

**The Road Not Taken:
Moral Sense Judgment in Contemporary Liberalism**

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Isaiah Berlin's notion of value pluralism poses significant challenges for contemporary liberal attempts at developing normative models of judgment and deliberation. Berlin's account of the nature of values and value conflicts, which I take to be, for the most part, correct, describes a moral universe in which values are irreducibly plural and often incommensurable. Contemporary liberal theory – which is heavily influenced by Kantian rationalism – is ill-equipped to deal with a moral universe characterized by value pluralism. In particular, the value pluralism thesis suggests serious, and possibly fatal, problems with basing normative conceptions of moral judgment and moral deliberation on rationalism alone. We are left then to ask whether there remain any resources in the liberal tradition that might address the challenges of value pluralism. I believe that such resources do exist in the moral sense tradition, specifically in the work of David Hume.

Kantian rationalism has had a most profound influence on the development of contemporary liberal theory. It has found contemporary expression in, amongst many others, the works of John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas. But this was not the only route open to liberal theory. An alternative and occluded tradition in liberal theory can be found in the moral sense philosophies of thinkers such as Anthony Ashley Cooper (the third Earl of Shaftesbury), Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, and most notably, David Hume.¹ The standard story of the development of liberal theory often casts Hume as a proto-utilitarian. However, this characterization is more appropriate to Francis Hutcheson than it is to Hume. Though Hume does write of utility, he never posited the greatest happiness for the greatest number as a formula for moral decision-making. As we will see, according to Hume, the notion of utility provides a means of understanding certain moral judgments. But it does not play the normative role that it does for a utilitarian.

The moral sense tradition is, therefore, a distinct though occluded tradition in liberal thought. This paper is the first stage of a larger project in which I am looking at the relationship between value pluralism and the moral sense tradition. So, at this stage, much of my discussion is speculative. I have left detailed discussions of the Kantian tradition and of the various responses to value pluralism to be developed later in the

¹ [References to the *Treatise* take the form of T followed by the book, part, section, and paragraph from which the passage is taken from *A Treatise of Human Nature*, eds. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), followed by a page reference in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge, revised by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978). References to the *Essays* list the essay title followed by a page reference in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987). References to the *Enquiries* take the form of EHU or EPM followed by the relevant section, part, and paragraph numbers from *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) and *An Enquiry Concerning The Principles of Morals*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) respectively, followed by a page reference in *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*. 1777 Edition. Reprint. 3rd Edition. ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge, revised by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). References to the *History of England* list the volume and page number in *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688*, 1778 Edition, Reprint, 6 vols, forward by William B. Todd (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1983). References to the *Natural History of Religion* give a page reference in *The Natural History of Religion*, ed. H.E. Root (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957). References to *Letters* list the volume followed by the page number in *The Letters of David Hume*, 2 Vols. ed. J.Y.T. Greig (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932). References to *New Letters* list the page number in *New Letters of David Hume*, eds. Raymond Klibansky and Ernest C. Mossner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954).]

project. In this paper, I will simply suggest four concrete ways in which the moral sense tradition offers us unique tools for dealing with the challenges of value pluralism. Firstly in defining a key role for the passions in moral judgment, the moral sense tradition better accounts for the empirical realities of judgment than does the Kantian tradition. Secondly, and following closely from this first point, the moral sense tradition provides a better basis for normative conceptions of judgment and deliberation because the role it affords plural passions in moral judgment better accords with the realities of value pluralism than does the singular focus on reason that is central to the Kantian tradition. Thirdly, and possibly most significantly, Hume's conception of moral judgment provides an account of different types of value and explains why some are rationally defensible while others are not. It, thus, offers useful guidance as to the limited, but still very important role for reason in moral judgment and deliberation. Finally, the moral sense tradition provides a useful means of understanding the complexity of difficult moral choices and the moral loss that the value pluralism thesis predicts will be an element of many moral choices that are nonetheless considered to be good. The starting point for this discussion is the work of Isaiah Berlin.

Berlin's thesis on the nature of values – the value pluralism thesis – fundamentally challenges core tenets of Western moral and political thought. Berlin suggests that the Western tradition is tied together by a common thread of monism, expressed in a Platonic ideal:

In the first place that, as in the sciences, all genuine questions must have one true answer and one only, all the rest being necessarily errors; 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, for one truth cannot be incompatible with another.²

In contrast to this view, Berlin claims that “there are many different ends that men may seek and still be fully rational, fully men, capable of understanding each other and sympathising and deriving light from each other.”³ Berlin is adamant in claiming that his position is not one of moral relativism. On his account, values are objective, meaning that they are “ends that men pursue for their own sakes, to which other things are means.”⁴ But they are also irreducibly plural. Genuine values cannot necessarily be harmonized or reconciled. In fact, many genuine values conflict with one another and, in some cases, are incommensurable with one another.

As John Gray has written, there are three levels to Berlin's doctrine of value pluralism. In the first place, the thesis suggests that “within any morality or code of conduct such as ours, there will arise conflicts among the ultimate values of that morality, which neither theoretical nor practical reasoning about them can resolve.”⁵ At a second level, Berlin's thesis suggests that “each of these goods is internally complex and inherently pluralistic, containing conflicting elements, some of which are constitutive incommensurables.”⁶ Finally, “different cultural forms will generate different moralities and values, containing many overlapping features, no doubt, but also specifying different,

² Isaiah Berlin. “The Pursuit of the Ideal,” in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 1-19. PP.5-6.

³ Berlin, “Pursuit of the Ideal.” P.11.

⁴ Berlin, “Pursuit of the Ideal.” P.11.

⁵ John Gray. *Isaiah Berlin* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996). P.43.

⁶ Gray, *Isaiah Berlin*. P.43.

and incommensurable, excellences, virtues and conceptions of the good.”⁷ I will take each of these layers of Berlin’s value pluralism in turn.

