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OAKESHOTT, BERLIN, AND LIBERALISM

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This article compares the political philosophies of Michael Oakeshott and Isaiah Berlin, probably the two most important political philosophers in postwar Britain, who, strangely, had very little to do with one another during their illustrious careers. The article focuses on their respective critiques of rationalism and theories of liberal pluralism, arguing that Oakeshott provides the more consistent and philosophically satisfying account in both instances.

Keywords: Oakeshott; Berlin; liberalism; political philosophy

A comparison of the political philosophies of Michael Oakeshott and Isaiah Berlin would seem to be natural, if not inevitable. Here are two political thinkers who were virtual contemporaries: Oakeshott was born in 1901 and died in 1990; Berlin was born in 1909 and died in 1997; both lived their entire professional lives as academics in England—Oakeshott presiding at the London School of Economics (LSE), and Berlin at Oxford; and their respective political philosophies took shape in the context of postwar Europe and the era of the Cold War. Beyond these incidental overlaps, there are also similarities in the substance of their political philosophies. Both thinkers begin their reflections on politics with a critique of utopianism and rationalism, though (as we shall see) what they understand by rationalism and the reasons they give for rejecting it are quite different. Both thinkers can be—and frequently are—characterized as pluralists, though here again what pluralism means in

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each case seems to differ widely. Finally, Berlin and Oakeshott are liberals, or so at least I shall argue. It is true that, in terms of conventional political labels, Berlin is generally thought to be a liberal and Oakeshott a conservative. Nevertheless, both Berlin and Oakeshott offer profound—though again distinctive—defenses of the liberal tradition in the broadest sense, against the threats that have been leveled at that tradition over the course of the twentieth century.

Given all that Oakeshott and Berlin share, both intellectually and politically, it comes as quite a shock that they had almost nothing to do with one another during their long and illustrious careers. Neither, as far as I know, mentions the other in his published writings. This is not altogether surprising in Oakeshott's case, since he rarely mentions any contemporary authors in his writings. What is truly surprising—and perhaps beyond believing—is that Berlin claims, in a private letter from 1991, that he has never read a word of Oakeshott's!¹ This lack of acquaintance with Oakeshott's work does not seem to have prevented Berlin, however, from judging that Oakeshott's defense of conservatism was merely "Collingwood warmed up."² What is going on here?

Though it remains something of a puzzle why these two thinkers kept their distance from one another, there was a rather famous incident that may have contributed to their mutual aloofness. The occasion was Berlin's delivery of the first August Comte Memorial Lecture at the LSE in May of 1953. The title of the lecture was "History as an Alibi"—later revised as the essay "Historical Inevitability"—and Oakeshott was given the honor of introducing Berlin. Speaking to a capacity crowd in the LSE auditorium, full of luminaries from LSE, Oxford, and Cambridge, Oakeshott began by remarking that 1953 marked the centenary of Comte's death, adding archly: "And what a century it has been for him!" Then Oakeshott turned his irony on Berlin, who had recently delivered six enormously popular lectures devoted to individual thinkers from Helvetius to de Maistre on the BBC:

There is no need for me to introduce, much less recommend, Mr. Isaiah Berlin to you. His learning is notorious, and joined with it is a brilliant turn of dialectic which has dazzled many audiences. Listening to him you may be tempted to think you are in the presence of one of the great intellectual *virtuosos* of our time: a Paganini of ideas.³

The reference to Paganini suggested that Berlin's intellectual history contained more show than philosophical substance, and apparently Oakeshott's ironic tone underlined the insult. Berlin was so unnerved by the introduction that he abandoned his usual custom of speaking extemporaneously and ended up giving "the worst lecture of his life."⁴

There is an element of truth to Oakeshott's ironic characterization of Berlin as "a Paganini of ideas"; perhaps that's why Berlin felt so wounded by it. At any rate, he interpreted "the bitchy introduction" as revenge for an innocent remark he had made to Oakeshott several years earlier during a lunch at Nuffield College in Oxford.⁵ This may have been in 1949-50, when Oakeshott was briefly a fellow at Nuffield. Apparently, Berlin suggested that Oakeshott should write a book on Hegel and exclaimed that "the need for such a book was so great that better one written by a charlatan than by no one at all."⁶ Needless to say, Oakeshott was not persuaded to write the book on Hegel (a pity, too). That his later, barbed introduction for Berlin at the LSE was some sort of revenge for this earlier episode, however, seems doubtful. It is more likely that Oakeshott was drawing ironic attention to the difference between Berlin's history-of-ideas approach to political thought and his own more philosophical approach.

There were other differences as well. For all that Oakeshott and Berlin seemed to have in common, they were divided by profound differences in background, personality, and style. To begin with the obvious, Berlin was by origin a Russian Jew, and Oakeshott was English through and through. Whereas Oakeshott came out of the British idealist tradition, which he never entirely abandoned, adapting it instead to nonmetaphysical purposes, Berlin was early on impressed by English analytic philosophy, which he jettisoned only after he gave up philosophy for intellectual history. Berlin was a great socialite, hobnobbing with the powerful and the famous, an establishment figure, Sir Isaiah. Oakeshott, on the other hand, though immensely charming in his own right, was always a bit of a bohemian and remained aloof from the political and intellectual establishment and its honors. Both were great conversationalists but in very different ways: Berlin delighted with his rapid-fire, erudite, and endless talk; Oakeshott charmed with his wit, childlike wonder, and modesty. Their writing styles are also quite different: Berlin's a relentless cascade of names and historical connections, expansive, leaving nothing unsaid; Oakeshott's economical, elegant, witty, often leaving too much unsaid.

These differences in background, personality, and style are not unrelated to the substantive differences in their political philosophies. I have indicated that Oakeshott and Berlin can both be said to be critics of rationalism, pluralists, and liberals but that their positions on each of these topics differ subtly and importantly. Herein lies the principal interest of this comparison. By critically comparing Oakeshott's and Berlin's respective understandings of rationalism, pluralism, and liberalism, I hope to shed some light on these important concepts in and of themselves. Of course, Berlin's brand of liberal pluralism has of late elicited a great deal of interest and become widely influ-

ential.⁷ My essay suggests, however, that it is Oakeshott who offers the more philosophically satisfying account of pluralistic liberalism.

