, Quong notes that reasonable pluralism is the "inevitable long-run result of the powers of human reason at work within the background of enduring free institutions."[17] On this understanding, reasonable pluralism isn't an unfortunate fact produced by poor reasoning or inadequate information. Instead, it's a product of the effective exercise of freedom of thought and expression. Reasonable pluralism is thus a permanent feature of any just, liberal society.

The question of whether reasonable pluralism is best understood as a fact about existing liberal societies,[18] or as a fact about an ideal or well-ordered liberal society, is an interesting one about which much could be said. I'll note only a couple of things about it. First, these interpretations are not mutually exclusive. One may consistently understand reasonable pluralism as both a fact about existing liberal societies, and as a fact about what would obtain under ideal liberal conditions. To be fair, reasonable pluralism looks a bit different in each case. If, for example, we stipulate that one of the features of a well-ordered liberal society is public, mutual acceptance of the same conception of justice,[19] then reasonable disagreement is less expansive under ideal conditions. This would mean that some policies acceptable to all reasonable citizens in an ideal liberal society are not acceptable to all reasonable citizens in existing liberal societies, e.g., policies that require accepting Rawls's Difference Principle. Perhaps the right way to think of the distinction between interpretations is that political liberals interested in doing work properly categorized as 'non-ideal theory' should be primarily concerned with reasonable pluralism in existing liberal societies, whereas political liberals interested in doing work properly categorized as 'ideal theory' should be interested in the sort of reasonable pluralism that would obtain in a well-ordered society.

Second, one of the virtues of the value pluralist explanation is that it explains both kinds of reasonable pluralism. On my view, an explanation for reasonable pluralism is incomplete if it merely explains existing reasonable disagreement. The best explanation should also explain why reasonable pluralism can be expected to persist under ideal liberal conditions. In light of this, Quong's distinction between types of reasonable pluralism actually enhances my argument. As we'll see, value pluralism is needed to explain why reasonable pluralism is here to stay.[20]

3. Rawls and Value Pluralism

In this section, I discuss Rawls's understanding of value pluralism (he called it 'intuitionism'), as well as the transition in Rawlsian thought marked by the publication of *Political Liberalism*.[21] In doing so, I hope to clarify what I mean by the claim that value pluralism explains reasonable pluralism, as well as to establish that a value pluralist explanation is plausible. I will also argue that Rawls himself believed that value pluralism, or more specifically, a type of indeterminacy that's closely associated with value pluralism, is part of the best explanation for reasonable pluralism. In the subsequent section, I consider and respond to the objection that value pluralism is too controversial for political liberalism to adopt it as an explanation.

I'll begin with some reflections on the way Rawls understood the relationship between value pluralism and his theory of justice in *A Theory of Justice*. There, Rawls claims that his theory of justice is best understood as a superior alternative to two views which had previously been dominant in political philosophy: value pluralism and utilitarianism.[22] The sense in which Rawls's theory is an alternative to utilitarianism is straightforward enough: both are conceptions of justice, but Rawls thinks his own conception better coheres with our considered moral judgments, e.g., the judgment that slavery is wrong even in circumstances where it would maximize utility.[23] The sense in which Rawls's theory is an alternative to value pluralism,

however, is a bit different. Rawls understands value pluralism not so much as a theory of justice as a form of skepticism about theories of justice. Though value pluralists think that it's possible to specify the different desiderata that any reasonable theory of justice must take into account and assign weights to, they do not think that any particular assignment of weights is uniquely reasonable. All that can be said is that assignments that weigh some desiderata far more heavily than others are unreasonable. Indeterminacy allegedly cannot be eliminated with respect to the various moderate assignments. By providing a justified theory of justice, one that avoids the many pitfalls of utilitarianism, Rawls took himself to be refuting the value pluralist's skeptical claim.[24]

Before moving on, it should be noted that the above-described indeterminacy, though associated with value pluralism, is not essential to it. The claim essential to value pluralism is that there is no super value to which competing values are reducible, i.e., no common property (such as utility) that can be measured and used to determine their relative weights. Indeterminacy is often thought to follow from irreducibility, but the two are separable from each other. In fact, some value pluralists claim that competing values can (at least sometimes) be determinately weighed, even though there is no common property via which to assign those weights.[25] However, indeterminacy, though not essential to value pluralism, is at least characteristic of it.

