

Pluralism, but Not for Pluralists: Gray's Peculiar Value Pluralism

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Moral or value pluralism is a set of ideas associated closely with Isaiah Berlin and subsequently explored by a variety of 20th and 21st-century moral philosophers.¹ There is nothing like a unified doctrinal statement, but there are certain commonalities amongst the various thinkers. First, value pluralists reject any monistic account of value and/or the moral life, including both deontology and utilitarianism, the two most prominent contemporary moral theories. This means that they doubt the possibility of creating or discovering a single decision procedure or single value ranking system in ethical life. Their primary conclusions are that values are both incompatible (i.e. there are multiple things that humans value and that are valuable, and these things do not form a coherent whole but conflict with each other) and incommensurable (i.e. that values are not completely comparable according to or reducible to a single metric). In this essay, I examine the conception of pluralism presented in some of the essays of John Gray. Gray and others have called this version of value pluralism *modus vivendi* pluralism, and it is notable in Gray's conception because he claims that his conception of pluralism does not entail any commitment to liberalism capaciously understood. I focus specifically on Gray's treatment of negative liberty because I will also argue that self-conscious value pluralists will reasonably conclude that the protection and promotion of negative liberty ought to be considered as the rebuttable first priority of an authentically pluralist political community. That is, the public morality of a political/legal community composed of self-conscious value pluralists would consider the protection of negative liberty as the first responsibility and the *differentia* of a pluralist government. As a complement to negative liberty as the unique responsibility of a self-consciously pluralist government, the first virtue and the *differentia* of the public morality of a pluralist community would be toleration of others, especially toleration of what others choose to do with their liberty.

In Gray's version, *modus vivendi* pluralism rejects the notion that the acceptance of pluralism suggests that negative liberty would be the primary priority of a pluralist community, and, indeed, he is skeptical of the notion that the acceptance of pluralism necessarily ought to be connected to any specific political regime or set of institutions. I will argue that Gray's pluralism suffers from specific weaknesses connected with his interpretation of the character and importance of pluralism itself which render his sort of pluralism's attention to the commitments of self-conscious pluralists insufficient.

I. *MODUS VIVENDI* PLURALISM

The term '*modus vivendi*' was originally a term of abuse that John Rawls used to characterize an unacceptable conception of the agreement that supports a just liberal regime. For Rawls, a merely strategic or instrumental agreement to 'get along' was both an unjust and unstable way to found a society of cooperation for mutual benefit.² However, *modus vivendi* pluralists reject Rawls' claim that a political society

is most adequately understood as a society of fair cooperation. Instead, they insist that the most that could garner widespread support among people with radically different moral commitments would be to consider political society as a regime of peaceful coexistence. Because of this conclusion, *modus vivendi* pluralists claim that pluralism has little to nothing to contribute to political theory. As John Gray writes, “as a matter of logic, value-pluralism cannot entail any political project. All that value-pluralism implies is that strongly universalist moralities—religious or political—are illusions.”³ Instead, whatever beliefs, values, commitments, or institutions lead to (relatively) peaceful coexistence constitute the *modus vivendi* of any particular political community. Liberal values and institutions (e.g. negative liberty manifested in freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of conscience, private property rights, etc.) are not a necessary part of every version of a good human life, and, thus, are not a necessary part of any political *modus vivendi*.⁴