The first layer of value pluralism, the notion that incommensurable values can co-exist within a single morality or code of conduct is demonstrated in many of the morally-charged debates in our own liberal democratic polity. Take, for example, the debates over questions such as whether or not to allow abortion, whether government agents should be allowed to use torture to extract information from terror suspects, or whether or not a state should sanction same-sex marriage or polygamy. Each of these debates pits competing and incommensurable values against one another within a liberal democratic paradigm. What is more, none allow for middle-ground solutions in which the values of all concerned parties could be equally realized. Polygamy and same sex-marriage are either sanctioned or they are not. Abortion is either permitted or it is not. And despite recent arguments of government officials in the U.S. and others, the same goes for torture. Now, of course, our laws admit of some flexibility on these questions. Government sanction of abortion, torture, same-sex marriage, and polygamy (not to imply any connection between these) can be limited to specific circumstances. But flexibility of this sort is political. It in no way diminishes the incommensurability of the values underlying these debates. A society may certainly choose to privilege the value of a woman’s control of her own body at certain stages of her pregnancy and the value of the unborn fetus’ life at others. But, in terms of the underlying values at stake in these debates, these choices are radical in nature. The fact that we allow a woman access to abortion at certain stages of her pregnancy and not at others is not a solution in which the competing values are fully realized. This understanding of the abortion debate is borne out by easy observation. Although the abortion issue was “settled” by the courts in Canada in *R. v. Morgentaler* [1988] and by the courts in the United States in *Roe v. Wade* [1973], the debate over abortion continues to this day. There is clearly no shared sense that the current rules governing access to abortion are grounded in shared values.

It is also important to note that the values defended by one side in these debates are not alien to those who take the other side of the debate. In the case of abortion, for example, it is highly likely that most proponents of the pro-life position also value a woman’s right to control over her own body. Though the individuals in question might oppose a woman’s right to an abortion, they might (and very likely would) equally oppose other measures, such as rape or forced sterilization, that would violate a woman’s right to control over her own body. In choosing to defend a pro-life stance, therefore, the individuals are not choosing between a value that they hold and one that they do not. In addition, the choice to adopt a pro-life stance does not imply the necessary priority of the value of life. The easy examples to demonstrate this point are, of course, the many cases of individuals who oppose a woman’s right to have an abortion while simultaneously supporting capital punishment for those convicted of serious crimes.

The second level of value pluralism – the internal complexity of various goods – is demonstrated in Berlin’s famous discussion of positive and negative liberty.⁸ This dimension of value pluralism is also evident in discussions of equality in which the definition of the term itself is contested. For example, notions of equality of opportunity

⁷ Gray, *Isaiah Berlin*. P.43.

⁸ Isaiah Berlin. “Two Concepts of Liberty,” in *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 166-217.

and equality of outcome are often pitted against one another. As Gray argues, goods such as liberty and equality turn out not to be “harmonious wholes, but themselves arenas of conflict and incommensurability.”⁹

Berlin grounds the third dimension of value pluralism – the notion that different cultures will generate different moralities – in his discussion of Herder. Herder, Berlin argues, “maintained that every activity, situation, historical period or civilization possessed a unique character of its own; so that the attempt to reduce such phenomena to combinations of uniform elements, and to describe or analyse them in terms of universal rules, tended to obliterate precisely those crucial differences which constituted the specific quality of the object under study, whether in nature or in history.”¹⁰ Herder’s claim about the uniqueness of culture supports the thesis that “cultures are comparable but not commensurable; each is what it is, of literally inestimable value in its own society, and consequently to humanity as a whole.”¹¹

The notion that different cultures will generate different and sometimes incommensurable moralities is apparent in the several cases of Jehovah’s Witness parents who have refused or attempted to refuse life-saving medical treatment for their children on religious grounds. Many citizens who do not share the Jehovah’s Witness’ faith commitments find their decision to refuse medical treatment to be utterly incomprehensible. They simply cannot understand how a parent could allow their child to die from an easily treatable disease. What is rarely if ever discussed in such cases, however, is the nature of the values that undergird the parents’ decision. Those values are utterly foreign to those who do not share the Jehovah’s Witness’ faith. However, they are clearly so cherished by some Jehovah’s Witnesses that they support, what must be, an excruciating decision on the part of the parents.

The empirical cases point to some of the complex and, often, very disturbing implications of value pluralism for moral and political deliberation. If we accept the value pluralism thesis, we are compelled to reject the monism that characterizes most of the history of Western moral and political thought. According to Berlin, the value pluralism thesis forces us to acknowledge that the “notion of a perfect whole is not only unattainable, but conceptually incoherent.”¹² This acknowledgment marks a fundamental shift in our moral universe. Without some conception of the ideal, even if it is acknowledged to be a practical impossibility on account of human fallibility, the notion of progress becomes difficult to sustain. The notion of progress, even incremental progress, implies movement towards an ideal or, at a minimum, towards a better state of affairs. But, in suggesting that values are irreducibly plural and often incommensurable, the value pluralism thesis forces us to see in the world practices and customs embodying different values that admit of no single measure for rational comparison. Likely the most troubling possible implication of value pluralism is that we might have no legitimate grounds for criticizing cultural practices that deeply offend our most cherished values. Is it possible that we have no recourse but to accept these practices as simply different, neither better nor worse than our own?

⁹ Gray, *Isaiah Berlin*. P.43.

¹⁰ Isaiah Berlin. “Herder and the Enlightenment,” in *Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 168-242. P.168.

¹¹ Berlin, “Herder and the Enlightenment.” PP.206-7.

¹² Berlin, “Pursuit of the Ideal.” P.13.

