Isaiah Berlin on Monism

Jason Ferrell

Introduction

Of the many things written about Isaiah Berlin it is surprising to note the relative dearth of studies that have taken monism as their singular subject. Compared to his studies of particular figures in intellectual history or his essays in political philosophy, the attention given to his claims about monism seems rather subdued. Generally when the topic of monism arises in the scholarly literature on Berlin, it is prefatory to other considerations. Monism is effectively a vehicle for the discussion of other, apparently more important, concerns. Given the controversies some of Berlin's writings have generated – such as whether value pluralism can be distinguished from moral relativism – it is perhaps not surprising that his thoughts on monism have been treated this way.[1] An initial glance at what he wrote on the subject does not immediately strike one as controversial. Monism, according to Berlin, embodies the central tradition of Western rationalism from the time of Plato until the contemporary moment.[2] Generally characterized as the belief that all questions have one true answer, Berlin often associates monism with the Enlightenment and its assumptions about the primacy of reason, and calls into question whether such a belief is true. For him it is clear that figures such as Hobbes,

[1] For a good overview of the critical literature on Berlin, see: Ian Harris, "Berlin and His Critics," in *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 349-374; George Crowder, "After Berlin: The Literature since 2002," accessed May 21, 2019, http://berlin.wolf.ox.ac.uk/lists/onib/after-berlin.pdf, and the exhaustive bibliography of secondary literature compiled by Henry Hardy on *the Isaiah Berlin Virtual Library* website that can be found at http://berlin.wolf.ox.ac.uk/lists/onib/other.html. For more specifically about the relativism-pluralism debate see: George Crowder, "Pluralism, Relativism, and Liberalism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Isaiah Berlin*, ed. Joshua L. Cherniss and Steven B. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 229-249.

[2] Compare: Isaiah Berlin, "European Unity and its Vicissitudes," in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 183-185; Isaiah Berlin, "The Pursuit of the Ideal," in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 4-5; Isaiah Berlin, "The Divorce between the Sciences and the Humanities," in *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Pimlico, 1997), 80-81; Isaiah Berlin, "My Intellectual Path," in *The Power of Ideas*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 5; and Isaiah Berlin, "The Birth of Greek Individualism," in *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 290.

Locke, and Voltaire are less interesting than writers like Herder, de Maistre, and Vico. Indeed, Berlin's reputation is tightly tied to his studies of the opponents of the Enlightenment, as well as his investigations into anti-rationalist movements like Romanticism. Since this is where his originality is taken to lie, the impetus is to highlight those things and relegate monism to the background. What, then, is there to discuss?

As with so much in Berlin's *oeuvre*, a reconsideration of what at first appears unambiguous leads to the realization that his views are quite nuanced. Monism frequently appears in his work, but it also varies when it occurs, much like a musical improvisation performed on different evenings. These variations highlight different aspects of what is often treated as a settled concept, and indicate dimensions to Berlin's discussion that are easy to overlook. While he does define the term in a clear-cut way, his treatment of monism is multifarious. Ostensibly, his concern is to illuminate the various forms of monism, and his depiction of it will vary according to what he considers the main concern of a specific essay. For present purposes, I will confine my investigation to what he says about three topics: history, philosophy, and politics. References to monism recur during his studies within each of these fields, and thus they provide appropriate areas to investigate what he says. To be sure, I believe that Berlin's use of monism is meant to be more illustrative of a certain set of beliefs and their influence than a logically precise analytical account. As is well known, Berlin had little interest in relating together all the strands of his thought, and the attempt to do so invites forcing a rich diversity of essays into a Procrustean mold. Berlin returns to topics repeatedly like a virtuoso developing a melody, with the result that he elaborates a set of ideas much as a performer elaborates a particular set of themes. The issue is not so much the logical consistency of what he says, but the expression of a viewpoint that is rhetorically persuasive, where analytical precision

contributes but one part to overall meaningfulness. Such is arguably the case for Berlin's claims about monism.[3] With this in mind, I will now begin.