Returning to Rawls, some of the weightings in his theory are quite prominent. In particular, he uses lexical ranking to assert the absolute priority of some primary goods over others: liberty takes priority over opportunities, wealth, and income; and opportunities take priority over wealth and income.[26] Other weightings are less prominent. A major idea in Rawls's work is that inequalities are only just when they maximally benefit the least well off.

Though Rawls tends to focus on wealth and income when discussing this thought, it also applies to the other primary goods: inequality of opportunity is justified when it increases the opportunities of the least well off, and unequal liberty is justified when it increases the liberty of the least well off.27 By specifying the productive condition under which inequality is justified, Rawls is, among other things, specifying the justified trade-off point between an egalitarian principle of distributive fairness (Rawls refer to it as the 'principle of redress') and a principle of efficiency.28 Were one to opt for strict equality, the result would be that everyone ends up worse off, but were one to simply maximize productivity, the result would be large inequalities between the better off and the less well off, even if one were to prohibit increases that require some cost to others. Permitting inequalities on the condition that they maximally benefit the least well off strikes a seemingly legitimate balance between these principles: a balance that can be justified to the less well off, as any reduction in the inequality between them and the better off would make them (the less well off) worse off. Other values that Rawls claims the difference principle reflects include reciprocity and 'fraternity' (community).29

Things take a sudden turn when we get to Rawls's work in *Political Liberalism*, however. There Rawls gives up the idea that his conception of justice is uniquely reasonable. Though the conception of justice he defended in *A Theory of Justice* remains his favorite, he concedes that other liberal conceptions of justice are reasonable, too. This is especially clear in his discussion of public reason, where he notes that political liberalism is a type of view, rather than a particular conception of justice, and that citizens may reasonably disagree about the content of the best political conception.30 In order to qualify as a liberal political conception of justice, some conditions must be met: certain basic rights, liberties, and opportunities must be specified; special priority must be assigned to them; and the goods needed to make use of the specified

liberties and opportunities must be made available to citizens.31 For this reason, Rawls correctly

notes that "not any balance of political values is reasonable."32 Within these confines, however,

there are many reasonable possibilities, e.g., conceptions may differ with respect to whether the

specified opportunities are understood more or less substantively, and they may differ with

respect to whether the goods made available through redistribution merely satisfy a basic

threshold or whether they meet a more demanding standard.

To be fair, I don't think Rawls believes that the value pluralist's indeterminacy entirely

suffices to explain reasonable pluralism. When explaining reasonable pluralism in general (not

just reasonable pluralism about political conceptions of justice), Rawls primarily refers to what

he calls "the burdens of judgment."33 Included among these burdens are factors unrelated to

value pluralism, e.g., the complexity of empirical and scientific evidence, and the vagueness of

many political concepts.34 However, other factors he lists clearly are related to value pluralism,

e.g., disagreement over how different considerations should be weighed, and disagreement over

which political values to pursue when it isn't possible to pursue all of the applicable values at

once.35 Rawls even cites Isaiah Berlin, indicating that disagreement about what values to pursue

in cases of incompossibility, as well as about the extent to which one value should be pursued

instead of another in cases of tension, are central themes in the famous value pluralist's work.36

All in all, Rawls seems to think that the value pluralist's indeterminacy is an important part of

the explanation for reasonable pluralism, and I think he's right.