Before taking up Berlin's and Oakeshott's respective critiques of rationalism, I should say something about their general approaches to political philosophy. In one respect, their approaches are similar in that both are informed by a profound sense of political and intellectual history—in this respect differing from the Anglo-American mainstream. Mark Lilla has recently commented that “what passes for political philosophy or political theory in the university today is almost wholly lacking in the psychological and historical insight Berlin tried to give readers,”⁸ and the same might be said of Oakeshott. Unlike Berlin, though, Oakeshott did not articulate his political philosophy simply through reflections on the history of political thought; he actually engaged in explicit philosophical analysis. And whereas Berlin seems to have entertained doubts as to whether he was a philosopher at all, Oakeshott never thought of himself as anything else; *Experience and Its Modes* and *On Human Conduct* are self-consciously philosophical works. Whether it was because he agreed with Nietzsche that the “only things that are definable are those that have no history”⁹ or simply because he found history more congenial than philosophy, Berlin did not devote himself to the task of philosophical definition. Oakeshott's philosophical method, on the other hand, whether applied to modes of experience or to modes of political association, is almost wholly taken up with the task of definition. The clarity of Oakeshott's account of liberal pluralism and the confusion of Berlin's are, I would argue, connected to this crucial methodological difference.

I

I turn now to Berlin's and Oakeshott's respective critiques of rationalism, beginning with Berlin's. Berlin's critique of rationalism is ultimately bound up with his pluralism, the dominant idea of his philosophy. Rationalism he identifies with monism, the belief that all human ends are ultimately compatible and fit into a single whole. Almost everything Berlin writes, from “The Hedgehog and the Fox” (1953) to “The Pursuit of the Ideal” (1988), involves an attack on rationalism or monism so understood and a defense of the pluralism of human ends. Indeed, this master-dichotomy in Berlin's thought can become rather monotonous. And as many writers on Berlin have noted, though he identifies with the fox who knows many things, he himself turns out to be something of a hedgehog who knows one big thing: that values are plural, and that rationalistic monism is a mistake.

This pluralistic theme is already present in the essay that grew out of Berlin's disastrous lecture at the LSE in 1953, "Historical Inevitability." There he recalls the reader to the "simple truths" that

the purposes, the ultimate ends of life are many, even within one culture and generation; that some of these come into conflict, and lead to clashes between societies, parties, individuals, and not least within individuals themselves. . . . And if we understand how conflicts between ends equally ultimate and sacred, but irreconcilable within the breast of even a single human being . . . can lead to tragic and unavoidable collisions, we shall not distort the moral facts by artificially ordering them in terms of some absolute criterion; recognizing that (*pace* the moralists of the eighteenth century) not all good things are necessarily compatible with one another.¹⁰

But it is in his famous essay "The Originality of Machiavelli," the first draft of which was read in 1953, that Berlin fully develops his pluralistic vision. Challenging the common claim that Machiavelli divided politics from morals, Berlin argues that Machiavelli instead exposed the incompatibility of two different ideals of life or moralities, Christian and pagan. In this way, Machiavelli challenged "one of the deepest assumptions of Western political thought," and one that lies "at the very heart of traditional rationalism": namely, the assumption that "there exists some single principle which not only regulates the course of the sun and the stars, but prescribes their proper behaviour to all animate creatures."¹¹ Recognizing that "ends equally ultimate, equally sacred, may contradict each other, that entire systems of value may come into collision without the possibility of rational arbitration," Machiavelli becomes, for Berlin, the unwitting originator of the pluralism that forms the basis of modern liberalism.¹²

Berlin's critique of rationalism is given its definitive form in his celebrated essay, "Two Concepts of Liberty," which was originally delivered in 1958 as Berlin's Inaugural Lecture as Chichele Professor at Oxford. Never very far in the background of the essay is the ideological conflict of the Cold War. Berlin urges the study of ideas and political theory because

our own attitudes and activities are likely to remain obscure to us, unless we understand the dominant issues of our own world. The greatest of these is the open war that is being fought between two systems of ideas which return different and conflicting answers to what has long been the central question of politics—the question of obedience and coercion.¹³

In the argument that ensues, it becomes clear that Berlin identifies negative liberty with liberalism and positive liberty with totalitarian communism. So different are these two concepts of freedom, he writes in one place, that they "have led to the great clash of ideologies that dominates our world."¹⁴

Berlin's analysis of negative and positive liberty is too well-known to rehearse here. It is enough for our purposes to highlight the way in which he identifies the doctrine of positive liberty with the most extravagant rationalism, "the programme of enlightened rationalism from Spinoza to the latest (at times unconscious) disciples of Hegel."¹⁵ Hegel and Marx, as arch-rationalists and proponents of positive liberty, are said to believe "that to understand the world is to be freed" and "that a wise lawgiver can, in principle, create a perfectly harmonious society at any time by appropriate education."¹⁶ Thinkers who subscribe to the positive concept of liberty are also said to believe "that there must exist one and only one true solution to any problem" and that "all true solutions to all genuine problems must be compatible: more than this they must fit into a single whole."¹⁷ Throughout the essay, Berlin, much in the manner of Karl Popper, lumps together disparate thinkers from Plato and Spinoza to Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Marx, and even Comte and sees their rationalistic philosophies as leading to totalitarianism. Comte, Berlin writes, "put bluntly what had been implicit in the rationalist theory of politics from its ancient Greek beginnings. There can, in principle, be only one correct way of life." This "rationalist argument, with its assumption of the single true solution, has led . . . to an authoritarian State obedient to the directives of an elite of Platonic guardians."¹⁸

In the latter part of "Two Concepts of Liberty," against the rationalist theory of politics he has been criticizing, Berlin lays out his pluralistic conception of value and tries to show how it entails negative liberty and a liberal understanding of politics. I want to postpone considering this argument, however, until I analyze Berlin's liberalism more systematically. I will conclude my analysis of Berlin's critique of rationalism by considering his late, autobiographical essay, "The Pursuit of the Ideal" (1988), which concisely sums up the core of Berlin's philosophy.

From Socrates and Plato to the positivists of the nineteenth century, Berlin tells us, Western philosophy has been animated by a rationalistic or Platonic ideal marked by the following, by now familiar, features:

In the first place that, as in the sciences, all genuine questions must have one true answer and one only. . . . In the second place that there must be a dependable path towards the discovery of these truths; in the third place that the true answers, when found, must necessarily be compatible with one another and form a single whole.¹⁹

It was his reading of Machiavelli, Vico, and Herder that helped Berlin to a pluralistic understanding of value, over against the rationalistic monism of the philosophical tradition. What has become clear to Berlin is that "values can clash." "The notion of a perfect whole, the ultimate solution, in which all

good things coexist” strikes him as “conceptually incoherent.” Reminiscent of Weber’s pluralistic position in “Science as a Vocation,” Berlin pronounces that “some among the Great Goods cannot live together.”²⁰ The failure to appreciate this fact has led to disastrous consequences. The rationalistic “search for perfection,” Berlin writes, “does seem to me a recipe for bloodshed.” And he concludes with his favorite quote from Kant: “Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing was ever made.”²¹