Monism and its Iterations

A fairly standard account of monism recurs in Berlin's writings. One part of this account is metaphorical, and involves the image of a "three-legged stool," a "tripod," or a "jigsaw puzzle." No matter which metaphor is marshalled, Berlin also says monism depends upon three basic assumptions – the second part of his account. These assumptions are: that all questions have one genuine answer; that there is a means of determining these answers; and that the answers are all compatible with one another.[4] Insofar as he characterizes monism this way it partially serves a heuristic role for him; monism is a means to frame, explore, and explain certain trends, figures, or positions. Particular individuals, for example, are classified as monists, their work then parsed as to how it exhibits the assumptions of monism. This use of monism occurs often in Berlin's intellectual histories, which often highlight the importance of a given figure based on how well they exemplify, or oppose, monism. Thus Plato is a monist *par excellence* while Machiavelli is not. From this perspective, monism becomes a simplifying device that allows Berlin to sort different authors and their works into different categories.[5] Although such a classificatory scheme is artificial – indeed Berlin repeatedly admits that he does this sort of thing

[3] For a different take on this issue see: Sara Lagi, "Sir Isaiah Berlin: against Monism (1953-1958), in *Monisms and Pluralisms in the History of Political Thought*, ed. Andrea Cantanzaro and Sara Lagi (Rome: Edizioni Epokė, 2015), 139-154, and Luke MacInnis, "Two Concepts of Monism: Axiomatic and Asymptotic," *The Review of Politics* 77, no. 4 (2015): 603-635.

[4] For examples of both the ways Berlin speaks about monism, see: Berlin, "The Pursuit of the Ideal," 5-6; Berlin, "The Birth of Greek Individualism," 290-294; Isaiah Berlin, "The Decline of Utopian Ideas in the West," in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 24-27; and Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 21-23.

[5] Eric Mack is particularly critical of Berlin's reading of history in this manner. See: Eric Mack, "Isaiah Berlin and Liberalism Pluralism," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (1993): 216f.

primarily as a means of provoking debate – it is not the sole way he employs monism.[6] Instead, monism, as he defines it, becomes a way of examining how history, philosophy, and politics can be understood and practiced. To clarify what I mean by this I will take each in turn.

Monism & History

Berlin's view of the subject of history is straightforward. On the one hand, history comprises a record of past events. In this respect history is a storehouse of narratives concerning the thoughts and deeds of significant figures and their influence. On the other hand, Berlin also claims "history is what historians do."[7] It is frequently his efforts regarding the first form of history that captures our attention, as Berlin's accounts of historical figures – such as Tolstoy or Vico – are extraordinarily captivating. But the latter idea – that history is what historians do – is no less compelling, especially when paired with what he says about monism.

According to Berlin, the study of history involves noting patterns that display both similarities and differences between diverse eras. Although Berlin argues that the historian's task is akin to an aesthetic one, wherein imaginative insight and a sensitivity to detail generate an account that illuminates what has happened, he also acknowledges that there is the temptation to interpret historical events analytically.[8] It is this temptation that prompts historians with monist inclinations to assemble theories that provide historical studies which go beyond simple narratives. As Berlin describes it, there is a desire to see a deeper significance in events than that of mere occurrence, and this leads some to interpret history as embodying a purpose, or

[6] Compare: Isaiah Berlin, "The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History," in *Russian Thinkers*, ed. Henry Hardy and Aileen Kelly (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 24-26 and Isaiah Berlin, "The Naïvetė of Verdi," in *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Pimlico, 1997), 287-290.

[7] Isaiah Berlin, "The Concept of a Scientific History," in *Concepts and Categories: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 103.