Modus vivendi pluralists have made it their primary point of departure to address the radical alteration of political culture that has arisen as non- or anti-liberal individuals and groups have immigrated to Western liberal states. As Patrick Neal (1997, p. 185) observes, *modus vivendi* pluralism is a response to the “shift from liberals arguing with each other about rights versus utility to liberals exploring alternative ways of rationally defending the faith in the face of challenges from ‘outside’.” They are much less concerned with conflicts within liberal value systems than with the kind of conflicts that exist between cultures, especially Western liberal cultures and non-liberal non-Western cultures, because, with mass immigration from the latter to the former, these conflicts have become internal to liberal states. Like egalitarian pluralists, *modus vivendi* pluralists view negative liberty as merely one value among many others. However, the *modus vivendi* pluralists recognize that, for many individuals and groups, negative liberty, especially understood in terms of individual choice, is not central to the pursuit of their version of the good life. This is especially the case for orthodox religious adherents, who despite the secularization of the West, appear to be growing in numbers throughout the rest of the world. Indeed, according to *modus vivendi* pluralists, the emphasis on negative liberty and freedom of choice neglects or even crowds out other possible good things. David McCabe (2010, p. 103) suggests that “in championing goods like self-expression, individuality, and choice, liberal regimes do less well in fostering others—cultural continuity within normative frameworks, aesthetic coherence across the community, fraternity with fellow citizens, moral integrity, and so on.” The recognition of the truth of a radical form of value pluralism has led the person most closely identified with *modus vivendi* pluralism, John Gray, to reject the notion that pluralism leads to liberalism at all. Indeed, as suggested above, this more radical pluralism has led Gray to claim that the political community in a pluralist world is best understood in terms of peaceful coexistence or ‘just getting along.’ The political regime of the modern state, for Gray, can be best understood as a *modus vivendi* which allows individuals and groups to pursue their own versions of the good life without the overall direction of a central power.⁵

Gray’s account of *modus vivendi* pluralism is most accurately considered as, on the one hand, a practical response to the influx of non-liberal and anti-liberal individuals and groups into the Western world and, on the other, a theoretical response to the appearance and academic influence of philosophically monistic theories of liberalism.⁶ He claims that “as a consequence of mass migration, new technologies of communication and continued cultural experimentation, nearly all societies today contain several ways of life, with many people belonging to more than one” (2002, p. 1). He couples this relatively non-controversial historical claim with a much more contentious historical and theoretical argument. Gray suggests that the ideological and monistic version of liberalism found in the work of thinkers like Rawls and Dworkin does not adequately reflect the empirical fact of pluralism as found in modern states or the theoretical truth of value pluralism as an account of human life. Further, Gray asserts that contemporary monistic liberalism is the last gasp of the Enlightenment project, which consisted of the attempt to construct or discover a single, universal, impersonal, and impartial morality and consequent political regime that would then be applied and administered throughout the world. He writes that:

The failures of the Enlightenment project that are my point of departure are intellectual as well as world-historical, though these intellectual failures are inevitably repressed in conventional liberal thought: I mean the inability of liberal theorists to deliver on the foundationalist promises of the Enlightenment project, by giving the principles of liberal society a universal claim on reason (1993, p. 69).

For Gray, the failures of both the Enlightenment project and of contemporary monistic liberalism result from the refusal of both to take seriously the nature of value pluralism. Since contemporary liberalism as manifested in the work of Rawls, Dworkin, Gauthier, Hayek, et al. fails to offer an adequate account of value pluralism, it neglects the authentic character of human life, offering instead a highly artificial and highly rationalized conception of morality and politics. According to Gray, taking proper account of the nature of value pluralism will lead, not to a liberal political theory, but to conceiving of political life as a *modus vivendi* between individuals and groups who hold a variety of conflicting ideas about what counts as a good human life. This *modus vivendi* will not be a one-time settlement or resolution of conflict, but a constant negotiation of the terms of peaceful coexistence between conflicting groups within any particular society.

Gray's account of value pluralism focuses primarily on conflicts between values and the incommensurability of values that are the common subject of most value pluralists. He writes that "the goods of human life are many and cannot be derived from or reduced to any one value," that there is a "non-harmony among values," and that "there is no one kind of life that is the best for all humankind or for any single person" (2003, p. 87). These are characteristic claims made by most value pluralists. However, there are important differences between Gray's account and other delineations of conflict and incommensurability. He writes that, since:

conflicts between communities whose ways of life are incompatible are a major threat to human well-being in the late modern world...[t]he variety of pluralism that should shape the agenda of political philosophy today is not the pluralism of personal plans and ideals that preoccupies recent liberal theory. It is the strong pluralism of incommensurable goods and bads whose conflicts implicate whole ways of life (2003, p. 85).