“The Pursuit of the Ideal” makes clear what is at the heart of Berlin’s critique of rationalism: a critique of utopianism and the quest for perfection in politics. This is a common theme in the political thought of the second half of the twentieth century, and we will certainly find a version of it in Oakeshott. The question that hovers over Berlin’s critique of utopianism is whether it remains bound up with the ideological wars of the fifties, attacking an enemy that is now no longer recognizable. Has the particular and somewhat exaggerated version of rationalism, monism, and perfectionism that Berlin writes against become something of a straw man at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

While Oakeshott’s critique of rationalism shares with Berlin’s an antipathy toward utopian politics, it ultimately rests on very different grounds, and it also seems less tied to the ideological context out of which it sprang. Oakeshott developed his critique of rationalism in a series of essays written after World War II. And though this critique can certainly be seen as a response to the collectivism and central planning of postwar Britain—not exactly the same target the left-leaning Berlin was aiming at—its foundations owe a great deal to Oakeshott’s prewar, idealist philosophical outlook. In his first book, *Experience and Its Modes* (1933), Oakeshott elaborated a logic of experience in general that he then applied to various modes of experience: history, science, and practice. This logic owed much to philosophical idealism and may be characterized as “concrete” in contradistinction to the “abstract logic” Hegel and his followers were reacting against. The core of this concrete logic consisted in a doctrine about what gives unity to experience. According to the traditional view, the unity of experience is akin to that of a class, having its seat in an essence or principle abstracted from the particulars comprising it. Experience is unified, in other words, in terms of an abstract universal. For Oakeshott, on the other hand, the unity of experience is not of the simple sort that belongs to a class but, rather, that which belongs to a complex whole or system; it lies not in conformity to an external essence or principle but in the internal coherence of the particulars themselves. In a complex whole or system, universal and particular are inseparable. The universal is, in short, what the idealists call—though Oakeshott does not use this term—a “concrete universal.”²²

Before seeing how this concrete logic relates to Oakeshott's critique of rationalism, it is worth remarking how different Oakeshott's whole approach seems to be from Berlin's. Perhaps the simplest way of putting the difference is that, whereas Berlin's critique of rationalism is directed against monism, Oakeshott's begins with precisely an effort to grasp the nature of the wholeness or unity of experience more profoundly. This reflects Oakeshott's roots in idealism, a philosophical tradition Berlin never seemed to have much sympathy for—his references to Hegel are almost invariably negative—having been swept up in the anti-idealist, analytic tide that eventually made its way to Oxford (in the form of A. J. Ayer) in the thirties.

Given his idealist philosophical background, it comes as no surprise that Oakeshott's critique of rationalism focuses on the theory of knowledge. The hidden spring of rationalism, he tells us in the early essay, "Rationalism in Politics" (1947), is a doctrine about human knowledge. To specify this doctrine, he distinguishes two sorts of knowledge present in all concrete activity: technical knowledge, which consists entirely of formulated rules or principles, and practical or traditional knowledge, which "exists only in use, is not reflective and (unlike technique) cannot be formulated in rules." No concrete activity, whether it be cookery, art, science, or politics, can be carried on simply with a knowledge of the technique. There is always something else—Oakeshott calls it variously style, connoisseurship, artistry, judgment—that tells us not only when to apply the rules but also when to leave the rules behind.²³ This notion of practical or traditional knowledge recalls Aristotle's notion of *phronesis* and has obvious parallels with Ryle's "knowing how" and Polanyi's "tacit knowledge."

The essence of rationalism is that it denies the epistemic value of practical knowledge and only recognizes technical knowledge. Rationalism consists in the belief in the sovereignty of technique, which is not the same thing as the sovereignty of reason *per se*. It is important to make this distinction in order to avoid mistaking Oakeshott's critique of rationalism for an attack on reason simply, rather than on a certain misunderstanding of reason.²⁴ The attraction of technique for the rationalist lies in its apparent certainty and self-completeness; it seems to rest on nothing outside of itself, building directly on the empty (or emptied) mind. But this apparent certainty and self-completeness of technical knowledge are an illusion. Knowledge of a technique does not spring from pure ignorance; it presupposes and is a reformulation of knowledge that is already there. It is only by ignoring or forgetting the total context of our knowledge that a technique can be made to appear self-contained and certain.²⁵

How does this relate to politics? In politics, the rationalist's belief in the sovereignty of technique translates into the belief in the superiority of an ide-

ology over a tradition or habit of behavior. This superiority is thought to lie in its being self-contained, “rational” through and through. This, again, is an illusion. An ideology, far from being self-contained or independently premeditated, itself presupposes a tradition of behavior and is merely an abridgement of it. Nor is a political ideology the spring of political activity; it is only the product of subsequent reflection on such activity. As Oakeshott succinctly puts it in “Political Education,” *his* Inaugural Lecture upon assuming the Chair of Political Science at the LSE in 1951: “Political activity comes first and a political ideology comes after.” A political ideology “merely abridges a concrete manner of behavior.” Such is the case, for example, with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and with Locke’s *Second Treatise*. These were not prefaces to political activity but postscripts. A political ideology, in short, rests on or presupposes an already existing tradition of behavior. And it is in terms of such traditions of behavior that political activity must ultimately be understood.²⁶

In “Political Education,” Oakeshott also adumbrates the idea of tradition that he deploys as a counterweight to rationalism, much as Berlin invoked pluralism. A tradition, for Oakeshott, is not something fixed or finished, an inflexible manner of doing things. Therefore, political activity consists in the exploration of what is intimated in a tradition. Politics is (in the now famous phrase) “the pursuit of intimations.”²⁷ This idea of pursuing the intimations of a tradition ultimately relates back to the concrete logic I mentioned earlier. A tradition of behavior for Oakeshott is a complex whole that does not point in a single direction, nor is it entirely self-consistent. A tradition of behavior is, in fact, a somewhat miscellaneous composition—in one place Oakeshott calls it a “multi-voiced creature”²⁸—consisting of a variety of beliefs, many pulling in different directions or competing with one another. It has identity, but this identity is of a complex and not a simple nature. A tradition of behavior is, in short, a concrete universal, and Oakeshott evokes its complex many-in-oneness in the following way:

[A tradition of behavior] is neither fixed nor finished; it has no changeless centre to which understanding can anchor itself; there is no sovereign purpose to be perceived or invariable direction to be detected; there is no model to be copied, idea to be realized, or rule to be followed. Some parts of it may change more slowly than others, but none is immune from change. Everything is temporary.