[8] Isaiah Berlin, "The Sense of Reality," in *The Sense of Reality: Studies in Ideas and their History*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996), 19-20.

reflecting a transcendent ideal, or following a set of nomological laws.[9] Such desires yield architectonic accounts that attribute meaning to events insofar as they can be properly related to the purpose, ideal, or laws of the given approach. This is particularly true for attempts to render history a more scientific domain of study. In such cases there is the belief that the facts of history are susceptible to explanation in the way that the facts of the natural sciences are. Both historical and scientific fields deal with data that is taken to be objectively true; specific events that are known to have actually occurred for the one, and particular datum that provide the basis of theory building for the other. The similarity leads to the assumption that the kind of explanations that work so successfully in physics, chemistry, and the like will prove equally successful for history.[10] Berlin finds this assumption to be problematic, as he does not believe the types of explanation are the same. For him the sciences deal with those observable traits that are most susceptible to quantification or descriptions according to their "external" features. The study of history, however, requires descriptions that are sensitive to those features that are not so susceptible. Because history is constituted by the actions of individuals, the historian must be able to see things from the perspective of a participant.[11] If such a perspective is not taken into account, the result is a stilted interpretation of events that ignores the issues that actually interest us. The problem is ultimately that the attempt to explain events according to a preconceived theory consisting of logically deducible "general formulae" and "relevant laws" provides an incomplete account of what it purports to explain.[12] And, according to Berlin, what can be said

[9] Isaiah Berlin, "Historical Inevitability," in *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 104-110.
[10] Berlin, "The Concept of Scientific History," 104-105.
[11] Berlin, "The Sense of Reality," 25-26.
[12] Berlin, "Historical Inevitability," 109.

about the scientific approach to history can be said about the other approaches as well, as teleological and "metaphysical realist" approaches attempt to force facts to fit their models.[13]

Given the impulse to interpret historical events according to criteria that are considered logically necessary, Berlin also regards monist approaches to history as being deterministic. The issue here is how monist readings of history interpret events as causally related or "inevitable." As he explains it, the problem arises partially from a misunderstanding of how the term "because" applies within the sciences as opposed to humanistic studies like history. For the sciences, "because" delineates a set of logical relations that determine the links between assumptions, arguments, and conclusions. With the humanities, "because" signifies the intelligibility of the account – of how things fit together or cohere – rather than the logically necessary ties between events. The attempt to apply the first understanding of "because" to the domain of history helps generate historical studies that treat historical moments as if they were causally determined, with little regard for human agency. Instead the focus is upon those forces – classes, or culture, or institutions – that do not simply shape individual behavior, but necessitate it.[14] For Berlin, such explanations of human behavior do not simply provide poor histories; they are also counter-intuitive. Since we *do* have a sense of ourselves as possessing agency, to accept an account that regards individual behavior as causally determined is to contradict what we believe to be true about the human condition. While such accounts may be eventually proven true – and the sense of our autonomy similarly disproven – as Berlin notes, this will require an overhaul not only of the way history is practiced, but of our moral discourse. In essence, if determinism is correct, then our view of what it means to be human will radically

[13] Berlin, "Historical Inevitability," 110.
[14] Berlin, "Historical Inevitability," 114f.

alter.[15] It is here that monism as relates to history overlaps with monism as found within the practice of philosophy. For the consequences of a monist approach to history – where one approach provides a parsimonious explanation of all that has happened, according to precisely determined causal relations – are similar to those found within monist visions of philosophy.

Monism & Philosophy

For Berlin philosophy is an activity that investigates the conditions of truth and meaning, or, put differently, attempts to specify the conditions that render the world intelligible. As a field of study, Berlin considers philosophy delineated by the questions it asks; there are questions that are not just difficult to answer, but lack obvious indicators as to where the answers lay. According to him, most questions can be classified as either formal or empirical, and thus gathered into one of two "baskets" (one that consists primarily in the use of deductive methods, the other that consist primarily in inductive techniques). Philosophical questions, however, are not readily classifiable in either way. Instead, they exhibit an admixture of both formal and empirical elements, and cause perplexity by proving resistant to conventional methods based on "observation and calculation."[16] Questions such as "What is the nature of time?" differ substantively from those such as "Is it raining?" or "What is the square root of 1?" Thus philosophical questions prompt a variety of queries into facts, values, principles, language, and methods, in wide-ranging attempts to determine their answers.[17]

Given the perplexity that philosophical questions evoke, Berlin indicates that there is an understandable desire to attain answers by the steady application of one method. Monist