Gray's 'strong pluralism' is characterized by an extreme incommensurability of values, and Gray argues that this means that there is no rational way to make judgments among such values or among commitments, plans, projects, or among ways of life. He writes that incommensurable goods "cannot be ranked," and that incommensurability "means that no...comparative judgments are possible." (2002; 2003, p. 84). For Gray, the difficulties associated with making judgments between different cultural systems is the single most important political problem of the contemporary Western world. However, the incommensurability of values does not necessarily lead to a radical subjectivism of the type that Gray often seems to suggest it does. Incommensurability only suggests that all values cannot be reduced to a single metric without emptying the variety of values of their actual meaningfulness in human lives. For example, one can buy sex, but one cannot buy love or friendship, so one might conclude that sex and friendship are not completely commensurable. That does not make decisions concerning whether one should sleep with one's friends or with one's friends' spouses beyond the scope of reasonable choice. Nor does it even mean that the value of sex itself can be made completely manifest in terms of monetary exchange.⁷ Further, the problems associated with incommensurability are more often than not overcome by the set of circumstances in which decisions are made, including considerations of both impersonal/impartial and personal duties, the consequences to others of one's actions, and one's personal commitments and projects. And comparisons can be made according to some specific quality in which the comparison is made. Gray suggests that the works of Aeschylus, Shakespeare, and Beckett are non-comparable (a term that he uses synonymously with incommensurable). However, Richard Halpern has just published a book which compares the three playwrights

(among others) in terms of the connection between tragedy and political economy (Halpern 2017). So, Gray has exaggerated the irrationality which any account of incommensurability must admit. Further, he does not offer an account of the character of practical reason, and, without such an account, value pluralism tends to slide into subjectivism and relativism. Gray's emphasis on radical incommensurability and conflict are the direct result of his focus on the problem of plural monisms instead of on the implications of the acceptance of value pluralism.⁸

From this account of 'strong' value pluralism, Gray derives his recommendations for contemporary political life, which he calls *modus vivendi* pluralism. Gray's version of *modus vivendi* is rather sketchy, but, given his claim that radical incommensurability makes rational judgments about value difficult if not impossible, the sketchiness is not necessarily its primary weakness. First, Gray claims that, since values are plural, conflict with each other, and are incommensurable, there is no single argument about the structure of the political community that could possibly be acceptable to all members of the community, and, thus, the fact of value pluralism itself destroys the credibility of monistic versions of liberalism. According to Gray, liberalism offers a version of *the* good life, but, since it is only one version, it cannot be understood to have universal validity. Second, since there are many forms of human flourishing, there will be many forms of government which are acceptable insofar as they promote a variety of good lives and maintain order, security, and enforce a minimum content of morality. Gray writes that "the test that value-pluralists apply is how regimes promote and protect valuable ways of life and ensure a *modus vivendi* among them... [and] the terms of such *modus vivendi* will be constrained by a universal minimum morality that specifies a range of generically human goods and bads."⁹ Third, negative liberty, for Gray, is merely one value among many, and, in fact, the concept of liberty is subject to the same sort of conflicts which characterize value conflict and incommensurability. He writes that "just as there are conflicts among ultimate values that are incommensurable—between liberty and equality, equality and general welfare, say—so there are conflicts no less radical within liberty itself—conflicts among distinct liberties having incommensurable value" (Gray 1993). Thus, he rejects not only the notion that negative liberty would be a priority for any self-conscious value pluralist, but also rejects the idea that negative liberty (i.e. freedom from external interference or coercion by other human beings) would be more valued by the pluralist than positive liberty (i.e. the capacity for self-mastery or self-realization).