There are several possible responses to the value pluralism thesis. Alasdair MacIntyre suggests that value pluralism, while a characteristic of our modern condition, does not in fact describe the nature of values. MacIntyre argues that value pluralism is an outcome of the Enlightenment project and the abandonment of an Aristotelian world view that provided for coherence in the moral universe. For MacIntyre, the splintering of the moral universe that demonstrates the failure of the Enlightenment project produced a form of value pluralism. Lacking the moral coherence provided by the Aristotelian framework, utilitarians and Kantians were freed to rationally disagree on the nature of virtue and vice. For MacIntyre, value pluralism of this sort is a condition to be overcome through a re-connection with Thomistic notions of virtue.¹³

Another response to value pluralism is articulated by Charles Taylor. Unlike MacIntyre, Taylor does not view value pluralism as an aberrant condition. Taylor acknowledges that certain values are, in fact, incommensurable. However, he does not understand this incommensurability to be a necessary or permanent characteristic of values. Giving the example of popular rule and public order as two values which once seemed incommensurable but which have since become reconciled in modern liberal democracies, Taylor writes that he is reluctant to take Berlin's value pluralism thesis as the last word and instead believes that "we can and should struggle for a 'transvaluation' (to borrow Nietzsche's term *Umwertung*) which could open the way to a mode of life, individual and social, in which these demands could be reconciled."¹⁴

It is beyond the scope of this paper to assess these two positions. I mention them at this stage only to highlight the fact that neither, in fact, accepts the value pluralism thesis. The one portrays incommensurable values as an aberrant condition, the other as a temporary condition. But what if we do accept value pluralism as an accurate account of the nature of values? What if values simply are irreducibly plural and often incommensurable? What implications would the fact of value pluralism have for our conceptions of judgment and moral deliberation? The most notable implication, I believe, is that we would have to re-think contemporary liberal models of judgment and deliberation because the dominant strains of liberal theory that are rooted in Kantian rationalism are insufficiently sensitive to value pluralism.¹⁵

This insufficient sensitivity to value pluralism is evident in, for example, John Rawls's Kantian-inspired conception of political liberalism. Rawls's re-articulation of his notion of justice as fairness in *Political Liberalism* was designed to answer the challenges of pluralism. However, Rawls's political liberalism fails to adequately respond to these challenges because it is so deeply rooted in a conception of reasonableness that is devoid of affect. Specifically, by excluding from his notion of public reason all reasons derived from comprehensive frameworks that are not shared, or at least accessible, by all citizens, Rawls "systematically (though sometimes unintentionally) rules out the kinds of claims

¹³ Alasdair MacIntyre. *After Virtue*. 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 2007).

¹⁴ Charles Taylor. "Charles Taylor Replies," in *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism: The Philosophy of Charles Taylor in Question*, ed. James Tully (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 213-257. P.214.

¹⁵ The same holds true for utilitarianism. In positing happiness or utility as the single end for which all human beings strive, utilitarianism is quite evidently incompatible with the Berlinian model in which values are irreducibly plural.

that are central to many citizens' cherished moral and religious doctrines."¹⁶ According to Rawls, "a citizen engages in public reason, then, when he or she deliberates within a framework of what he or she sincerely regards as the most reasonable political conception of justice, a conception that expresses political values that others, as free and equal citizens, might reasonably be expected to reasonably endorse."¹⁷ The notion of reciprocity that underlies Rawls's claim is most certainly worthy of support in a liberal democratic culture. However, because Rawls's satisfies the criterion of reciprocity through appeal to his original position in which individuals are abstracted from their affective concerns and constrained in their deliberation by a highly rationalist conception of judgment, he follows his acknowledgment of the fact of pluralism by bracketing and ruling out of bounds a whole realm of public discourse with which his theory is ill-equipped to deal.¹⁸

Rawls's political liberalism shows itself to be insufficiently sensitive to value pluralism by its capacity to accommodate only a narrowly defined realm of moral and political discourse. It further demonstrates its insensitivity to value pluralism through its unquestioned valuation of liberal autonomy. As John Gray has argued, this notion of liberal individual autonomy, while uncontested by liberals such as Rawls, is, in fact, not a universally subscribed value.¹⁹ One need only think of cultures that value the wisdom of elders to realize that liberal autonomy is not a universal value. Rawls's unquestioning reliance on this notion further impairs the capacity of his political liberalism to respond to the challenges of value pluralism.

So where does this leave us? Is the choice for liberals either to abandon hope of fully responding to the challenges of value pluralism or to do so at the cost of their own commitments to impartiality, reciprocity, and reasonableness? William Galston has argued that liberalism can, in fact, accommodate value pluralism.²⁰ I plan to respond to Galston's claims in my larger work on this subject. In this paper, I wish simply to point to another alternative for liberals, namely a re-discovery of the moral sense tradition. The work of David Hume in particular points to four key advantages for responding to the challenges of value pluralism: 1) it better accounts for the empirical realities of moral judgment than do Kantian rationalist models of judgment; 2) it relies on a plural notion of the passions rather than on a singular notion of reason; 3) it acknowledges and accounts for not only different values, but different types of value; and 4) it better accounts for the moral loss that can, and often does, accompany moral judgments that are, nevertheless, good and defensible. In what follows, I will briefly sketch out these four advantages.

Contemporary liberal theories of judgment and deliberation have tended to draw a clean distinction between reason and the passions and to define no legitimate role for the

¹⁶ Sharon Krause. *Civil Passions: Moral Sentiment and Democratic Deliberation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). P.156.

¹⁷ John Rawls. *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). P.450.

¹⁸ Peter Jones makes the useful distinction between the "fact of pluralism" and "value-pluralism" in "Toleration, Value-Pluralism, and the Fact of Pluralism," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 9, no.2 (June 2006): 189-210.

¹⁹ John Gray. "Pluralism and Toleration in Contemporary Political Philosophy," *Political Studies* 48 (2000): 323-333.

²⁰ William Galston. *Liberal Pluralism: The Implications of Value Pluralism for Political Theory and Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); *The Practice of Liberal Pluralism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

latter in moral and political deliberation. In large part, this can be accounted for by the overwhelming, and very laudable, concern amongst contemporary liberals with ensuring impartiality in moral and political matters. However, though the motive behind it may be laudable, the effect of this bifurcation has been the development of normative models of judgment and deliberation that do not accord with the empirical realities of judgment. As Sharon Krause argues,

no sentiment-free form of practical judgment is available to us. In this sense, there is no real choice to be made between the sentiment-based model and the rationalist one because we cannot deliberate about practical ends without affect. So to argue for a sentiment-based model of judgment and deliberation is not to recommend bringing more passions into politics, or to encourage people to be more emotional and less reflective in their judgments. It is rather to defend a clearer understanding of what is already happening (and what cannot help but happen) when we deliberate about what we ought to do.”²¹

Krause’s understanding of judgment, which I share, draws heavily on the moral sense tradition, in particular, on the work of David Hume.