But that everything is temporary in a tradition does not mean that it provides no criterion for distinguishing between good and bad political projects. To be sure, this criterion cannot lie in correspondence to a fixed purpose or principle, but by denying such objectivism Oakeshott does not lapse into a feature-

less relativism. The criterion that governs a tradition of behavior is coherence. He writes:

Though a tradition of behavior is flimsy and elusive, it is not without identity, and what makes it a possible object of knowledge is the fact that all its parts do not change at the same time and that the changes it undergoes are potential within it. Its principle is a principle of *continuity*: authority is diffused between past, present and future; between the old, the new, and what is to come. . . . Everything is temporary, but nothing is arbitrary. Everything figures by comparison, not with what stands next to it, but with the whole.²⁹

The political theorist John Gray, whose own work has been deeply influenced by both Berlin and Oakeshott, has criticized Oakeshott's idea of tradition for its "neglect of diversity and conflict among (and for that matter within) traditions of practical activity, especially moral and political traditions." The "cardinal weakness of Oakeshott's account of political life," Gray argues, with its "recourse to a single underlying tradition of political practice," lies "in its suppression of *conflict*." Gray celebrates Berlin, on the other hand, for his thoroughgoing rejection of rationalistic monism and his radical assertion of the pluralism of value:

Where [Berlin] diverges from Oakeshott is in his constant recurrence to the reality of conflict—conflict among goods that are uncombinable and may be incommensurable, among obligations whose stringency is undeniable, among evils none of which is avoidable, among traditions each of which exerts a genuine pull on our complex and plural selves.³⁰

From what I have already said about Oakeshott's conception of a tradition, it is clear that I do not agree with Gray that it suppresses conflict. Perhaps the best response to Gray's criticism (which is by no means original) is the one Oakeshott gave to D. D. Raphael in 1965. The beliefs that compose a tradition, he writes,

are not self-consistent; they often pull in different directions, they compete with one another and cannot all be satisfied with one another, and therefore they cannot properly be thought of as a norm or as a self-consistent set of norms or "principles" capable of delivering to us an unequivocal message about what we should do. . . . Even to think of them as a "creed" gives them a character they have not got. Aristotle called them the "admitted goods" and recognized them to be incommensurable. . . . To the "rationalist," who insists upon getting a straight answer, this multi-voiced creature seems to be a most unreliable oracle. . . . We cannot expect a straight answer from our somewhat miscellaneous beliefs, preferences, approvals, disapprovals, etc. They do not provide a single, unambiguous norm.³¹

Clearly Oakeshott does not conceive of a tradition as something univocal or excluding diversity, and clearly the difference between him and Berlin does not consist in the fact that he suppresses conflict in political life while Berlin embraces it. The real difference between Oakeshott and Berlin lies, rather, in the fact that Oakeshott, unlike Berlin, does not see diversity and conflict as precluding any sort of unity or integration. Oakeshott's critique of rationalism does not rest on the stark dichotomy of monism and pluralism, unity and diversity. Rather, it presupposes an understanding of unity that incorporates diversity and conflict. Against the simple unity imposed on politics by ideological purpose or rational principle, Oakeshott defends the complex and concrete unity of a tradition. There is something between the rigid monism Berlin attacks and the radical (if not relativistic) pluralism he embraces; something between the Enlightenment rationalism Berlin often caricatures and the Romantic celebration of diversity and particularity he sometimes seems to endorse. This is the territory that Oakeshott explores throughout his career, from his early concrete logic of experience, to his idea of tradition, and eventually in his theory of civil association.

II

It is time now to turn to the understandings of liberalism that grow out of Berlin's and Oakeshott's respective critiques of rationalism. In his recent book, *Two Faces of Liberalism*, John Gray classifies Berlin and Oakeshott together as exemplars of what he calls *modus vivendi* liberalism, the liberalism that sees liberal institutions as means to peaceful coexistence among different ways of life. This *modus vivendi* liberalism Gray opposes to the dominant liberalism of our time, exemplified by John Rawls, which is based on rational consensus and animated by the Enlightenment hope for a universal regime.³² Here again, though, Gray sees Oakeshott's version of pluralistic liberalism as hobbled by an insufficient appreciation of diversity and conflict.³³ My own interpretation will cut in a different way. Instead of seeing Oakeshott's liberalism as insufficiently pluralistic, I will argue that Berlin's pluralism is ultimately incapable of grounding or specifying liberalism in a theoretically satisfying way.

In order to grasp Berlin's understanding of liberalism, we must return to "Two Concepts of Liberty." There Berlin argues that his pluralistic conception of value somehow entails the negative liberty that liberalism aims to secure. In a world where ultimate ends collide and there is no "final solution," the freedom to choose takes on supreme importance. The positive concept of liberty, as we have seen, rests on the mistaken monistic notion that all human

ends are ultimately compatible and can fit into a single whole. But if human ends are not ultimately compatible, then choice is unavoidable, and negative liberty, the freedom to make one's own choices without coercion, is what is ultimately valuable. In this way, Berlin justifies liberalism. He writes:

If, as I believe, the ends of men are many, and not all of them are in principle compatible with one another, then the possibility of conflict—and of tragedy—can never be wholly eliminated from human life, either personal or social. The necessity of choosing between absolute claims is then an inescapable characteristic of the human condition. This gives its value to freedom as Acton conceived of it—as an end in itself.³⁴

As several commentators have noted, Berlin's argument from pluralism to liberalism does not really work.³⁵ To be fair to Berlin, his concern in "Two Concepts of Liberty" does not seem to be to establish a logically rigorous connection between pluralism and liberalism. Rather, in keeping with the polemical context of the essay, he is more concerned to refute the errors of positive liberty and the monistic conception of value that it rests upon. Once we acknowledge the pluralism of value, the most influential antiliberal arguments on the basis of which negative liberty has been deemed worthless or second-rate all fall to the ground. If pluralism is true, then the idea of positive liberty that underwrites Communism and Fascism rests on an error, and there is no reason to deprive human beings of the negative liberty that is the hallmark of liberal society.

Difficulties appear, however, once we go beyond this negative, polemical point and try to establish a more positive and philosophically rigorous connection between pluralism and liberalism. It is not clear why, in the face of radical pluralism, one would necessarily opt for satisfying as many goals as possible instead of pursuing a single goal, or why one would give priority to negative liberty over other, equally valuable goods. As George Crowder writes:

The plurality of values in itself gives us no reason to support liberalism, indeed no reason to prefer any particular political arrangement to any other. . . . The mere fact that values are "plural," in the relevant sense, tells us nothing about which of the vast range of values known to us from human experience are the values we ought to choose for ourselves and our social institutions. Pluralism tells us that we must choose but not what to choose.³⁶

John Gray also questions Berlin's argument from value pluralism to liberalism. The ideal of liberalism based on negative liberty cannot simply be inferred from the meta-ethical thesis of pluralism; rather, it rests on the culturally specific value of choice-making. Radical pluralism must include the possibility of ways of life that do not value choice-making; it does not simply

underwrite the rather specific values of individuality and autonomous choice that belong to liberalism.³⁷