It might be objected that the value pluralist explanation isn't needed because one or more

of Rawls's other burdens of judgment – those not wedded to value pluralism – suffice to explain

reasonable pluralism on their own. For example, Charles Larmore has argued that of the various

burdens specified by Rawls, one in particular does most of the explanatory work. More

specifically, he argues that the most significant factor is that "Our total experience, which shapes how we assess the evidence and weigh values, is likely in complex modern societies to be rather disparate from person to person."37 The basic idea here is that disagreement about value weightings, rather than being traceable to the structure of practical reasoning, is the product of contingent cultural and economic differences between citizens. Since people come from different backgrounds containing different formative experience, they end up weighing values differently, or so the explanation goes. The problem with heavily relying upon this explanation is that it has trouble explaining why reasonable disagreement about value weightings has persisted for so long and can be expected to continue persisting. If disagreement about value weightings is traceable to different cultural and economic backgrounds, then presumably it can be overcome through education and dialogue. And if the reason it hasn't yet been overcome through education and dialogue is because citizens lack adequate opportunities to pursue them (which seems implausible, since reasonable moral disagreement persists among those who are both well-educated and politically involved), then presumably the goal of the state should be to afford citizens these opportunities in hopes of overcoming disagreement. The goal of accommodating disagreement would be, at best, a short-term concession required by non-ideal circumstances, rather than an enduring liberal commitment. A value pluralist explanation for reasonable disagreement about value weightings thus fits our understanding of reasonable pluralism better than an explanation that appeals solely to differences in cultural and economic background.38

4. *Value Pluralism in Political Liberalism*

Perhaps the most compelling worry about a value pluralist explanation, at least from a political liberal perspective, is that value pluralism is itself a contestable moral view. As we know,

political liberalism's goal is to secure a theoretical basis for legitimacy that respects the fact that citizens reasonably disagree about justice and the good.39 A political liberal justification for coercion must therefore avoid relying upon controversial moral premises. On the assumption that (a) coercion is only legitimate when it is justifiable to those who are coerced, and (b) citizens reasonably disagree about moral matters, it follows that a justification that relies on controversial moral premises cannot secure legitimacy, as not all those subject to coercion can reasonably be expected to accept it. In light of the above, it might seem that political liberalism must avoid a value pluralist explanation for reasonable pluralism. It might seem that political liberalism may only appeal to uncontroversial considerations when explaining the phenomenon of reasonable pluralism, since invoking a controversial moral view to explain reasonable pluralism may undermine political liberalism's ability to secure a basis for legitimacy. In fact, the existing literature on the relationship between value pluralism and reasonable pluralism suggests that explaining the latter via the former entails according value pluralism a justificatory role in political liberalism. Like me, George Crowder and William Galston maintain that value pluralism is needed to explain reasonable disagreement.40 However, the reason they argue for the claim that value pluralism is needed to explain reasonable pluralism is because they think it, in turn, supports the claim that political liberalism cannot avoid relying upon value pluralism for justification.41 Here's a reconstruction of their argument:

Sub-premise 1: The fact of reasonable pluralism is a key premise in political liberalism's argument for why legitimacy requires avoiding controversial moral premises.

Sub-premise 2: Value pluralism is needed to explain reasonable pluralism.

Sub-premise 3: If value pluralism is needed to explain reasonable pluralism, then value pluralism is a necessary condition for reasonable pluralism, i.e., the hypothetical falsity of value pluralism implies the falsity of reasonable pluralism.

Sub-conclusion/Premise 1: Political liberalism's argument for avoiding controversial moral premises depends upon value pluralism, i.e., the argument's conclusion relies upon value pluralism for justification.

Premise 2: Value pluralism is a controversial moral view.

Main conclusion: Political liberalism cannot justifiably avoid all controversial moral premises.