The importance of predicating normative models of judgment and deliberation on empirically sustainable models of how the mind actually functions cannot be over-stated. Hume raises this point in the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* when he writes of uniting two species of philosophy in his discussions of the painter and the anatomist. According to Hume, painters extol virtue, “borrowing all helps from poetry and eloquence, and treating their subject in an easy and obvious manner, and such as is best fitted to please the imagination, and engage the affections.”²² Anatomists endeavour to “understand” the nature of people rather than to cultivate their manners.²³ Hume considered himself to be an anatomist and pointed to Hutcheson as a model of the painter. “The anatomist,” Hume advises, “ought never to emulate the painter... An anatomist, however, is admirably fitted to give advice to a painter; and ‘tis even impracticable to excel in the latter art, without the assistance of the former.”²⁴ Therefore, if we want to “undermine the foundations of an abstruse philosophy which seems to have hitherto served only as a shelter to superstition and a cover to absurdity and error,” Hume argues that we ought to “unite the boundaries of the different species of philosophy by reconciling profound inquiry with clearness, and truth with novelty.”²⁵

In his role as anatomist, Hume proposes a conception of judgment that rests on two key foundations. Firstly, the passions are heavily implicated in the process of judgment. Secondly, it is the passions that motivate us to action. As Hume writes, reason is “utterly impotent in this particular.”²⁶ He argues that

Reason, being cool and disengaged, is no motive to action, and directs only the impulse received from appetite or inclination, by showing us the means of attaining happiness or

²¹ Krause, *Civil Passions*. PP.140-1.

²² EHU 1.1.1; SBN 5.

²³ EHU 1.1.2; SBN 6.

²⁴ T 3.3.6.6; SBN, p.620-1.

²⁵ EHU 1.1.17; SBN16. Hume’s reference to Hutcheson as a painter is clearly meant to be deprecating. He was very critical of all philosophical systems that lacked the accuracy that he attributed to his own. Therefore, Hume’s discussion of uniting the two species of philosophy should not be taken as an expression of praise for “painters.” Rather, I read it as an expression of hope for a new type of philosophy that would harness the “painter’s” passionate praise of virtue to an accurate (according to Hume) understanding of human nature.

²⁶ T 3.1.1.6; SBN 457.

avoiding misery: Taste, as it gives pleasure or pain, and thereby constitutes happiness or misery, becomes a motive to action, and is the first spring of impulse to desire and volition.²⁷

The means through which we generate and communicate the passions that motivate action is sympathy. This, then, is the primary mechanism through which the passions operate in our process of judgment.

Hume argues that the “propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments” is the most remarkable quality of human nature.²⁸ Through sympathy, he writes, we actually come to experience the passion that another experiences.

When any affection is infus'd by sympathy, it is at first known only by its effects, and by those external signs in the countenance and conversation, which convey an idea of it. The idea is presently converted into an impression, and acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself, and produce an equal emotion, as any original affection.²⁹

The transition from idea to impression is achieved through the relations of contiguity and resemblance, or causation. Our proximity to the person experiencing the passion in question combines with the resemblance³⁰ we share as fellow human beings to “convey the impression or consciousness of our own person to the idea of the sentiments or passions” of that person.³¹

Hume does argue that the communication of sentiments is a process that appears instantaneous to anyone who reflects upon it with less than the “strict scrutiny of a philosopher.”³² Sentiments are communicated almost by contagion. “As in strings equally wound up,” he writes, “the motion of one communicates itself to the rest; so all the affections readily pass from one person to another, and beget correspondent movements in every human creature.”³³ Nevertheless, just as a musical instrument can be more or less in tune, so too Hume believed that our moral attunement to the sentiments of others admits of improvement.

Hume saw two principal avenues for the improvement of our moral sense. In the first place, he believed that “[history’s] chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature.”³⁴ So, as Jennifer Herdt writes, the many accounts of factional prejudices and their consequences that Hume recounts in his *History of England* are not merely descriptive. He “is never simply analyzing past events, but always also trying to shape contemporary attitudes and beliefs.”³⁵ Hume intended the *History* to “increase awareness of the hypocrisy and self-deception of religious belief,

²⁷ EPM Appx.1.21; 294.

²⁸ T 2.1.11.1; SBN 316.

²⁹ T 2.1.11.3; SBN 317.

³⁰ Resemblance performs two rolls in this process. In the first, what might be called generic resemblance, we infer the existence of others’ sentiments because we recognise that all people have the same kinds of sentiments. In the second roll, resemblance operates as a means of transmission of vivacity.

³¹ T 2.1.11.6; SBN 318.

³² T 2.1.11.3; SBN 317.

³³ T 3.3.1.6; SBN 576.

³⁴ EHU 8.1.7; SBN 83.

³⁵ Herdt, *Religion and Faction*. P.206.

thereby deflating factional bigotry, encouraging mutual sympathetic understanding, and enhancing concern for public welfare at the expense of factional interests.”³⁶

The second means through which our moral sense can become better attuned to the sentiments of others is conversation. As Susan Purviance writes, “discussion and conversation provide the context for the refinement of moral judgement.”³⁷ In fact, Hume saw sympathy as intimately related to sociability. This link is essential because, in order to operate as the key mechanism in moral judgment, sympathy must carry us beyond the limits of our own personal sentiments.³⁸ Hume writes that “we have no such extensive concern for society but from sympathy; and consequently ‘tis that principle, which takes us so far out of ourselves, as to give us the same pleasure or uneasiness in the characters of others, as if they had a tendency to our own advantage or loss.”³⁹ The sentiment at the heart of Hume’s extensive sympathy is “humanity,” which Hume defines as “a feeling for the happiness of mankind, and a resentment of their misery.”⁴⁰

Sympathy is the mechanism through which sentiments are communicated. However, the mechanism through which we make moral judgments is that which Hume calls a double relation of impressions and ideas. This is the mechanism through which the indirect passions of pride, humility, love and hatred, those that Hume associates with moral judgments, arise. In Hume’s words, the double relation of impressions and ideas is explained as follows:

When an idea produces an impression, related to an impression, which is connected with an idea, related to the first idea, these two impressions must be in a manner inseparable, nor will the one in any case be unattended with the other. ‘Tis after this manner, that the particular causes of pride and humility are determin’d. The quality, which operates on the passion, produces separately an impression resembling it; the subject, to which the quality adheres, is related to self, the object of the passion.⁴¹