These criticisms of Berlin's attempt to link value pluralism and liberalism have not gone unanswered. Several scholars have defended Berlin by pointing to those areas of his thought where he seems to limit the range and scope of value pluralism.³⁸ There are places where Berlin suggests that there "is a minimum area of personal freedom" that must be preserved "if we are not to 'degrade or deny our nature,'" this minimum being defined somewhat vaguely as "that which a man cannot give up without offending against the essence of his human nature."³⁹ And there are other places where Berlin speaks of a common moral horizon, along the lines of H. L. A. Hart's notion of the minimum content of natural law,⁴⁰ which serves as a lower bound on our behavior. In "The Pursuit of the Ideal," for example, he writes:

There are, if not universal values, at any rate a minimum without which societies could scarcely survive. Few today would wish to defend slavery or ritual murder or Nazi Gas chambers or the torture of human beings for the sake of pleasure or profit or even political good—or the duty of children to denounce their parents, which the French and Russian revolutions demanded, or mindless killing.⁴¹

Though Berlin's scattered references to a common human nature and a common moral horizon go some way toward distinguishing his value pluralism from radical relativism, they are far too generic and minimal to ground liberalism or justify the priority of negative liberty to other political values. Historically there have been many societies that have fulfilled Berlin's criteria of a minimal decency without necessarily elevating negative liberty or the value of choice-making to supreme importance. It is in the historically specific disposition to value autonomous choice and individuality, not in some generic human nature or universal moral minimum, that the ground of liberalism should be sought. As John Gray puts it:

It is in the historical reality of a human subject which conceives choice-making to be centrally constitutive of its identity, rather than in any supposed universal inference from the truth of value-pluralism to the supreme value of choice itself, that liberalism is best grounded, if a ground for it be sought.⁴²

Intimations of this more historicistic argument connecting value pluralism to liberalism can also be found in Berlin. Commenting on John Stuart Mill's doctrine of liberty, Berlin states that the ideal of negative liberty is "comparatively modern . . . scarcely older, in its developed state, than the Renaissance or the Reformation."⁴³ Indeed, it is Mill more than anyone else

who has given expression to the historic value of individuality and choice-making by conceiving of man as

a being capable of choice, one who is most himself in choosing and not being chosen for; the rider not the horse; the seeker of ends, and not merely of means, ends that he pursues, each in his own fashion.⁴⁴

Berlin's frankest acknowledgment of the historical character of the ideal of negative liberty appears in the famous concluding paragraph of "Two Concepts of Liberty":

It may be that the ideal of freedom to choose ends without claiming eternal validity for them, and the pluralism of values connected with this, is only the late fruit of our declining capitalist civilisation: an ideal which remote ages and primitive societies have not recognised, and one which posterity will regard with curiosity, even sympathy, but little comprehension. This may be so; but no sceptical conclusions seem to me to follow. Principles are not less sacred because their duration cannot be guaranteed. . . . "To realise the relative validity of one's convictions," said an admirable writer of our time, "and yet stand for them unflinchingly is what distinguishes a civilised man from a barbarian."⁴⁵

It was this passage, of course, that led Leo Strauss to condemn Berlin's essay as "a characteristic document of the crisis of liberalism—of a crisis due to the fact that liberalism has abandoned its absolutist basis and is trying to become entirely relativistic."⁴⁶ To me, however, Berlin's historicist argument here—which we will find fully developed by Oakeshott—represents a more coherent response to the question of the basis of liberalism than the attempt to ground it in the non-historical fact of pluralism.

If Berlin is not entirely clear about the basis of liberalism, he is even murkier about what a liberal society actually consists in. A liberal society, for him, is chiefly characterized by negative liberty, but (as he himself recognizes) no society can be simply based on negative liberty. There must be limits to such liberty, there must be room for state-action, and of course there must be limits to state-action. But Berlin is not very specific about these limits. He tells us that even in liberal societies individual freedom is not "the sole, or even the dominant, criterion of social action. We compel children to be educated, and we forbid public executions. These are certainly curbs to freedom." Where exactly to place these curbs on our freedom ultimately rests on "our moral, religious, intellectual, economic, and aesthetic values, which are, in their turn, bound up with our conception of man, and of the basic demands of his nature." And, as always with Berlin, the values on which we would base a decision themselves conflict and involve us in tragic choices:

The extent of a man's, or a people's liberty to choose to live as he or they desire must be weighed against the claims of many other values, of which equality, or justice, or happiness, or security, or public order are perhaps the most obvious examples.

There is no foolproof method by which to adjudicate between these competing claims, so Berlin leaves us with "Burke's plea for the constant need to compensate, to reconcile, to balance."⁴⁷

Berlin's pluralism here would seem to leave the precious negative liberty of liberal society significantly imperiled. Berlin seems to realize this, and therefore he also argues that there are "some absolute barriers to the imposition of one man's will on another." But when it comes to defining what these absolute barriers are based on, Berlin once again becomes vague:

There must be some frontiers which nobody should be permitted to cross. Different names or natures may be given to the rules that determine these frontiers: they may be called natural rights, or the word of God, or natural law, or the demands of utility or of the "permanent interests of man"; I may believe them to be valid a priori, or assert them to be my own ultimate ends, or the ends of my society or culture. What these rules or commandments will have in common is that they are accepted so widely, and are grounded so deeply in the actual nature of men as they have developed through history, as to be, by now, an essential part of what we mean by being a normal human being. Genuine belief in the inviolability of a minimum extent of individual liberty entails some such absolute stand.⁴⁸

Berlin goes on to define the "normal human being" upon which he rests his "absolute stand" as one who could not cross the inviolable frontiers of liberty "without a qualm of revulsion."⁴⁹

None of this is very satisfying. And if one were to ask where exactly it is that Berlin goes wrong, I would answer that most of his difficulties stem from his understanding of liberalism in terms of the concept of negative liberty. Negative liberty, especially in the implausible Hobbesian-Benthamite form that Berlin sometimes defends it, cannot really distinguish between various types of state-action. All state-action represents an encroachment on our negative liberty to pursue our wants and desires without obstruction. Thus Berlin is left with the criterionless and tragic balancing of liberty with other, competing values.⁵⁰ To this naive understanding of negative liberty in which law is always seen as a restriction on freedom, Locke's reply to Filmer remains decisive: "that ill deserves the name of confinement which hedges us in only from bogs and precipices."⁵¹