The above argument may appear strong, but Sub-conclusion/Premise 1 mistakenly conflates dependence with justification. To say that X justifies Y is to say that X gives us *reason* to believe Y. That reason may or may not be a decisive one: X may be sufficient to justify believing Y or it may only provide some evidence for believing Y. Either way, though, X justifies Y if and only if it is a reason to believe Y, and in this case, X (value pluralism) is not a reason to believe that Y (legitimacy requires avoiding controversial moral premises) is true. Value pluralism, if needed to explain a key premise in political liberalism's argument (reasonable pluralism), is a necessary condition, but necessary conditions are not reasons for belief. For example: the presence of oxygen is a necessary condition for combustion to have occurred, but it is not a reason to believe that combustion occurred; fighting in the boxing match is necessary for one to win the boxing match, but it is not a reason to believe that one won the match, etc.

Suppose we were to adopt a more charitable interpretation of Crowder's and Galston's argument. Suppose we interpreted them to be arguing not that value pluralism justifies the political liberal view of legitimacy, but that value pluralism is necessary for that view of legitimacy to be justified (because it is a necessary condition for reasonable pluralism). Interpreted this way, Crowder and Galston could consistently concede that according value pluralism an explanatory role does not imply that value pluralism is a reason to subscribe to the political liberal view. They would, however, maintain that if one thinks value pluralism is false, then one has an excellent reason to reject the political liberal view. Unlike the previous version of their argument, this one does not conflate dependence with justification. The conclusion it draws is analogous to the claim that if one thinks oxygen was absent, then one has an excellent reason to believe that combustion did not occur.

Though it is more plausible by comparison, the charitable version of Crowder and Galston's argument is nonetheless still flawed. More specifically, it presupposes an incorrect understanding of reasonable pluralism's epistemic status. Were it the case that it is a questionable matter whether reasonable pluralism exists, then it would be sensible to claim that value pluralism is necessary to justify the political liberal view of legitimacy. If reasonable pluralism were questionable, and if value pluralism were to prove false, then, assuming that the argument for a necessary connection between the two is a strong one, we might justifiably conclude that reasonable pluralism does not exist, and that the political liberal view is therefore unjustified. But reasonable pluralism is not questionable. It is not some dubious sociological claim, but rather a phenomenon, and thus something we may take for granted. Given reasonable pluralism's status as a phenomenon, describing value pluralism as necessary for its justification is inappropriate. Were it to turn out that value pluralism is false, we should not therefore

conclude that reasonable pluralism does not exist. Instead, the appropriate conclusion would be that value pluralism is not, as it turns out, a necessary condition for reasonable pluralism.

It should be noted that even if we considered value pluralism sufficient to explain reasonable pluralism, it would still be false that we thereby commit ourselves to the claim that value pluralism justifies reasonable pluralism.[42] This follows from reasonable pluralism's status as a phenomenon, and thus as something that's to be explained rather than argued for. Though explanations and arguments often look similar and may both appeal to sufficient conditions, they nonetheless have entirely different purposes: an argument seeks to prove the truth of its conclusion, whereas an explanation seeks to show why it's *explanandum* is true (thereby assuming its truth). As such, whether appealing to a sufficient condition is justificatory depends on whether the appeal appears in the context of an argument or in the context of an explanation. For example, suppose that failing to study is sufficient for Jane to do poorly on her math exam. If Jane's friends know that she failed to study, but the exam grades for Jane's math class haven't been returned yet, then Jane's friends might reasonably invoke her lapse in studiousness to *argue* that she did poorly on her exam. Neither Jane nor her friends know what her grade is yet, but they have a good reason to believe that it's a poor one. By contrast, suppose that the exam grades for Jane's class have been returned, and that Jane's friends have seen the poor grade she received. In this context, her friends might reasonably claim that her lapse in studiousness is the reason she did poorly, i.e., they might *explain* her poor performance by invoking the fact that she failed to study. Though Jane's failure to study is still of interest because it's a sufficient condition, it provides no justification in the scenario where Jane's friends have seen her grade. In that scenario, whether Jane did poorly is not at issue – it doesn't need to be proven.