Gray sometimes suggests that toleration is a primary priority of *modus vivendi* pluralism.¹⁰ He is also correct in rejecting the Rawlsian characterization of political community as a fair system of cooperation.¹¹ As Gray rightly observes, the empirically pluralistic nature of modern states means that they cannot be accurately considered systems of cooperation. Instead, modern states ought to be understood as means by which individuals and groups of individuals with very different commitments, plans, and conceptions of a good human life coexist in relatively peaceful and orderly way.¹² It is also the case that self-conscious value pluralists would view the state in a similar way, since there is no reason for pluralists to expect the state to assist them in the pursuit of their particular projects by forcing others to cooperate with them. However, they can reasonably expect the state to secure the conditions under which they engage in the pursuit of their projects (e.g. order, security, and negative liberty). Gray is right in observing that negative liberty is not the only political value, and that order and security are also important. So, it makes perfect sense for a person, whether a pluralist or not, to prefer the order and security of Singapore and, until recently, of Hong Kong to the negative liberty of inner-city Detroit, the south side of Chicago, or the ninth ward of New Orleans. However, since order and security are goods in any political regime and would be considered goods by monists as well as pluralists, this fact does not tell us anything about the importance of value pluralism or its implications for political theory.

Indeed, the most obvious weakness of Gray's work, and that of other pluralists who reject the connection between pluralism and a preference for negative liberty as a political value, is that Gray does not take the commitments of self-conscious value pluralists seriously enough. Instead, his primary concern seems to be making the West safe for plural monisms. Value pluralism as an account of the character of practical life does not involve the mere assertion that there are various valid beliefs about what constitutes

a good life for human beings. Instead, it involves a claim about the real nature and plurality of possible good human lives, and, thus, the more interesting question is, what are the implications for accepting it?, not how do we deal with those who do not accept it? Nonetheless, Gray's claims that political life in plural communities involve, at best, getting along with others, and that "the test of legitimacy for any regime is its success in mediating conflict of values" raise questions about what counts as getting along and what counts as successful mediation (2002, p. 133). As noted above, Gray often suggests that any *modus vivendi* can be judged on the basis of whether it preserves, supports, and/or encourages a variety of versions of good human lives. It is "a political project, not a moral ideal...[I]t is a commitment to common institutions in which the claims of rival values can be reconciled" (2002, p. 25). At the same time he claims that *modus vivendi* does not "aim to convert the world to value-pluralism...[Indeed,] illusion may be a condition of some forms of life that are worth living," according to Gray (2002, p. 136).¹³ It is with this confession that Gray's lack of commitment to the actual political implications of accepting the truth of value pluralism becomes clear, and we are presented with, to borrow a phrase from Bernard Williams, what might be called Government House pluralism.¹⁴ *Modus vivendi* here is a kind of value pluralism where the ignorant monists are protected in their monism to preserve their happiness, contentedness, the values of their monisms, etc. Indeed, the purpose of Gray's *modus vivendi* regime could be understood as the fostering of a menagerie of monisms so that pluralists are able to observe the kinds of goods that acceptance of pluralism makes impossible or, at least, difficult (e.g. monotheistic doctrinal religions, political ideologies, cultural institutions like slavery and suttee and cannibalism).¹⁵

Generally, we would prefer that our scientists, engineers, mechanics, and carpenters have 'true' opinions about their various practices. It is less important that human beings have correct meta-ethical opinions, but it is still odd that Gray is indifferent to the persistence of error in thinking about moral and practical judgments.¹⁶ Indeed, Gray is more concerned with criticizing liberal monists like Kant, Bentham, and Rawls than with correcting illiberal monists, like Muslims, Marxists, and Fundamentalist Christians.¹⁷ It is true that one does not have to have a proper understanding of moral philosophy either to be moral or to live a decent life, just as one does not have to have a proper philosophy of comedy to be funny. However, it is usually considered to be the case that it is better to know the truth than to operate under an illusion. As Bernard Williams writes, "the consciousness of the plurality of competing values is itself a good, as constituting knowledge of an absolute and fundamental truth" (1978, p. xix).