III

Let us turn now to Oakeshott's conception of liberalism as it grows out of his critique of rationalism. And the first thing to point out is that Oakeshott's critique of rationalism is not meant to be a critique of liberalism. While Oakeshott certainly rejects the rationalistic tendencies of much liberal thought—its reliance on principles and natural rights; its hostility to tradition, authority, and prejudice; its belief in the transparency of the social order to individual reason—which is why he prefers to speak of “parliamentary government” rather than liberalism, he does not see these rationalistic tendencies as essential or intrinsic to liberalism; indeed, quite the contrary. In a review of one book attacking rationalism, for example, Oakeshott criticizes the author for making precisely this identification of liberal or parliamentary government with rationalism. The truth of the matter, he writes,

is that parliamentary government and rationalist politics do not belong to the same tradition and do not, in fact, go together. . . . The institutions of parliamentary government sprang from the least rationalistic period of our politics, from the Middle Ages, and . . . were connected, not with the promotion of a rationalist order of society, but (in conjunction with the common law) with the limitation of the exercise of political power and the opposition to tyranny in whatever form it appeared. The root of so-called “democratic” theory is not rationalist optimism about the perfectibility of human society, but scepticism about the possibility of such perfection and the determination not to allow human life to be perverted by the tyranny of a person or fixed by the tyranny of an idea.⁵²

In his rationalism writings, Oakeshott tries to develop a concept of liberal politics out of his notion of tradition, where “tradition” refers not simply to the past or the merely existent but (as I have argued above) to the nature of a complex whole and the manner in which it is maintained and integrated. He criticizes the idea of central social planning, for example, because the mode of integration that belongs to it is of a simple and external sort. In a centrally planned society, all power is concentrated in the hands of the government, and the government imposes order on society from the outside, as it were. Such concentration of power inevitably leads to despotism. In a liberal democratic society, on the other hand, the mode of integration is of a more complex sort, being based on the rule of law. The latter integrates a society in terms of rights and duties, which are not to be thought of as “natural” or absolute. The integration provided by the rule of law is, of course, never perfect or final. Enjoyment of the rights and duties that comprise it can lead to dangerous concentrations of power, which then call out for remedy or readjustment. But the key point is that these dangerous concentrations of power must be diffused by

means of incremental adjustments in the rights and duties of individuals, never by means of an overhead plan.⁵³

Here we see how Oakeshott understands liberal democracy as a tradition, a way of living. We must not, he argues, think of liberal democracy as an abstract idea or as a fixed body of abstract rights but, rather, as “a living method of social integration, the most civilized and the most effective ever invented by mankind.”⁵⁴ The difference with Berlin is striking. Whereas Berlin follows the old-fashioned liberal way of thinking that pits the sphere of individual, negative liberty against the interference of the state, Oakeshott, in more Hegelian fashion, tries to conceive the relationship between government and individual in a less oppositional way. Indeed, Oakeshott criticizes “as a relic of an old intellectual error” that way of thinking that sees our rights as “limitations” and their adjustment as “interference.” The practical problem with this way of thinking is that it ultimately obscures the distinction between adjustment by means of the rule of law and adjustment by means of an overhead plan; both are seen to be “intrusive.”⁵⁵ In Berlin’s case, this leads to an inability, as was noted above, to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate state-action. The old-fashioned liberal opposition between individual and government obscures what Oakeshott takes to be the truly significant opposition: that between two categorically distinct modes of government, central social planning and the rule of law.

In Oakeshott’s earlier rationalism writings, we find him trying to conceive of liberal society largely in terms of his critique of rationalism and the notion of tradition underlying it. While not ignoring the issue of freedom, he tends to subordinate it to, or at least place it in the context of, concerns with the stability, coherence, and continuity of a complex society. In some of Oakeshott’s later essays, however, beginning with “On Being Conservative” (1956) and “The Masses in Representative Democracy” (1957), a subtle shift takes place in his outlook, particularly with respect to the grounds upon which he defends liberalism. Instead of tradition, we now hear a good deal more about individuality, and the liberal political order, characterized by diffusion of power, the rule of law, and the absence of any overarching purpose, is defended largely in terms of its appropriateness to this historic disposition of individuality.⁵⁶ Correspondingly, what Oakeshott opposes to the morality and politics of individuality is not so much ideology any longer as the morality and politics of the common good: the imposition on subjects of a common substantive condition of human circumstance.

In these writings and the ones that follow, Oakeshott firmly embraces the historicist grounding of liberalism that is only tentatively and intermittently suggested by Berlin. Not the meta-ethical thesis of value pluralism, nor the existence of a common moral horizon, nor again human nature, but only our

historic circumstances, chief among which is the disposition to cultivate individuality, serve to ground liberalism. Oakeshott states his historicist position clearly in the lectures he delivered at Harvard in 1958, in the course of criticizing writers who have sought to ground liberalism—or the political theory of individualism—on “metaphysical theories of personality,” “principles of natural law,” or “theories of human nature”:

The political theory of individualism should, I think, be understood as the elucidation of a view of the office of government appropriate to certain circumstances. And the chief feature of these circumstances is the appearance of subjects who desire to make choices for themselves, who find happiness in doing so and who are frustrated in having choices imposed upon them. In order to begin to think about the manner of governing appropriate in these circumstances we do not need to demonstrate that a disposition of this sort has eternal validity, that it represents the fundamental structure of human nature, or that no other disposition is conceivable; all that we need do is to recognize the appearance of such subjects—namely, subjects intent upon the enjoyment of individuality—in sufficient numbers to make it appropriate to consider the corresponding office of government.⁵⁷

On Human Conduct (1975) represents the complete working out of the new approach signaled by “On Being Conservative,” “The Masses in a Representative Democracy,” and the Harvard lectures *Morality and Politics in Modern Europe*. Here Oakeshott defends the essentially liberal ideal of civil association in terms of an elaborate teaching about human freedom, within which he distinguishes two aspects: the freedom intrinsic to human agency, and the historic freedom or individuality that has for centuries occupied a central place in the European moral imagination. The freedom inherent in agency denotes a formal dimension of all conduct recognized to be human and specifies two essential conditions: first, that human conduct is understood to be an exhibition of intelligence and not the consequence of some organic, genetic, psychological, or otherwise non-intelligent “process” and, second, that the substantive actions and performances of agents be chosen by them and reflect their understandings of themselves and their beliefs about their situation. Such freedom, Oakeshott argues, is perfectly compatible with the various practices, instrumental and moral, that govern our activities, since these practices must be understood in order to be engaged in and because they “adverbially qualify” but do not determine our substantive choices and performances.⁵⁸ Only those practices that require us to pursue an end we have not chosen or approve of conditions that do not correspond to our own self-understanding violate our intrinsic freedom or “moral autonomy” by severing “the link between belief and conduct which constitutes moral agency.”⁵⁹

Here we can see Oakeshott theorizing more perspicuously the inviolable sphere of human liberty that Berlin gestured toward in his vague references to

human nature and a common moral horizon. Oakeshott does not, however, regard the freedom inherent in human agency as in any way sufficient to ground liberalism or civil association. This intrinsic freedom “does not distinguish one agent from another and it does not entail any particular mode of association.”⁶⁰ In premodern Europe, for example, when what Oakeshott calls the “morality of communal ties” prevailed, “the opportunity for choice was narrowly circumscribed” without impinging on the freedom intrinsic to agency, since everyone thought of themselves solely as members of a community and not as choice-making individuals.⁶¹ It is only when this “unsought and inescapable freedom” of agency came to be recognized “as the emblem of human dignity and as a condition for each individual to explore, to cultivate, to make the most of, and to enjoy as an opportunity rather than suffer as a burden” that it became possible to understand the European state in terms of civil association.⁶²