Similarly, political liberalism (quite appropriately) assumes reasonable pluralism. It's concerned with reasonable pluralism's implications for the legitimate use of coercion, as well as with the causes of reasonable pluralism, but whether reasonable pluralism exists is not at issue. To be fair, and as we noted earlier, reasonable pluralism is not strictly empirical. Though we observe that disagreement about justice and the good is pervasive in liberal democracies, the claim that some disagreeing views are reasonable is a judgment rather than an observation. Thankfully, there's no tension between describing something as a judgment and treating it as a phenomenon. For example, we judge slavery to be wrong. Though we might wonder *why*, precisely, slavery is wrong, and thus turn to moral theories in hopes that one or more of them can explain this judgment, that slavery is wrong isn't a questionable claim in need of justification – taking it for granted is appropriate. Of course, our intuitive judgments are not restricted to matters of rights and wrong. We make judgments of various sorts, including judgments of moral regret, e.g., the judgment that breaking a promise in order to save a life is justified but also regrettable. We also make judgments of reasonableness: we see that disagreement about moral matters persists both currently and throughout history, and that it persists even among thoughtful individuals who are respectful of each other's perspective, and we judge that much of this disagreement is reasonable and thus not always resolvable. Though, as we noted earlier, value pluralism helps us to understand moral regret, and though I've argued that value pluralism helps us to understand reasonable pluralism, our intuitive judgments are pre-theoretical. If value pluralism turned out to be false, the right response would be to seek another explanation for the judgments it sought to explain.

Since explaining reasonable pluralism via value pluralism does not entail according value pluralism a justificatory role in political liberalism's argument, there's no good reason for

political liberalism to be agnostic about it. Though value pluralism is indeed a contestable view

that some people reasonably object to, political liberalism can nonetheless embrace that view

without compromising its goal of securing a theoretical basis for the legitimate exercise of

coercion. Why? Because dissenting citizens can consistently buy into political liberalism's

normative arguments and yet reject its proffered explanation for reasonable pluralism. For

example, it would be perfectly consistent for a citizen to (a) accept that she lives in a society

characterized by reasonable pluralism, (b) accept that her co-citizens are free and equal, (c)

accept that *(a)* and *(b)* collectively justify a requirement to enact laws democratically and/or

secure an overlapping consensus about political principles of justice, and yet (d) reject value

pluralism as false. In order for this citizen's commitment to (d) to be consistent with her

commitments to (a) and (c), she must also reject the claim that value pluralism is a necessary

condition for reasonable pluralism. But it is not unreasonable for her to do so (even if she's

wrong to do so). There is thus no reason internal to political liberalism to refrain from invoking

value pluralism to explain reasonable pluralism.

5. *Unobjectionable Substance*

In the previous sections, I hope to have successfully argued that value pluralism is needed to

adequately explain reasonable pluralism, and that drawing on this explanation is compatible with

political liberalism's commitments. In this section, I argue that explaining reasonable pluralism

via the indeterminacy associated with value weightings has implications for the kinds of

justification open to political liberalism. Generally speaking, political liberals are wary of direct

appeals to substantive values. They assume that such appeals are subject to reasonable

disagreement and should thus be avoided. Instead, political liberals usually opt for a procedural

approach. One such approach is to confine policy prescriptions to whatever can be justified by a

political conception of justice that is itself the output of a procedural device such as Rawls's original position. Another, more extreme approach is to hand all legal authority over to democratic procedures, eschewing even a charter of rights and freedoms or a bill of rights.[43] However, if the problem with substantive values, particularly those within the shared political culture, is specifically that different people weigh them differently in cases of conflict, then it's hasty to entirely forsake direct appeals. What about cases where values do not conflict with each other? And what about cases where the conflict is unnecessary? One of the many noteworthy points G.A. Cohen argued for over the course of his career is that the tension between efficiency and distributive equality is a contingent one. Forsaking economic incentives for the sake of equality only leads to levelling down if the talented would work less productively. Were an egalitarian ethos in place, however, the talented would be motivated to exercise their productive talents even in the absence of incentives.[44]