In simpler language, Hume is arguing that an indirect passion such as pride can only arise when two relations exist: the first is between a quality of the subject – for example the generosity of a character – and either pain or pleasure; the second is between the subject and either myself or another. In the case of my generous character, the generosity is associated with pleasure. The generous character is associated with me. Through this double relation, I feel pride in my generous character. Were the generous character someone else’s, the association of generosity and pleasure would combine with the association between the generous character and that person, to produce in me a love for that person on account of their generous character. Pride and love are associated with pleasure. Humility and hatred are associated with pain. Pride and humility are associated with oneself. Love and hatred are associated with another. From the initial two relations – that between the quality of the subject and either pain or pleasure, and between the subject and either myself or another – one of the four indirect passions arises naturally in my mind through its association of impressions and ideas.

³⁶ Herdt, *Religion and Faction*. P.14.

³⁷ Susan M. Purviance, “Intersubjectivity and Social Relations in the Philosophy of Francis Hutcheson” in *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland*, eds. John Dwyer and Richard B. Sher (Edinburgh: Mercat, 1993), 23-38. P.26.

³⁸ T 3.3.1.26; SBN 589.

³⁹ T 3.3.1.11; SBN 579.

⁴⁰ EPM Appx.1.3; SBN 286.

⁴¹ T 2.1.5.10; SBN 289.

Hume's conception of judgment immediately points to two key advantages for responding to the challenges of value pluralism. Firstly, by describing the necessary role of the passions in practical reasoning, it better accounts for the empirical realities of judgment than does the Kantian tradition.⁴² Secondly, Humean moral judgment is more sensitive to value pluralism because it relies on a plural notion of the passions as opposed to the singular focus on reason that defines the Kantian tradition. Berlin argues that, despite the irreducibly plural nature of values and the fact that many are incommensurable, there is a core set of shared values that make us human.⁴³ Berlin never identifies this core set of shared values. And in many ways, giving content to his claim is one of the central challenges for anyone seeking to come to grips with the notion of value pluralism. What Berlin does tell us is that "all men have a basic sense of good and evil."⁴⁴ And, in this claim, although perhaps inadvertently, Berlin points to an area of correspondence between value pluralism and the moral sense tradition. We may not all share identical conceptions of good and evil, but Hume's model of judgment explains why the notions of good and evil make sense to people who embody and espouse very different moral outlooks. The Kantian tradition is premised on the notion that we all share a universal capacity for reason and through that capacity for reason, identical conceptions of right and wrong. The demands of reason are categorical for all rational beings. However, the value pluralism thesis would seem to speak against this claim. What is more, whether or not all people share a universal capacity for reason, there can be no doubting that, as John Gray has argued, different cultures value reason differently.⁴⁵ Therefore, any model of judgment or deliberation that gives absolute primacy to a singular conception of reason will necessarily show itself to be insensitive to the challenges posed by value pluralism.

By contrast, as Kate Abramson has argued, Hume's model of extensive sympathy "allows him to justify a complex and interestingly pluralist account of cultural conflicts of values."⁴⁶ Kantian models of judgment and deliberation, such as Rawls's account of reasonable pluralism, simply do not account for this complexity. According to Abramson,

The pluralist account offered [by Hume] is one on which we will have grounds to say, from within the point of view of the "general, inalterable standard of morals" (T603, E229) of extensive sympathy: (1) when the borders between cultures are relevant for determining the value of a given trait, practice, or set of practices; (2) that with respect to any two or more values, the commensurability of those values in actual social practices is not guaranteed; (3) that there is a certain range of equally acceptable social balances among various virtues; (4) that some identifiable cases of cultural conflicts of value are products of mistaken judgments about the effects of a given trait or practice; and (5) that some identifiable cases in which there is an apparent cultural conflict of values are not, after all, genuine conflicts of values.⁴⁷

⁴² See Sharon Krause's excellent discussion in *Civil Passions* of how Hume's philosophy of mind gives a more accurate account of the empirical realities of practical reasoning than do Kantian inspired conceptions of judgment.

⁴³ Berlin, "Pursuit of the Ideal." P.11.

⁴⁴ Berlin, "Pursuit of the Ideal." P.14.

⁴⁵ Gray, "Pluralism and Toleration in Contemporary Political Philosophy."

⁴⁶ Kate Abramson. "Hume on Cultural Conflicts of Values," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal in the Analytic Tradition* 94, no.1/2, Selected Papers Presented at the American Philosophical Association Pacific Division Meeting 1998 (May, 1999): 173-187. P.183.

⁴⁷ Abramson, "Hume on Cultural Conflicts of Values." P.183.

Hume's model of extensive sympathy stipulates that, "we must restrict ourselves to the 'general point of view', restricting our purview to only those who have 'commerce' with the agent in forming our ideas of a trait's typical effects."⁴⁸ It, therefore, allows us to see where cultural borders are relevant to moral judgment. In this sense, Hume does not help us to fully overcome the problem that I set out earlier of having no legitimate grounds for criticizing cultural practices that deeply offend our own values. However, extensive sympathy does give us access to the deep value commitments that inform moral claims and so opens the possibility of discovering that some apparent value conflicts are, in fact, illusory.

In order to understand Abramson's fourth claim – that Hume's model of extensive sympathy offers means for determining certain conflicts of values to be the result of mistaken judgments – we must turn to Hume's pluralist understanding of value itself, perhaps the most important respect in which his conception of judgment equips us to respond to the challenges of value pluralism. According to Hume, "we reap a pleasure from the view of a character, which is naturally fitted to be useful to others, or to the person himself, or which is agreeable to others, or to the person himself."⁴⁹ (T591). By distinguishing two distinct types of value – the useful and the agreeable – Hume helps us to understand why, contra neo-Kantian conceptions of judgment and deliberation, moral and political deliberation in the moral universe defined by value pluralism cannot be solely grounded in a singular conception of reasonableness. He also helps us to define the role of reason in moral judgment and deliberation.