[15] Berlin, "Historical Inevitability," 161-162. Compare: Isaiah Berlin, "Introduction," in *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 4-7.
[16] Isaiah Berlin, "The Purpose of Philosophy," in *Concepts and Categories: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 3. Compare: Isaiah Berlin, "Does Political Theory Still Exist?" in *Concepts and Categories: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 144-148.
[17] Berlin, "The Purpose of Philosophy," 3. Compare: Isaiah Berlin, "The Philosophers of the Enlightenment," in *The Power of Ideas*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 36-38.

approaches to philosophy arise as a consequence, for such a desire easily lends itself to monism's assumptions that all questions have a genuine answer that can be determined by the use of one method. Some of Berlin's earliest writings take up these issues through critiques of logical positivism and phenomenalism. While not his most famous essays, "Verification," "Empirical Propositions and Hypothetical Statements," and "Logical Translation" address what are demonstrably monist tendencies as found within philosophical theories that were dominant in the early to mid-twentieth century. As he argues in these particular pieces, both logical positivism and phenomenalism attempt to reduce philosophical questions to one dimension, and then articulate how this dimension is determinative of truth and meaning. In the case of logical positivism the claim that truth is determined by whether a statement can be "verified" – or has empirical content that corresponds to the external world – exhibits the monist impulse, while with phenomenalism this impulse ties to the claim that truth depends upon the sensory impressions of individuals, conceptualized as ideally situated observers.[18] Statements (or propositions) are then regarded as meaningful to the extent that they meet the conditions stipulated by the verification principle, or can be translated into hypothetical statements of an "if … then …" form. While Berlin criticizes logical positivism and phenomenalism for various technical reasons (such as an inability to account for the meaning of statements about past events), two of his biggest concerns are the reductive nature of both positions and the way they incorrectly assume meaning is a function of truth. According to Berlin, the attempt to reduce all statements to either claims that are empirically verifiable or stated in a hypothetical form distorts experience.[19] Relatedly, he also argues that meaning precedes the determination of truth, as there are intelligible claims that we regard as significant, despite their not meeting the criteria of

[18] Isaiah Berlin, "Empirical Propositions and Hypothetical Statements," in *Concepts and Categories: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 40.
[19] Berlin, "Empirical Propositions and Hypothetical Statements," 39-43, 46-47,

logical positivism or phenomenalism. In fact, the ability to determine whether a statement is true presumes that its meaning is already understood, otherwise there would be no way to verify, falsify, or investigate it.[20] Ultimately, the desire for certainty which underlies such approaches, and drives their belief that genuine knowledge is a function of one procedure or mode of inquiry, is the problem, as it precludes the consideration that perhaps truth and meaning are multifarious.[21]

As with the study of history, Berlin indicates that what can be said about the flaws of logical positivism and phenomenalism can be said about any approach which assumes that truth and the conditions for determining it are fundamentally unitary. Thus Platonism, Aristotelianism, Scholasticism, Cartesianism, Lockean and Humean forms of empiricism, Kantianism, and Hegelianism all reflect the same monist tendencies discernible in logical positivism and phenomenalism, despite their very different assumptions and arguments. Each, in its own way, holds that there is one particular way to determine truth, and attempts to reinterpret all other approaches in its own terms or refute them by arguing that their answers are false. Accordingly, Berlin holds that monist approaches to philosophy provide the common stream from which much of European thought flows, from its classical origins to its contemporary articulations, and indicates there may be deeper problems lying under the surface. In particular are the practical implications of such approaches, especially as found in the realm of politics.

Monism & Politics

Berlin's discussion of politics is notably sparse when it comes to considerations of institutional arrangements. Rather than focus on conventional subjects like the role of the

[20] Isaiah Berlin, "Verification," *Concepts and Categories: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 25.
[21] Isaiah Berlin, "Logical Translation," in *Concepts and Categories: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 77-79. Compare: Berlin, "My Intellectual Path," 2-4.

legislature, executive, or judiciary, he instead focuses upon issues of political judgment and the broader dimensions of decision-making. His concern is less about the mechanics of governance than about the context of individual agency.[22] Given this, the political implications of monism revolve around its understanding of human nature, as well as how this relates to ideas about liberty and autonomy. His main goal is to show how the rationally determined order of a monist inspired politics leads to paternalism and a restriction of liberty.