There's a big literature surrounding Cohen's discussion of incentives, and I do not wish to get into it here. Nor, for the matter, do I wish to defend his related claim that the scope of Rawls's difference principle should be extended to the personal context.[45] The point I'd like to make is a modest one. Suppose that a greater, society-wide commitment to equality would ease the tension between efficiency and distributive equality. Suppose also that it's feasible to promote such a commitment through political measures, e.g., educational reforms designed to foster civic virtue. What reasonable objection could there be to taking such measures? We needn't assert that citizens are morally required to maximize the position of the least well off, or that it's feasible to entirely eliminate the tension between equality and efficiency. The first is a very demanding moral claim, and the second depends on a dubious degree of optimism about human psychology. All we need to assert is that some easing of the tension between efficiency

and distributive equality is both possible and desirable. When opportunities like this present themselves, namely opportunities to increase the extent to which we can implement a political value without cost to the other political values, it strikes me that reasonable disagreement is less of a worry than it otherwise would be. In so far as it remains a worry, the concern is to avoid presupposing a controversial interpretation of the value to be promoted. Accomplishing this may sometimes be difficult, but I don't think it's too difficult in the case of distributive equality. Most varieties of distributive equality entail that inequality in the distribution of wealth and income should be greatly reduced. What they disagree about, for the most part, is *why*.46 This suggests that it's possible to significantly reduce the gap between the rich and the poor while remaining neutral between competing forms of distributive equality.

Consider another example from the contemporary egalitarian literature: the harshness objection to luck egalitarianism.47 According to luck egalitarianism, inequalities are fair only when they are traceable to choice, e.g., the inequality between the hardworking tradesman and the leisure-loving surfer, or the inequality between the lucky and the unlucky gambler. Inequalities traceable to circumstance, e.g., the inequality between a person who is able-bodied and a person with a congenital disability, are considered unfair and thus grounds for redistribution.48 Against the luck-egalitarian view, it is often argued that neglecting choice-based inequalities is sometimes too harsh. Luck egalitarianism implies that it would be unfair to aid someone who, as a result of her imprudent choices, is unable to meet her basic needs, and thus luck egalitarianism is putatively insensitive to the requirements of values like community and compassion.49 But what about cases where someone is unable to meet her basic needs through no fault of her own? Both luck egalitarians and traditional egalitarians agree that cases where someone has less through no fault of her own warrant redistribution. What they disagree about is

18

the fairness of cases where someone has less because of her own choices. Furthermore, unlike cases where an inability to meet basic needs is traceable to imprudence, cases that are traceable to bad brute luck do not involve value conflict. Quite the opposite: they involve value overlap, as considerations of fairness, community, and compassion collectively militate in favor of providing assistance. Considering that fairness, community, and compassion are all values embedded in our shared political culture, it's hard to imagine how one could reasonably disagree with the conclusion that assistance is warranted.

It might seem that political liberals have reason to object here. In particular, it might seem that appeals to non-conflicting values only avoid reasonable disagreement if the value pluralist explanation is true. But isn't this a problem for citizens who reject the value pluralist explanation? Can't they object that appeals to non-conflicting values presuppose a moral view they don't accept? I argued earlier that political liberalism can explain reasonable pluralism via value pluralism without compromising its (political liberalism's) approach to legitimacy. The reason political liberalism can do so is because monistic citizens can consistently reject the value pluralist explanation but accept political liberal justifications for coercion. It would be problematic, then, if citizens must accept value pluralism in order to accept appeals to non-conflicting values. However, I don't think that citizens must do this. The reason is that the claim that there are multiple reasonable weightings of competing values, and the claim that there is no single value to which competing values are reducible (value pluralism), are different, albeit related claims. Value pluralism provides a compelling explanation for why there are multiple reasonable weightings of competing values, but one may accept that there are multiple reasonable weightings, as well as the claim that multiple reasonable weightings is an important part of the explanation for reasonable pluralism, and yet reject value pluralism. For example, I