Oakeshott devotes several lyrical pages of *On Human Conduct* to evoking this historic disposition to cultivate the freedom inherent in agency—the disposition of individuality—finding it notably expressed in such writers as Pico della Mirandola, Montaigne, Cervantes, Hobbes, Pascal, Kant, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard. When he says that in Pico we find “a new image of ‘human nature,’ not Adam, not Prometheus, but Proteus—a character distinguished on account of limitless powers of self-transformation without self-destruction,”⁶³ we are perhaps reminded of Berlin’s vivid description of Mill’s image of human nature as creative, self-transformative, and perpetually incomplete.⁶⁴ Interestingly, Oakeshott does not mention Mill in his gallery of radical individualists and indeed regarded him as an equivocal theorist of the morality and politics of individuality. In one place he writes that Mill’s beliefs in “self-improvement” and “progress” constituted inadvertent steps “away from any kind of genuine individualism” and “in the direction of a collectivist theory.”⁶⁵

So what is the connection between freedom thus understood—in terms of the freedom intrinsic to agency and the historic disposition of individuality—and the liberal ideal of civil association? In an argument that owes much to Hobbes, Oakeshott insists that it is the idea of authority that lies at the heart of civil association that preserves the freedom intrinsic to agency of modern persons disposed to individuality. In modern, individualistic circumstances, it would be difficult to find a common purpose in terms of which to unite the members of a state. This is what makes civil association particularly appropriate to such circumstances. The members of civil association, unlike those of an enterprise association, are joined together not by any common purpose or even by their approval of the conditions it imposes; they are united only in their common recognition of the authority of the rules of civil association.

And herein lies their freedom, according to Oakeshott: "In acknowledging civil authority *cives* have given no hostages to a future in which, their approvals and choices no longer being what they were, they can remain free only in an act of dissociation."⁶⁶

Here, again, the differences with Berlin are noteworthy. The freedom that characterizes civil association is not simply Berlinian negative freedom, a freedom that stands in opposition to civil authority. Rather, freedom as Oakeshott conceives it is intimately related to civil authority. He does contrast the freedom that belongs to civil association with the "not less genuine, but wholly different freedom which belongs to enterprise association." But, again, this latter freedom is not to be understood in terms of Berlinian positive freedom. For Oakeshott, the freedom of human agency is to be understood in terms of the "link between belief and conduct." In civil association, this link is preserved, as we have seen, because civil authority is not acknowledged in terms of approval or desirability. In enterprise association, the link between belief and conduct is preserved only because an agent has chosen to enter the association and has the ability to extricate himself from it when he chooses to do so. Because freedom in an enterprise association depends on the choice to be and to remain associated, Oakeshott argues that such an association is an inappropriate model for the modern state, which is a compulsory association.⁶⁷

What are the advantages of Oakeshott's conceptualization of liberalism under the rubric of civil association vis-à-vis Berlin's? It seems to me there are two. In the first place, Oakeshott's theory of civil association overcomes the problem arising from Berlin's specification of liberalism in terms of negative liberty. As we have seen, by pitting the negative liberty of the individual against the interference of the state, Berlin effectively deprives himself of the ability to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate state-action. For Oakeshott, on the other hand, the freedom of the individual is understood in such a way that authority, obligation, and law do not necessarily compromise it. When properly conceived of in the context of nonpurposive civil association, authority, obligation, and law do not appear as "impediments" to human liberty but as necessary conditions of it. Oakeshott thus provides a criterion by which to distinguish between different types of state-action, depending on whether such action issues in nonpurposive, adverbial rules of conduct or in measures that are instrumental to a substantive purpose. We are not left with a tragic choice between freedom and other values such as equality, justice, security, and happiness; rather, we are given a conception of freedom that specifies just how these values are to be understood if they are to be rendered compatible with liberal life.

The second advantage of Oakeshott's theory of civil association is that it provides an account of political life that accommodates a significant amount

of individuality, pluralism, and diversity, without dissolving into a welter of competing moralities. Contrary to what John Gray has argued, Oakeshott's conception of civil authority is not merely formalistic and suppressive of the conflict that Gray associates with Berlin's "agonistic liberalism."⁶⁸ Nevertheless, Oakeshott does not understand liberalism as a mere *modus vivendi* between conflicting moralities. Indeed, he understands civil association as itself a moral (i.e., noninstrumental) practice, with criteria and considerations of its own. This does not mean that Oakeshott falls into the monism that Berlin decries. Civil association, like a tradition, is a complex many-in-one. Oakeshott analogizes it to a living, vernacular language. Like a language, civil association is not something consciously contrived, an artistic whole, something fixed and finished; it is a flexible instrument, with a complex organization, capable of maintaining its identity while tolerating change, diversity, and radical individuality. This is what ultimately differentiates Oakeshott's liberal pluralism from the more radical and less coherent pluralism of Berlin.

NOTES

1. Letter to Shirley Letwin, dated November 24, 1991, in Oakeshott archive at the British Library of Political and Economic Science (BLPES).

2. Noel Annan, *The Dons: Mentors, Eccentrics and Geniuses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 223.

3. Oakeshott's handwritten introduction can be found in the archive at the BLPES. Berlin's BBC lectures have recently been published under the title *Freedom and Its Betrayal: Six Enemies of Human Liberty*, edited by Henry Hardy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

4. This comment comes from Noel Annan's account of the lecture in *Our Age: English Intellectuals between the World Wars—A Group Portrait* (New York: Random House, 1990), 401. Other accounts of the episode can be found in Michael Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998), 205; Norman Podhoretz, "A Dissent on Isaiah Berlin," *Commentary* 107 (February 1999): 30-31.

5. Berlin writes about this lunch in two letters to Shirley Letwin, one dated November 24, 1991 (in which Berlin refers to Oakeshott's "bitchy introduction"), the other dated April 20, 1993. Both letters can be found in the Oakeshott archive at the BLPES. In the letter of April 20, 1993, Berlin writes,

I realize that I agree with quite a lot of what [Oakeshott] thought, but I think it violently exaggerated—a curious word to use about so impressionist a writer. . . . I do admit that after I heard him at the Carlyle Club, his views seemed to me a little deranged.