To ascribe value on the basis of usefulness is to make a causal claim. A character trait, for example courage, is useful for the effects that it is expected to produce. On the other hand, there is not necessarily a causal claim underlying value that is ascribed on the basis of agreeableness. Take, for example, generosity. Hume's claim is that we identify generosity as a virtue through a feeling of approbation. Imagine a scene in which a young child at a fair drops his ice cream cone and begins to cry. His sister immediately offers her cone to her brother. The boy's face lights up with pleasure and we, as the impartial observers, feel that same warm feeling of pleasure well up in us. Certainly, one effect of the sister's generosity is that the boy now has another ice cream cone to eat. And so, in one sense, we can claim that, like those virtues that we value on the basis of their usefulness, we value generosity as a cause of some effect that produces pleasure. Through extensive sympathy, we have reason to approve of this virtue when generalized to the societal level and so can claim that it would be useful if everyone were generous.

However, on a different level, the Humean claim is that, in cases of virtues such as generosity, we find the generous act itself to be agreeable. That warm sense of approval that arises in us is a response to the generosity of the act itself, not necessarily to the outcome of the act. In this case, the feeling of approbation and the feeling of agreeableness are essentially one. This case marks a stark contrast with the case of the virtue that is strictly useful. In that case, the sense of approbation which attends the character trait is quite distinct from the sense of pleasure which attends the effect of that trait.

Hume's distinction between the agreeable and the useful shows us that the role of reason is circumscribed in moral judgment and deliberation. As he writes in the *Enquiry*

⁴⁸ Abramson, "Hume on Cultural Conflicts of Values." P.174.

⁴⁹ T 3.3.1.30;SBN 591.

Concerning the Principles of Morals, “one principal foundation of moral praise being supposed to lie in the usefulness of any quality or action; it is evident, that *reason* must enter for a considerable share in all decisions of this kind; since nothing but that faculty can instruct us in the tendency of qualities and actions, and point out their beneficial consequences to society and to their possessor.”⁵⁰ However, reason cannot guide us in judgments of the agreeable, as these are matters of taste.

Understanding the role of reason in moral judgment and deliberation requires also that we specify the nature of this faculty. For Hume, the understanding can be understood in relation to his discussion of sympathy. He writes that

what is principally remarkable in this whole affair is the strong confirmation these phænomena give to the foregoing system concerning the understanding, and consequently to the present one concerning the passions; since these are analogous to each other. ‘Tis indeed evident, that when we sympathize with the passions and sentiments of others, these movements appear at first in *our* mind as mere ideas, and are conceiv’d to belong to another person, as we conceive any other matter of fact. ‘Tis also evident, that the ideas of the affections of others are converted into the very impressions they represent, and that the passions arise in conformity to the images we form of them.⁵¹

In other words, the understanding functions in much the same way as the seeming “immediate” process of sympathy.

In Hume’s system, all perceptions of the mind are either impressions or ideas. The former include all sensations, passions and emotions. The latter are “faint images of these in thinking and reasoning.”⁵² Because they are more immediate, impressions usually have a livelier effect upon the mind than do ideas. But belief will “raise up a simple idea to an equality with our impressions, and bestow upon it a like influence upon the passions.”⁵³ Hume defines a belief as “a lively idea related to or associated with a present impression.”⁵⁴ He often describes a belief as an idea to which we assent.⁵⁵ Hume realised that we conceive many ideas to which we do not assent. To believe is to hold something to be true, as opposed to simply having a raw picture of it in our head.

For Hume, the process through which we assent to ideas, in other words the process of belief, is sentimental. Beliefs consist “not in the nature and order of our ideas, but in the manner of their conception, and in their feeling to the mind... which distinguishes the ideas of judgment from the fictions of the imagination.”⁵⁶ Hume calls this feeling “a superior *force*, or *vivacity*, or *solidity*, or *firmness*, or *steadiness*.”⁵⁷ For the most part, he is concerned with causal beliefs. We see a glass falling toward a tiled floor and then it breaks. We come across a gardener planting and tending a beautiful garden. When a pattern develops such that glasses that fall on tiled floors break, or that beautiful gardens have been planted and tended by gardeners, we come to consider the relationship as one of cause and effect. As we experience the cause and the effect together more and more often, their relationship begins to feel *right* in our mind. The two ideas come to feel

⁵⁰ EPM Appx.1.2; SBN 285.

⁵¹ T 2.1.11.8; SBN 319.

⁵² T 1.1.1.1; SBN 1.

⁵³ T 1.3.10.3; SBN 119.

⁵⁴ T 1.3.7.5; SBN 96.

⁵⁵ See for example T 1.3.7.1; SBN 94.

⁵⁶ T 1.3.7.7; SBN 629.

⁵⁷ T 1.3.7.7; SBN 629.

to us as though they belong together and we come to infer the existence of the one from experience of the other.

For Hume, judgment, or the process of arriving at conviction, is a far less active process than it is for many other thinkers, especially those in the Kantian tradition. Hume writes that in our judgments concerning cause and effect, “our imagination passes from the first to the second, by a natural transition, which precedes reflection, and which cannot be prevented by it.”⁵⁸ For Hume, reasoning is simply associating. Judgments are the effects of custom on the imagination.⁵⁹ In inferring a cause from an effect, or vice versa, we are simply completing a pattern that has been etched in our mind through custom and experience, or sometimes through education or rhetoric. It is from this basis that Hume argues, “all probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation.”⁶⁰

Of course, people often do make unsound judgments. And so, just as Hume requires that we regulate our sentiments in moral judgment, he also requires that we reflect critically upon the conclusions of our understanding. What distinguishes Hume’s account of reason from other such accounts is that Hume shows us how the very same principles of association that determine people to make philosophical judgments can also lead them into error. This feature of the mind is evidenced in Hume’s discussion of four types of unphilosophical probability.

The first type of unphilosophical probability arises from the effect that distance in time has in diminishing the force and vivacity of a union between ideas. Hume argues that, irrespective of its coherence, an argument carries a different force in our mind according to whether it is recent or remote. It is undeniable, he writes, that “this circumstance has a considerable influence on the understanding, and secretly, changes the authority of the same argument, according to the different times, in which it is propos’d to us.”⁶¹ Likewise, Hume argues, “an experiment, that is recent and fresh in the memory, affects us more than one that is in some measure obliterated; and has a superior influence on the judgment, as well as the passions.”⁶² In both of these cases, the effect of time on the force and vivacity of a union of ideas leads an individual to make unphilosophical judgments.