One of the clearest instances of monism's influence upon politics is found in Berlin's discussion of utopianism. In "The Decline of Utopian Ideas in the West" he explicitly says that the assumptions of monism – here he uses both the "three-legged stool" and "jigsaw puzzle" metaphors – embody the central tradition of western political thought.[23] However, he also *adds* an assumption to his account, for he says that there is a further presumption that "virtue is knowledge."[24] This proposition, which he attributes to Socrates, depends upon the assumption of an unchanging, eternal human nature.[25] The elaboration of what this human nature is – of its true purpose – generates a moral vision that blends together descriptive and evaluative claims, such that knowing what human nature "is" provides the basis for knowing what individuals "ought" to do.[26] As Berlin makes clear, the combination of the three basic monist assumptions with the further assumption about human nature justifies an approach to politics that aims to establish the perfect society. Accordingly, utopian writers propose arrangements that fulfill our basic human nature, and thereby provide criteria to judge actual political practice. It is an approach to politics that Berlin believes ranges from Plato's views about the philosopher-king to Marx's views of the

[22] For more on Berlin's lack of discussion about the mechanisms of governance, see: Jeremy Waldron, "Isaiah Berlin's Neglect of Enlightenment Constitutionalism," *in Political Political Theory: Essays on Institutions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), as well as George Crowder, "Value Pluralism, Constitutionalism, and Democracy: Waldron and Berlin in Debate, *The Review of Politics* 81, no. 1 (2019): 101-127.
[23] Berlin, "The Decline of Utopian Ideas in the West," 24-25, 27.
[24] Berlin, "The Decline of Utopian Ideas in the West," 27.
[25] Berlin, "The Decline of Utopian Ideas in the West," 28.
[26] Berlin, "The Decline of Utopian Ideas in the West," 28-29.

proletariat, and lends itself to forms of rational planning that limit autonomy and are paternalistic.

The paternalism of monist approaches to politics is most evident in their treatment of liberty. Berlin is famous for his distinction between negative and positive liberty, with the first referring to the opportunities individuals have and the second referring to their moral agency.[27] For Berlin, the issue is how monism interprets the concept of positive liberty and justifies a type of politics that inhibits the individuals' ability to make their own decisions. His argument is that positive liberty assumes individuals are purposive in their actions – that we have ends that we rationally pursue – and that monism distorts this assumption. The distortion arises when monism mistakenly presumes that the ends of a given individual are not simply rational, but universal in scope and applicable to the whole of humanity. As Berlin notes, "if I am rational, I cannot deny that what is right for me must, by the same reasons, by right for others who are rational like me."[28] The result is that what is said to be the rational purpose of one is construed as the rational purpose of all – an extension that is logically unsound. While it may be true, for example, that some individuals find meaningful agency through labor, this does not warrant the reification of labor as the definitive end of all humanity, as Marx holds. Similarly, while others might define their actions according to a spiritual ideal, it is a mistake to assume that all human endeavors are to be so judged, as Tolstoy suggested in his later years. For Berlin, the monist influence is the appropriation of positive liberty such that one, and only one, form of autonomy is exalted over all others, because of a belief that what is right for me must also be right for everyone else. The dilemma then is why someone should be allowed to do what the monist knows is contrary to their true end. If I, the monist, know that your true purpose is to cultivate the use of reason, then

[27] Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 169-181.
[28] Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 191.

why would I allow you to do things that don't contribute to this end? Obviously I shouldn't – not if I am certain about what I know.[29] Thus I am justified in restraining you. At this point Berlin believes the monist invokes a variety of questionable rationalizations: that doing what you want, rather than what your true end requires, is actually to be unfree; that since you are being coerced in the name of your true self, it isn't really coercion; that if you understood what was genuinely good for yourself, you'd approve the monist's actions; and that no matter who it hurts, so long as the higher end is attained, no amount of sacrifice is too great.[30] All are dubious arguments grounded upon monism's conflation of positive liberty as something that conceptualizes individual autonomy with an allegedly universal end that defines all of humanity. Worse, all are arguments that regard human beings not as what they are – individuals – but as material to be shaped and fitted together according to a pattern.