6. Annan, *Our Age*, 401.

7. A recent convert to Berlinian pluralism is William Galston; see his *Liberal Pluralism: The Implications of Value Pluralism for Political Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

8. Mark Lilla, "Inside the Clockwork," *The New York Review of Books* 49 (April 25, 2002): 43.
9. See Bernard Williams, "Liberalism and Loss," in *The Legacy of Isaiah Berlin*, edited by Ronald Dworkin, Mark Lilla, and Robert B. Silvers (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), 91-92.
10. Isaiah Berlin, "Historical Inevitability," in *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays*, edited by Henry Hardy and Roger Hausheer (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 176.
11. Isaiah Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli," in *The Proper Study of Mankind*, 312, 313.
12. *Ibid.*, 320, 324.
13. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *The Proper Study of Mankind*, 193.
14. *Ibid.*, 203.
15. *Ibid.*, 213.
16. *Ibid.*, 214. See Paul Franco, *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom* (London: Yale University Press, 1999), 180-82, for a critique of Berlin's treatment of positive freedom as it relates to Hegel.
17. Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 216, 218.
18. *Ibid.*, 223.
19. Isaiah Berlin, "The Pursuit of the Ideal," in *The Proper Study of Mankind*, 5.
20. *Ibid.*, 10-11.
21. *Ibid.*, 15-16.
22. See Michael Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 32-33.
23. Michael Oakeshott, "Rationalism in Politics," in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, edited by Timothy Fuller (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Press, 1991), 11-16.
24. Noel Annan makes this mistake when he says that "Oakeshott was sceptical of reason in politics: Berlin was not" (*The Dons*, 223).
25. Oakeshott, "Rationalism in Politics," 16-17.
26. Michael Oakeshott, "Political Education," in *Rationalism in Politics*, 48-54.
27. *Ibid.*, 56-58.
28. Michael Oakeshott, "Rationalism in Politics: A Reply to Professor Raphael," *Political Studies* 13 (1965): 90.
29. Oakeshott, "Political Education," 61, see also 67-68. W. H. Greenleaf, *Oakeshott's Philosophical Politics* (London: Longmans Green, 1966), 55, was the first to suggest the connection between Oakeshott's notion of tradition and the idealist notion of a concrete universal.
30. John Gray, "Berlin, Oakeshott and Enlightenment," in *Endgames: Questions in Late Modern Political Thought*, by John Gray (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1997), 86-87, 90. Gray makes this same criticism of Oakeshott in a number of other places; see his *Isaiah Berlin* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 7-8; *Enlightenment's Wake: Politics and Culture at the Close of the Modern Age* (London: Routledge, 1965), 67-68; *The Two Faces of Liberalism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2000), 32-33.
31. Oakeshott, "Reply to Raphael," 90. Strangely, in *Two Faces of Liberalism*, Gray quotes from this very passage (on p. 49), when only a few pages earlier he criticizes Oakeshott for seeking "to replace reference to principle [in liberalism] by the guidance of tradition—as if any late modern society, least of all his own, contained only one tradition" (pp. 32-33, see also 53).
32. Gray, *Two Faces of Liberalism*, 2.
33. *Ibid.*, 32-33, 53.
34. Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 239.

35. See especially George Crowder, "Pluralism and Liberalism," *Political Studies* 42 (1994): 293-305; Gray, *Isaiah Berlin*, chap. 6.
36. Crowder, "Pluralism and Liberalism," 293, 303.
37. Gray, *Isaiah Berlin*, 159-61.
38. See Steven Lukes, "The Singular and the Plural: On the Distinctive Liberalism of Isaiah Berlin," *Social Research* 61 (1994): 697-717; Jonathan Riley, "Interpreting Berlin's Liberalism," *American Political Science Review* 95 (2001): 283-95; Galston, *Liberal Purposes*, chap. 5.
39. Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 198.
40. H. L. A. Hart, *The Concept of Law* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1961), 189-95. See also Stuart Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 155.
41. Berlin, "The Pursuit of the Ideal," 15.
42. Gray, *Isaiah Berlin*, 160.
43. Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 201.
44. Isaiah Berlin, "John Stuart Mill and the Ends of Life," in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1969), 178.
45. Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 242.
46. Leo Strauss, "Relativism," in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism: An Introduction to the Thought of Leo Strauss*, edited by Thomas L. Pangle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 17.
47. Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 240. See also "The Pursuit of the Ideal," 14.
48. Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 235-36. See also "The Pursuit of the Ideal," 15.
49. Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 236.
50. In his later writings, Berlin does not emphasize the tragic character of political deliberation quite so much. Thus, in "The Pursuit of the Ideal," he writes:
- How do we choose between possibilities? What and how much must we sacrifice to what? There is, it seems to me, no clear reply. But the collisions, even if they cannot be avoided, can be softened. Claims can be balanced, compromises can be reached. (P. 14)
51. Locke, *Second Treatise*, §57.
52. Michael Oakeshott, "Scientific Politics," in *Religion, Politics and the Moral Life*, edited by Timothy Fuller (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 109. This is a review of Hans Morgenthau's *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* (1946). For a full defense of the view that Oakeshott can be regarded as a liberal thinker, see Paul Franco, *The Political Philosophy of Michael Oakeshott* (London: Yale University Press, 1990); also "Michael Oakeshott as Liberal Theorist," *Political Theory* 18 (1990): 411-36.
53. Michael Oakeshott, "Contemporary British Politics," *Cambridge Journal* 1 (1947-48): 474-90; see also "The Political Economy of Freedom," in *Rationalism in Politics*.
54. Oakeshott, "Contemporary British Politics," 489-90.
55. *Ibid.*, 488.
56. There are anticipations of this emphasis on individuality in some of Oakeshott's earlier writings. See, for example, "John Locke," *Cambridge Review* 54 (1932-33): 73; "Thomas Hobbes," *Scrutiny* 4 (1935-36): 272; "Introduction" to Hobbes's *Leviathan* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1946), lv-lviii.
57. Michael Oakeshott, *Morality and Politics in Modern Europe*, edited by Timothy Fuller (London: Yale University Press, 1993), 84.
58. Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1975), essay I.
59. *Ibid.*, 158.
60. *Ibid.*, 235.

61. See Oakeshott, "The Masses in Representative Democracy," in *Rationalism in Politics*, 365; *Morality and Politics in Modern Europe*, 19; "The Moral Life in the Writings of Thomas Hobbes," in *Rationalism in Politics*, 296-97.

62. Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, 236.

63. *Ibid.*, 241.

64. Berlin, "John Stuart Mill and the Ends of Life," esp. 178, 189, 192, 205-6.

65. Oakeshott, *Morality and Politics in Modern Europe*, 78-83.

66. Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, 158.

67. *Ibid.*, 157-58; Michael Oakeshott, "The Vocabulary of a Modern European State," *Political Studies* 2, no. 3 (1975): 340. In the latter article, Oakeshott explicitly denies that the different types of freedom belonging to civil association and enterprise association are to be understood "in terms of a so-called 'positive' and 'negative' freedom."

68. Gray, "Berlin, Oakeshott and Enlightenment," 88-92.

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