The persuasive force of an argument is also affected by the number of links in its chain of reasoning. Hume writes, “tho our reasonings from proofs and from probabilities be considerably different from each other, yet the former species of reasoning often degenerates insensibly into the latter, by nothing but the multitude of connected arguments.”⁶³ Again, we see how unsound judgments arise from the same processes of mind that produce sound philosophical judgments. Any factor that diminishes the lively feeling in the mind that connects a given set of ideas is naturally diminishing the force of our conviction for the simple reason that our conviction, or belief, consists in that feeling of the mind.

The fourth type of unphilosophical probability is that derived from general rules. Judgments of cause and effect are determined by our experience. Once a causal relation

⁵⁸ T 1.3.13.8; SBN 147.

⁵⁹ T 1.3.13.20; SBN 155.

⁶⁰ T 1.3.8.12; SBN 103.

⁶¹ T 1.3.13.1; SBN 143.

⁶² T 1.3.13.2; SBN 143-4.

⁶³ T 1.3.13.3; SBN 144.

has been established in our mind, our imagination connects the cause with its effect, or vice versa, “by a natural transition, which precedes reflection, and which cannot be prevented by it.”⁶⁴ However, our mind does not always transfer past experience to exactly corresponding situations in the present. Because the relation of resemblance has so strong an influence on the mind, our imagination often transfers “our experience in past instances to objects which are resembling, but are not exactly the same with those concerning which we had experience.”⁶⁵ General rules can serve a very useful purpose because it is “by them we learn to distinguish the accidental circumstances from the efficacious causes.”⁶⁶ However, general rules are also the bases of prejudice. The effect of resemblance on the mind can carry “us to a lively conception of the usual effect, tho’ the object be different in the most material and most efficacious circumstances from that cause.”⁶⁷

According to Hume, unsound judgments result from the fact that “when set into any train of thinking,” the imagination “is apt to continue, even when its object fails it, and like a galley put in motion by the oars, carries on its course without any new impulse.”⁶⁸ Countering this natural propensity would have been easy had Hume been able to differentiate the feeling of sound belief from that of unsound belief. But because belief consists in a feeling of the mind that can only vary in degree, he could not do so. In fact, it is very difficult to describe the feeling of belief at all. Hume confesses that

‘tis impossible to explain perfectly this feeling or manner of conception. We may make use of words, that express something near it. But its true and proper name is *belief*, which is a term that every one sufficiently understands in common life. And in philosophy we can go no farther, than assert, that it is something *felt* by the mind, which distinguishes the ideas of the judgment from the fictions of the imagination. It gives them more force and influence; makes them appear of greater importance; infixes them in the mind; and renders them the governing principles of all our actions.⁶⁹

In other words, *belief feels like belief*. Hume did argue that “a man of solid sense and long experience” usually has a greater assurance in his beliefs than does “one who is foolish and ignorant” because “our sentiments have different degrees of authority, even with ourselves, in proportion to the degrees of our reason and experience.”⁷⁰ But ultimately, the only conclusion that follows from Hume’s philosophy of mind is that belief feels like belief.

The relevance of Hume’s work to value pluralism was evident in his own day as his entire corpus of moral, political, and philosophical works was animated by concerns about the real moral and political effects of faction and fanaticism. Although Hume’s interest in philosophical questions is undeniable, as Jennifer Herdt argues, “Hume’s epistemological concerns are not just secondary to practical and moral affairs..., but they

⁶⁴ T 1.3.13.8; SBN 147.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ T 1.3.13.11; SBN 149.

⁶⁷ T 1.3.13.12; SBN 150.

⁶⁸ T 1.4.2.22; SBN 198.

⁶⁹ T 1.3.7.7; SBN 629.

⁷⁰ T 1.4.1.5; SBN 182.

are actually driven by his concerns about the threat posed by religious belief and practice to the peace and prosperity of society.”⁷¹

The discussion of faction is, of course, important for a discussion of value pluralism. If, as Berlin suggests, different cultures will generate different moral frameworks that, on account of the lack of any overarching moral standard, cannot be rank ordered or even rationally compared, then the notion of faction will become particularly salient in a pluralist society. Hume divided factions into three types: factions from interest, from affection, and from principle. He thought factions from principle to be the most dangerous.⁷² These are also the types of faction most directly related to value pluralism. Hume believed that the effects of faction demonstrated his central concerns about people’s over-reliance on “what is vulgarly call’d” reason⁷³ and about the imposition of principles derived from a “false reason”⁷⁴ onto the real world. However, his moral sense philosophy also offers resources for better understanding the value conflicts that arise between factions and, in cases where those disagreements rest on faulty judgments, for discovering shared values that might mitigate factional conflict.

Hume summed up his concerns with faction in a letter to his friend Adam Smith in which he wrote that “Faction, next to Fanaticism, is, of all the passions, the most destructive of Morality.”⁷⁵ At the most obvious level, faction undermines morality because “members of religious factions perceive actions in defense of their party as selfless and principled, but this simply licenses them to do greater harm with a clear conscience.”⁷⁶ Members of religious factions “do not simply possess a false theoretical understanding of the relationship between morals and religion; more dangerously, religious zeal (which spreads by “contagion” or passive sympathy) warps their substantive moral judgments and beliefs, their capacity to apprehend moral distinctions.”⁷⁷ What is more, faction actually threatens the very capacity of individuals to make moral judgments. Faction steels the heart of individuals against the social sympathy that makes moral evaluation possible. As Herdt argues, “factional zeal, and the passive, contagious sympathy by which it spreads, are directly opposed to the

⁷¹ Herdt, *Religion and Faction*. P.9.