It should also be obvious that accepting the adequacy of value pluralism as an account of human practical life will have an actual effect on one's own practical valuations, the nature of one's commitments, plans, and projects, and what one takes to be a good human life. Gray claims that "strong pluralism is a subversive truth. It cannot coexist with the articles of faith of any universalist creed," which is an odd claim for him to make given that his primary concern seems to be extending liberal tolerance to a variety of illiberal monisms, each claiming to be true and, thus, rejecting value pluralism (2003, p. 101). Of course, self-conscious value pluralists will not necessarily be morally upstanding human beings, and the acceptance of value pluralism will not bring about the New Jerusalem and it is unlikely that the lion will be lying down with the lamb. There is no reason to believe that people who accept the validity of value pluralism will not continue to cheat on their spouses or on their taxes, steal from their employers, neighbors, or big box retailers, mistreat or ignore their children and/or parents, refuse to stand up for what is right, flee from danger, abuse drugs or alcohol, or do almost anything that has traditionally been considered immoral. However, if they take their acceptance of value pluralism seriously, they will be far less likely to be fanatical followers of religion or political ideology, and they will quite obviously want to reserve for themselves the freedom to change their minds about their beliefs, commitments, plans, and projects.¹⁸ For a person who has changed his so many times about so many things, Gray seemingly ignores that there might be others who might at some point change their minds as well, and, thus, place a high priority on negative liberty.

Gray's strong or extreme version of pluralism suffers from serious weaknesses directly related to his characterization of the problem that he is attempting to address. His project concerns, on the one hand, addressing the increasing empirical pluralism which characterizes modern Western states, while also

criticizing the theoretical claims of monistic or ideological liberals because of their rejection of value pluralism. However, Gray's practical purposes and his theoretical ones do not necessarily cohere very well. The historical fact that Western states now contain significant and diverse population groups who not only reject liberalism as an account of the good life for humans but offer distinctively non- or anti-liberal accounts of the good life for human beings is of significant practical importance. However, this development has nothing to do with the theoretical validity of value pluralism as an adequate account of practical life. Indeed, instead of addressing the implications for political life of value pluralism for self-conscious value pluralists, Gray focuses almost solely on the problem of the proliferation of plural monisms. Because of this direction, Gray's account of value pluralism concerns itself primarily with conflicts between groups and cultures, and ignores conflicts within groups and cultures and within the individuals composing them. And, when he does glance in that direction, his examples point in the direction of the priority of negative liberty, especially regarding choices about an individual's own commitments to groups or cultures.¹⁹

Modus vivendi pluralism is best understood, not as a form of liberalism, but as an appeal to liberals, both monists and pluralists, to extend the range of toleration in the liberal state to non- and anti-liberals who are willing to accept a minimal public moral standard which doesn't prioritize negative liberty or choice itself. The ambivalent and, sometimes hostile, disposition of Gray as the most prominent defender of *modus vivendi* toward negative liberty makes *modus vivendi* pluralism much more susceptible to appropriation from ideologies that are both monistic and anti-liberal, and, in that way, undermines any real commitment to the truth claims of value pluralism. It also involves ignoring the radical character of accepting value pluralism, i.e. that there are all sorts of orthodoxies and ideologies that would be obviously unappealing to a value pluralist because of their monistic character. Gray wants to preserve the diversity of good lives, especially those dependent on monistic morality, but in doing so, he neglects the importance of negative liberty to his fellow value pluralists.

CONCLUSION

The weakness of Gray's conception of *modus vivendi* pluralism lies in its lack of interest in what self-conscious value pluralists would require governments to do. I suggest that value pluralists would reasonably choose negative liberty as the primary political value that distinguishes regimes that respect pluralism from those that do not. The government's protection of negative liberty is the primary value of a pluralist state because of the various possibilities that negative liberty preserves and supports. It preserves a space within which each person can pursue his own projects and act on his own commitments; it allows for the possibility that he might change his mind about his commitments, projects, and the entire direction of his life; it preserves and supports the idea that good human projects and commitments are plural and that there is no single hierarchy that could be composed which would be acceptable to all; and it preserves and supports the notion that projects and commitments which do not violate the minimum content of morality should be allowed to flourish without fear or favor from government or from our fellow citizens.

