Political liberalism and public justification: the deep view

1. Introduction
The importance of the idea of public justification in Rawls’s political liberalism has often been discussed. But it remains contested just what its role is. If there currently is a mainstream view on the matter, it seems to be the ideal theory view. On this view, public justification is part of ideal theory only: public justification strictly supposes the normative context and resources of an ideal, well-ordered society of the sort prescribed by Rawls’s Justice as Fairness (JF). On one common variant of this view, public justification exclusively addresses the ideal, reasonable citizens of a well-ordered society. And to test whether a conception of justice is publicly justifiable is to test whether its substantive principles—as they have been established by other means, e.g., JF’s Original Position—can gain the stable support of such citizens. Another influential variant of the ideal theory view is Quong’s recent version of an “internal” conception of political liberalism. He, too, assumes that public justification exclusively addresses the ideal, reasonable citizens of a well-ordered society. But he takes ideal theory public justification to be more fundamental for political liberalism than the common variant of the ideal theory view allows: on his reading, political liberalism as a whole, and not only its substantive principles, must be publicly justifiable.

What I want to suggest here is a different view of the role of public justification in political liberalism. The ideal theory view, I take it, gets many things right. But it has limits. Yes, Rawls construes public justification as part of ideal theory—in one important use he makes of this idea. And yes, Rawls takes it that public justification exclusively addresses reasonable people. Not least, as Quong notes, Rawls’s political liberalism employs public justification in a more fundamental role than the common variant of the ideal theory view allows. However, contrary to both variants of the ideal theory view, Rawls employs public justification not only, nor even primarily, as part of ideal theory (or so I shall suggest). As an alternative to the ideal theory view, then, I shall outline what we might call the deep view. The deep view is a non-ideal theory version of an internal conception. It claims two things. First, public justification—seen as a

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2 This variant of the ideal theory view in effect conceptualizes public justification in light of the account of stability provided in Rawls’s A Theory of Justice (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), e.g., pp. 453-462.
robustly public, interpersonal form of justification by a standard of reciprocal acceptability by reasonable people, or people political liberalism recognizes as such\(^5\)--is fundamental in political liberalism’s order of justification. In Rawls-type political liberalism, the standard of reciprocal acceptability by reasonable people serves as a standard of theory selection for the domain of the political, and the aim of meeting this standard is part of what gives rise to the project of a political liberalism to begin with. Second, public justification plays its important systematic role also in the actual world, and not solely as part of ideal theory. The deep view hence differs from both forms of the ideal theory view just mentioned--for both deny that public justification has an important systematic role to play outside of ideal theory.

To suggest the deep view as a relevant variant of an internal conception of political liberalism, the bulk of my discussion will lay out how the deep view integrates a wide range of ideas, views, or commitments that are part of political liberalism’s complex justification structure. These include, e.g., *pro tanto* and full justification, the primacy of political values, reasonableness, justificatory neutrality, the role of reasonable comprehensive views, public reasons, the wide view of public political culture, overlapping consensus, political legitimacy, reflective equilibrium and the Original Position, amongst others. Throughout, I shall propose interpretations of the things just listed that fit the deep view—for it is part of the point I aim to make here that they can be interpreted accordingly. Unsurprisingly, then, I will read these things in terms that often differ from the interpretations that proponents of the ideal theory view tend to attach to them. Now I shall not argue that these things must be read in the way I propose, or that they may not be read in terms that fit the ideal theory view (I will deviate from this policy only in section 6, when I sharpen the contours of the deep view by contrasting it with Quong’s ideal theory version of the internal conception). Hence, my focus throughout is on laying out the deep view, rather than on attacking alternative readings of the role or nature of public justification in political liberalism. As I see it, what Rawls and other first-generation political liberals, such as Macedo or Larmore, have said on political liberalism’s complex justification structure leaves room for more than one reading. Some readings fit the ideal theory view, but others support the deep view—or so I shall suggest. Moreover, prior to defending a non-standard reading of political liberalism against its (inevitably many) competitors, it is best to first lay out the reading itself—so as to put into plain sight what would then stand to be defended. My current discussion aims to do just that.\(^6\)

I proceed as follows. The first four sections focus on the relationship between public justification and two other kinds of justification in Rawls, i.e., *pro tanto* and full justification. On the deep view, Rawls construes the relationship between these kinds of justification in terms that give pride of place to public justification—in *one* of its roles (but certainly not all of them). That is, in one of its roles, public justification identifies what kind of values full justification must

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\(^{6}\) While what I say below stands on its own, it comes in addition to what I say on the deep view elsewhere. For a fuller account of the deep view: see [omitted for blind review], [omitted for blind review] and [omitted for blind review].
prioritize and *pro tanto* justification must draw on. When reasonable people—i.e., people political liberalism recognizes as “reasonable”—seek to attain full justification, they prioritize the very kind of values that *pro tanto* justification must draw on in demonstrating the completeness of a conception of justice: namely, values that are reciprocally acceptable by all reasonable people, or publicly justifiable values. And, for Rawls, only what he calls “political” values, if any, qualify for the role. To bring this complex structure into focus, I start with *pro tanto* justification and full justification. Section 2 focuses on *pro tanto* justification and Rawls-type political values. Section 3 addresses full justification and the role of reasonable comprehensive views. Against this background, Section 4 turns to political liberalism’s species of robust public justification. I take note of some of its defining constraints and address how they cohere with Rawls’s wide view of political culture.