noted earlier that, according to Larmore, reasonable disagreement about value weightings is the product of contingent cultural and economic differences between citizens.50 I also argued that Larmore's explanation has trouble explaining why reasonable disagreement has persisted for so long and can be expected to persist under even ideal liberal conditions. The reason I'm mentioning his view now, however, is to illustrate that monistic citizens have at least one alternative explanation to appeal to. They can consistently accept that there are multiple reasonable weightings of conflicting values, as well as the associated claim that direct appeals to non-conflicting political values are respectful of reasonable pluralism, without being forced to give up their monism. Value pluralism isn't the only explanation for why there are multiple reasonable weightings, and though it is an important part of the *most plausible* explanation (or so I've argued), that doesn't mean citizens who adopt alternative explanations are therefore *unreasonable*. There are a great many implausible, yet reasonable views that the citizens of a liberal democracy may adopt. Creationists, for example, do not offer a very plausible explanation for why living organisms have the properties they do. A Darwinian explanation is equally capable of explaining those properties, and it is also much more consistent with geological phenomena and the fossil record. Despite its implausibility, creationism remains a reasonable view, and to be respectful of it, the liberal state must justify coercion in a manner that's consistent with the claim that God created the world about 10, 000 years ago. Similarly, so long as coercion is justified in a manner that's consistent with the claim that different values are reducible to a single super value, then monism is respected as a reasonable view. And monists needn't give up their monism in order to accept the legitimacy of appealing to non-conflicting political values.

In conclusion, I've argued that value pluralism is an important part of the best explanation for reasonable pluralism. Furthermore, I've argued that this explanation suggests there is a certain amount of space within political liberalism for legitimate, direct appeals to substantive values. Sometimes it's feasible to implement the requirements of a political value without loss to another value, and even when it isn't, sometimes it's possible to *make it* feasible. In cases like this, it isn't true that promoting a substantive political value fails to respect reasonable disagreement.

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1 Rawls 1993.

2 Berlin (2002); Cohen (2008).

3 For discussion of the distinction between value pluralism and reasonable pluralism, see Larmore (1996) chapter 7.

4 In this paper, I use the term 'justice' the same way Rawls does: to refer to the output of practical reasoning about how we should design shared institutions. However, I think that there's good reason to think of 'justice' as an input in practical reasoning: specifically, as a fundamental value that should be balanced against other fundamental values. The reason I adopt Rawls's usage here is because his is currently common among political philosophers, and thus

using the term differently would distract from my paper's argument. For the arguments I give in support of the view that justice is one fundamental value among many, see Johannsen (2018) chapters 5 and 6. For a defense of my arguments, see Johannsen (2019) pp. 769-77.

5 See Crowder (2002) pp. 158-84; and Galston (2002) pp. 46-7.

6 For his earlier thoughts about the justificatory relationship between value pluralism and liberalism, see Crowder (1998).

7 For worries about using value pluralism to justify political liberalism's normative claims, see Larmore (1996) chapter 7. It is telling that Larmore tentatively concedes that value pluralism may play a role in explaining reasonable pluralism, even though he rejects the claim that it plays a justificatory role in political liberalism. For Larmore's brief, unargued thoughts on value pluralism's explanatory relationship with reasonable pluralism, see Larmore (2008) pp. 141-2; and Larmore (2015) pp. 71-2.

8 See, for example, Waldron (1999).

9 See, for example, Stocker (1990) and Stocker (1997), as well as Ross (1930).

10 See endnote 2 in the present paper.

11 For discussion of the phenomenon of rational moral regret see, for example, Williams (1973) and Stocker (1990). Value pluralists can explain rational moral regret more easily than monists can, but that hasn't stopped monists from offering explanations of their own. See, for example, Hurka (1996).