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NOTES

- 1 See, among others, Raz (1986); Stocker (1990); Norton (1976); Baier (1985); Pincoffs (1986); Hampshire (1989); Berlin (2002, pp. 166-217; Kekes (1993); and Williams (1985).
- 2 Rawls (2005, pp. 144-154). Rawls' acceptance of value pluralism is questionable, and he severely limits this acknowledgement by restricting acceptable pluralisms to those he calls reasonable pluralism. Nonetheless, critics have suggested that Rawls is wrong about the apparent instability of a *modus vivendi* understanding of political agreement. For example, Claudia Mills argues that such an instrumentalist or strategic commitment to a liberal regime might be just as effective as the overlapping consensus that Rawls recommends, and, of course, instrumental/strategic commitments can develop over time into stronger more durable commitments (e.g. the transactional relationship that a person has with his barber or bartender or haberdasher often turns into a personal commitment to said barber, bartender, haberdasher). See Mills (2000, pp. 190-203; and Hershovitz (2000, pp. 221-230).
- 3 Gray (2000, p. 135). For other writers who have argued that value pluralism has few implications for political theory, see Crowder (1994, pp. 293-305); Newey (1998, pp. 493-522); and Kekes (1993, pp. 199-217). Both Crowder and Kekes have subsequently altered their positions, with Crowder now arguing that an acceptance of value pluralism leads to an acceptance of welfare-state liberalism, and Kekes suggesting that it would lead to an Oakeshottian-style conservatism. See Crowder (2002, pp. 217-257 and Kekes (1998, pp. 190-219).
- 4 John Gray is the most prominent proponent of *modus vivendi* pluralism. See Gray (2000, pp. 85-102); and Gray (2002). However, there are other writers who use the language of *modus vivendi* and/or peaceful coexistence, but use it to defend negative liberty as a primary political value. See Kukathis (2003) and McCabe (2010). Others defend a version of *modus vivendi* pluralism while calling it something else. For example, Patrick Neal calls it vulgar liberalism, and Gray himself sometimes refers to it as agonistic liberalism. See Neal (1997, pp. 185-205; Gray (1993, pp. 64-69; 1995, pp. 64-86).
- 5 Neal (1997, p. 191) writes that *modus vivendi* pluralism involves "a 'Hobbesian enterprise of pragmatically looking for ways to ensure civil peace and order among those who disagree.'"
- 6 John Gray is well-known for the chameleon-like character of his thought, so I will focus primarily on his work on *modus vivendi* pluralism, which can be found in (Gray 2003, 2002). For a brief account of Gray's intellectual transformations, see Colls (1998, pp. 59-71).
- 7 The Beatles, a popular singing group from the 1960s, recognized the difficulties arising in this area, noting that love cannot be reduced to a purely monetary valuation, when stating that 'I don't care too much for money, [because] money can't me love.' At the same time, however, they realized that, in certain circumstances (e.g. extreme poverty), money might be considered more valuable than love. So, while admitting that 'your lovin' gives me a thrill,' they also note that 'your lovin' don't pay my bills,' so the solution is to 'give me money, that's what I want.'
- 8 For a similar critique of Gray's conception of incommensurability, see Rasmussen and Den Uyl (2005, pp. 173-183). Rasmussen and Den Uyl focus on Gray's generalized rejection of perfectionist morality, which ignores the possibility that value pluralism can encompass a notion of individual moral perfectionism, which can also resolve the problems of general incommensurability of values by particularizing such problems within the beliefs, commitments, and projects of an individual.
- 9 Gray (2003, pp. 86, 87) offers no systematic account of the minimum content of morality, arguing that "there can be no definitive list of the conditions that endanger a worthwhile human life. Even so, to be tortured, or forced to witness the torture of loved ones or compatriots; to be separated from one's friends, family or country; to be subjected to humiliation or persecution, or threatened with genocide; to be locked in poverty or avoidable ill-health—these are great evils for all who suffer them." He also notes that "The good life for humans demands a clean and healthy environment, a stable and cohesive society, and a distribution of benefits and burdens that is accepted as fair. It requires many other goods as well. There can be no complete or definitive list" (Gray 2002, p. 66; 2003, p. 98).
- 10 He writes that "toleration is a precondition of any stable *modus vivendi* among incorrigibly imperfect human beings" See Gray 1995, p. 18.
- 11 In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls writes that "society is a cooperative venture for mutual advantage," while, in *Justice as Fairness*, he claims that "political society... is a fair system of cooperation" (Rawls 1999, p. 4; 2001, p. 4).
- 12 Neal (1997, p. 200) suggests that "Hobbesians take the measure of civil polity by the yardstick of the *summum malum*, and on that instrument the mark labelled 'civil peace' is not preceded by the adjective 'mere.'"
- 13 As an example of the perversity of Gray's argument, he suggests that the suffering and anguish of Kafka and van Gogh might have been a necessary condition of their creative genius, so that curing