⁷² Hume writes that “parties from *principle*, especially abstract speculative principle, are known only to modern times, and are, perhaps, the most extraordinary and unaccountable *phenomenon*, that has yet appeared in human affairs. Where different principles beget a contrariety of conduct, which is the case with all different political principles, the matter may be more easily explained. A man, who esteems the true right of government to lie in one man, or one family, cannot easily agree with his fellow-citizen, who thinks that another man or family is possessed of this right. Each naturally wishes that right may take place, according to his own notions of it. But where the difference of principle is attended with no contrariety of action, but every one may follow his own way, without interfering with his neighbour, as happens in all religious controversies; what madness, what fury can beget such unhappy and such fatal divisions?” (*Essays*, “Of Parties in General.” P.59-60).

⁷³ T 2.3.4.1; SBN 419.

⁷⁴ T 1.4.7.7; SBN 268.

⁷⁵ In a letter to Adam Smith (1774) regarding Benjamin Franklin’s rejection for the position of Deputy Postmaster-General for the colonies. Quoted in E.C. Mossner, *The Life of David Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980). P.573.

⁷⁶ Herdt, *Religion and Faction*. P.205.

⁷⁷ Herdt, *Religion and Faction*. P.4.

sympathetic understanding needed to appreciate different points of view” and make good moral judgments.⁷⁸

An essential aspect of Hume’s account of moral evaluation is “that it be shared and articulated.”⁷⁹ As Annette Baier describes Hume’s account of moral judgment,

the test for virtue, for what makes a quality an approved quality, is “tendency to the good of mankind” (T.578), recognized by impartial sympathy with all of those affected by the presence of that quality of mind. Vices are anything that renders “any intercourse with the person dangerous or disagreeable” (ibid). Human happiness is the touchstone, and Hume takes it to be obvious that happiness requires fellowship, commerce, intercourse.⁸⁰

Factions block this moral intercourse.⁸¹ The fanatic, Hume writes, “consecrates himself, and bestows on his own person a sacred character, much superior to what forms and ceremonious institutions can confer on any other.”⁸² The sacred view that they hold of themselves divides enthusiasts, in their own minds, from others by a gulf so wide as to completely impede the sympathy that Hume took to be the basis of moral judgment. He argues that the fanatic’s sense of his own superiority “naturally begets the most extreme resolutions; especially after it rises to that height as to inspire the deluded fanatic with the opinion of divine illuminations, and with a contempt for the common rules of reason, morality, and prudence.”⁸³

Hume’s discussion of faction points to evident problems for democratic deliberation. When faction impedes the sympathy that makes moral judgment possible, it simultaneously makes moral deliberation impossible. Hume did conceive of enthusiasm as a type of sickness that makes individuals unsociable. So, at one level, his discussion of faction points to a similar conclusion to that arrived at by Rawls in *Political Liberalism*: namely that the scope of pluralism that can be accommodated in political deliberation must be limited to what Rawls calls “reasonable pluralism.”⁸⁴ However, Hume’s account is more sophisticated and, therefore, more satisfactory than Rawls’s in two important respects.

Firstly, as I have discussed, Hume shows how the same processes of mind that lead us to make sound judgments can also lead us into error or superstition. This model leaves open the possibility for bridging certain value conflicts that Rawls, because he viewed the distinction between the reasonable and the unreasonable as clear cut, did not allow. Hume’s account helps to explain why those who hold to superstitious or erroneous beliefs often fail to recognize the unreasonableness of their position. It also offers avenues for critical reflection on those beliefs and, through better understanding of the processes of mind that produce belief, at least in principle, to the possibility for the reconciliation of value conflicts based in mistaken judgments. Hume’s model of extensive sympathy offers further tools for bridging, or at least better understanding,

⁷⁸ Herdt, *Religion and Faction*. P.206.

⁷⁹ Annette C. Baier. *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume’s Treatise* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991). P.191.

⁸⁰ Baier, *Progress of Sentiments*. P.219.

⁸¹ Hume viewed the Protestant sects, such as the evangelical Scottish Presbyterians, the various Puritan sects, the Anabaptists, the Antinomians, the Fifth Monarchy Men, and the Independents as enthusiasts.

⁸² *Essays*, “Of Superstition and Enthusiasm.” P. 76.

⁸³ *Essays*, “Of Superstition and Enthusiasm.” P. 77.

⁸⁴ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*. P.441.

seemingly intractable value conflicts because it offers access to a realm of shared values that might be inaccessible to those whose moral sense has been dulled by faction.

Secondly, however, Hume's account shows us that some value conflicts, namely those based in values conceived as agreeable rather than useful are not open to rational calculation. Factional conflicts over such values cannot be addressed solely through reason. In such cases, the choice between competing values is a radical choice. What we must, however, bear in mind is that often, a single individual will cherish conflicting and incommensurable values. Therefore, as the value pluralism thesis predicts, moral choice between incommensurable values will necessarily entail moral loss, a loss that may be felt by individuals on both sides of a particular dispute. Hume's moral sense philosophy leaves room for the acknowledgment of that moral loss in ways that rationalist accounts of judgment cannot. From a rationalist perspective, a moral choice cannot be simultaneously rational and irrational. However, we know from experience, that moral choices and moral judgments can be attended with feelings of blame and approbation simultaneously. We have all experienced the bittersweet feeling that accompanies a moral choice that, at one level is a good choice, but that we know to be nonetheless attended with moral loss. In this regard then, Hume's moral sense philosophy provides a more adequate basis for understanding the complexity of moral choices than does the rationalist tradition that is so dominant in contemporary liberal theory. Hume does not give us clear means for resolving such value conflicts. However, he offers us a much surer basis for addressing them than can be generated on the basis of a rationalist model that is out of step with the empirical realities of judgment.

The discussion in this paper is still very speculative. And there is obviously a great deal more to be said about the relationship between the moral sense tradition and Isaiah Berlin's value pluralism thesis. However, even at this stage in the discussion, we can see that the moral sense tradition offers us unique tools for addressing the challenges of value pluralism. The point is simply that, if Berlin is right about the nature of values and value conflicts, then contemporary liberal theorists who develop normative models of judgment and deliberation to respond to the pluralism of modern liberal democratic societies would do well to turn back to the moral sense tradition in order to re-discover the capacity it offers to support models of judgment and deliberation that are both better attuned to the practical realities of judgment and more sensitive to value pluralism than are the dominant Kantian-inspired models that predominate in contemporary liberal theory.