12 The criteria I've listed roughly match those endorsed by Rawls. See Rawls (1993) p. 54.

13 Rawls (1993) pp. 140-54..

14 See, for example, Waldron (1999).

15 Though value pluralists have generally neglected the phenomenon of reasonable pluralism, two exceptions are George Crowder and William Galston. See endnote 5 in the present paper.

16 See endnote 11 in the present paper.

17 See Quong (2011) p. 142. For the quote, see Rawls (1993) p. 4.

18 For examples of philosophers who have interpreted reasonable pluralism as a fact about existing liberal societies, see Raz (1990); Habermas (1995); and Klosko (1997).

19 Rawls (1993) p. 35. Though Rawls stipulates that agreement about justice is one of the features of a well-ordered society, he sometimes acknowledges that reasonable disagreement about the correct political liberal conception of justice is both possible and likely. See endnote 30 in the present paper.

20 See pages 9-10 in the present paper.

21 See Rawls (1993).

22 Rawls (1971) p. 3.

23 Rawls (1971) pp. 158-61.

24 Rawls (1971) pp. 34-9.

25 See for, example, Stocker (1990) p. 72.

26 Rawls (1971) pp. 40-4 and 302-3.

27 Rawls (1971) pp. 302-3.

28 Rawls (1971) p. 100-2.

29 Rawls (1971) pp. 102-6.

30 Rawls (1993) pp. 226-7. See also Rawls (1999) pp. 140-3.

31 Rawls (1993) p. 6.

32 Rawls (1993) p. 227.

33 Rawls (1993) p. 54.

34 Rawls (1993) p. 56.

35 Rawls (1993) pp. 56-7. See also Crowder (2002) pp. 165-71; and Galston (2002) pp. 46-7.

36 Rawls (1993) p. 57.

37 For the quoted sentence, see Larmore (1996) p. 170. For additional discussion, see Larmore (2015) p. 72.

38 For similar thoughts, see Galston (2002) pp. 46-7.

39 See Rawls's discussion of "the liberal principle of legitimacy" in Rawls (1993) pp. 136-7. See also Larmore's discussion in Larmore (2015) pp. 74-80.

40 Crowder (2002) pp. 158-84; Galston (2002) pp. 46-7.

41 See, for example, Crowder (2002) p. 159, p. 165, and pp. 167-8; and Galston (2002) pp. 46-7.

42 At one point, Crowder claims that value pluralism implies reasonable pluralism, i.e., that value pluralism is a sufficient condition for reasonable pluralism. See Crowder (2002) pp. 171-2.

43 Waldron (1999).

44 Cohen (2008) chapters 1 and 2.

45 For seminal discussion of Cohen's critique of incentives and the basic structure restriction see, for example, Williams (1998); and Murphy (1999). For more recent discussion see, for example, Shiffrin (2010); Macleod (2011); Schouten (2013); Johannsen (2013); Johannsen (2016); and Albertsen (2019).

46 Whether the reason for redistribution is to secure equal resources, equal welfare, equal capabilities, equal access to advantage, etc., egalitarian theories converge on the conclusion that the radical inequalities of wealth and income existing in most contemporary societies are unjust. Nor must one be a so-called 'distributive egalitarian' to think so: 'relational egalitarians' concur.

For a sampling of the different forms of egalitarianism on offer, see endnotes 47 and 48 in the present paper.

47 For articulations of the harshness objections, see Anderson (1999) pp. 295-300; and Scheffler (2003) p. 33.

48 For seminal examples of the luck egalitarian position, see Dworkin (2000); Arneson (1989); and Cohen (1989).

49 In response to the harshness objection, some luck egalitarians have argued that luck egalitarianism is a conception of one value among many, and that the requirements of luck equality must be balanced against competing values. See, for example, Segall (2007); Cohen (2009) pp. 34-6; Casal (2007) pp. 321-3; and Johannsen (2018) pp. 34-5.

50 See endnote 37 in the present paper.