- their problems might have prevented them from producing their masterpieces. However, it's a very different proposition to suggest that, had Kafka or van Gogh not experienced their own personal torments, they would not have produced the profound beauty that they did, and saying that we shouldn't want to prevent human beings from experiencing personal torments because, on occasion, we get good art out of it. In a similar way, it is one thing to accept Shostakovich's compromises with Soviet totalitarianism as reasonable under the circumstances, but it's quite another to justify Soviet totalitarianism because Shostakovich produced his music under its cloud (Gray 2002, p. 59).
- 14 Williams (1995, p. 166) uses the term 'Government House Utilitarianism' to describe the anxiety of rule utilitarians about what the possible deleterious effects on common sense morality might be if the common people actually understood the true character of utilitarian arguments, especially the notion that act utility is the real or authentic justification for obeying moral rules. He writes that "Utilitarianism emerges as the morality of an elite, and the distinction between theory and practice determines a class of theorists in whose hands the truth of the Utilitarian justification of non-Utilitarian dispositions will be responsibly deployed... This version may be called 'Government House Utilitarianism'".
 - 15 Gray (2002, pp. 109-10) mentions that slavery would be contrary to the minimum content of morality, but gives no support for this argument. A benign slavery which insured that the slaves were well-fed, well-housed, well-clothed, had adequate leisure time, somewhat meaningful work, etc. would seemingly satisfy Gray's standards. In fact, he even mentions the Communist regime in Cuba under Castro as a legitimate form of government, suggesting that government enslavement of the people is acceptable as long they have a socialized medical service.
 - 16 Daniel Weinstock (1997, p. 492) offers the following characterization of Gray's indifference toward persistent monists (I have substituted the term 'pluralist' and 'monist' for Weinstock's original terms 'liberal' and 'traditional' to clarify the relevance of his summary to my argument): "[The pluralist] knows something that [the monist] does not. [The pluralist] is right in his beliefs about value, whereas [the monist] is wrong. His epistemic superiority has to do, moreover, not with some marginal fact or relatively trivial aspect of human existence. Rather, it has to do with moral and prudential values that give meaning to life and allow for cooperation and solidarity within communities. Given his objective value pluralism, Gray can deny this superiority only by trivializing pluralism in a way that runs against the whole thrust of his argument."
 - 17 In this he is very different than Stuart Hampshire, another thinker who could be classified as a *modus vivendi* pluralist. Indeed, Hampshire titled the second chapter of *Justice is Conflict* "Against Monotheism" (Hampshire 2000, pp. 51-75).
 - 18 For Chandran Kukathas (2007, pp. 74-118), who is as concerned with extending liberal toleration to non- or anti-liberal individuals and groups as Gray, the right of exit and the freedom of association connected with it are the central liberties that value pluralists would want their governments to protect.
 - 19 Gray (2002, p. 56) writes "say I am a second-generation Asian woman who must decide between an arranged marriage and a relationship based on personal choice. In that case an appeal to common practices will not suffice. I must decide which practice I accept." Gray's example offers obvious evidence as to why a self-conscious pluralist would strongly desire a government that placed a rebuttable primary priority on the preservation of negative liberty for its citizens. Otherwise, and in a *modus vivendi* pluralist community, this paradigmatic woman might not be given a choice at all.