As Berlin makes clear, there is no political movement, secular or religious, that has not at some point used such reasoning to inflict the most horrible suffering upon others.[31] Consequently, of all the iterations of monism, the political variant is the one with the deadliest implications. For where the other forms of monism challenge our understanding of the world and our place in it, the political iteration demands that the world be changed, and us with it. If this cannot be accomplished voluntarily, then it will have to be through the forceful efforts of those who know what is best. "In this way," Berlin writes, "the rationalist argument, with its assumption of the single true solution, has led by steps which, if not logically valid, are historically and psychologically intelligible from an ethical doctrine of individual responsibility

[29] Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 214.
[30] Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 192-198. Compare: Berlin, "My Intellectual Path," 16-18.
[31] Berlin, "European Unity and its Vicissitudes," 181-182,

and individual self-perfection to an authoritarian State obedient to the directives of an elite of Platonic guardians."[32]

Appraisal and Conclusions

Berlin's depiction of monism as a jigsaw puzzle is useful for appraising his own account of it; for it is simple to put the pieces together and see how they fit as a whole. The understanding of history as a causally determined set of events squares nicely with the philosophical conception of existence as having a rational order. Both then fall into place with a utopian view of what society could be, if individuals recognize their real ends and corresponding place in the world. Monism, seen in this way, does provide an interesting way to interpret various movements, thinkers, and ideologies. The temptation is then to articulate a different account of things – or present different pieces of a different puzzle. Thus the ease with which many scholars turn their attention to what Berlin says about pluralism and liberalism.

Yet there is something to recommend resisting such a temptation. As I have indicated throughout my discussion, each of the iterations of monism highlights different issues, and, upon reflection, can be seen to stand alone. Berlin's critique of them, while it allows their relation, actually takes each in turn. That is, Berlin provides reasons to reject each piece of the monist puzzle on its own terms. Hence he calls into question whether or not history is a discipline that is amenable to a scientific approach; raises doubts about the idea that all questions can be answered by the use of one method; and highlights the intelligible but logically flawed political implications of monism. The interesting thing to note about Berlin's approach to monism is not whether his characterization of the Western tradition of rationalism as monist is correct, but how he identifies particular assumptions and their influence. For the implications of monism for history, philosophy, and politics entail a substantive shift in our ideas about what it means to be

[32] Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 198.

human, how we understand the world, and the way we organize society. In this respect, Berlin's account – or accounts – of monism foregrounds widely held assumptions and asks that they be reconsidered. Perhaps, Berlin suggests, we've not fully thought through the consequences of what we say we believe. Perhaps once we've done so we may not be comfortable with where our beliefs lead us.

So can anything be said on behalf of monism? Some, such as Ronald Dworkin, say yes, and argue that Berlin's concerns can be accommodated within a monist rubric.[33] I believe such a defense of monism misses the point. If one wants to defend monism the issue is not whether a monist position can account for pluralism or liberalism as Berlin understands them. Rather, the issue is whether one can speak of events as "causes" without falling prey to a scientific interpretation of history – or whether one can provide answers to philosophical questions that inspire analogous approaches that aren't reductive – or whether one can assume a shared human end without sliding into authoritarianism. In other words, the issue is whether one can address the particular problems of monism Berlin notes, and provide precise responses to his specific charges. Ultimately, contra Berlin, it may prove to be the case that there is no *a priori* reason to think that the assumptions of monism must lead to the outcomes he indicates. This may be why he acknowledges the fact that monism's political iteration proceeds according to steps that require logical leaps. Without caution, rationalism segues into irrationalism. At the very least, then, it seems that if one desires to defend rationalism, one must treat Berlin's account of monism as a set of unavoidable admonitions.

[33] Ronald Dworkin, *Justice for Hedgehogs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).