Section 5 outlines the deep view of the role of public justification—it is in this role that public justification has pride of place vis-à-vis *pro tanto* and full justification—and sketches how deep public justification relates to the criterion of reflective equilibrium (CRE) and the Original Position (OP). For at least one actual, non-ideal society, Rawls claims that a conception of political justice enables political legitimacy in that society only if it is reciprocally acceptable by the reasonable people of that society. This is why he (re)formulates JF as a variant of political liberalism. Next, it is part of JF’s role to reconstruct the self-conception of the reasonable participants of (deep) public justification. JF uses OP as a device to generate reconstructive suggestions. Yet only if these suggestions cohere with the considered judgments of these reasonable people will JF, rather than some other variant of political liberalism, achieve public justification. As reflected in the role of full justification, then, CRE is a condition of (deep) public justification.

Section 6 contrasts the deep view with Quong’s ideal theory variant of the internal conception. He is right to observe that political liberalism, in pursuing the aim of overlapping consensus, exclusively addresses doctrines or people that are reasonable in political liberalism’s sense. Alas, political liberalism pursues this aim not only within an ideal, well-ordered society, but also in the actual world, where not all doctrines or people are “reasonable” in that sense. And political liberalism includes some actual people within the constituency of public justification: both actual “reasonable” people and the non-actual, ideal “reasonable” citizens of a well-ordered society are recipients and co-authors of political liberalism’s justifications and conclusions. As section 7 concludes, all this has implications for what we may see as a defining challenge for political liberalism: namely, the challenge to establish how political liberalism can be more than a stretch of public dogma.

2. *Pro tanto* justification and “political” values

To start with, Rawls writes that all political justification “must be *pro tanto.*” To justify a conception of justice, *φ, pro tanto* is to show that *φ* provides an ordering exclusively of political values that is “complete,” or such that “the political values specified by it can be suitably ordered, or balanced, so that those values alone give a reasonable answer by public reason to all or nearly all questions concerning constitutional essentials and basic justice.”

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justification is not in all cases trumping.\(^9\) Still, it can constitute genuine justification: while Rawls claims that all political justification must be \textit{pro tanto}, he evidently takes it that political justification can establish \(\varphi\) as a reasonable, authoritative basis for a legitimate exercise of political power.

Why does \(\varphi\)’s capacity to answer political questions exclusively in terms of political values count toward \(\varphi\)’s justification? Rawls points toward an answer when he links \textit{pro tanto} justification to public reason. Public reason is exercised in reasoning that “aims for public justification”\(^10\)—public justification, in turn, is justification by a standard of reciprocal, equal acceptability by reasonable people—and, again, here and below, this refers to people political liberalism recognizes as “reasonable,” given the meaning they attach to this word.\(^11\) Add to this Rawls’s technical notion of political values. Rawls-type “political” values share three features (henceforth, I shall refer to Rawls-type “political” values simply as political values). First, these values apply to a given society’s “domain of the political” \textit{only}. Second, they are part of the political tradition of that society—as Rawls focuses on the liberal political tradition of the United States, he takes it, too, that these values are liberal in content. A third feature is especially relevant here, albeit it is reflected not so much in Rawls’s express account of these values, but more in the usage he makes of them: “political” values, if any, are acceptable by all reasonable citizens (while some political values are also reasonably non-rejectable).\(^12\) In conjunction: to demonstrate that \(\varphi\) is complete is to demonstrate that \(\varphi\) provides answers to relevant political questions that exclusively employ values that are reciprocally acceptable by all reasonable citizens. And so \textit{pro tanto} arguments—i.e., arguments that demonstrate completeness—count toward \(\varphi\)’s justification because they count toward \(\varphi\)’s \textit{public justification}.\(^13\)

There is a strong and a weak reading of Rawls-type \textit{pro tanto} justification. Completeness can come in degrees. Several conceptions of justice might advance political values that provide answers “to \textit{all or nearly all} questions concerning constitutional essentials and basic justice,” but some might be better at this than others. Thus, on a strong reading, \(\varphi\) possesses \textit{pro tanto} justification not simply if \(\varphi\) passes the threshold of completeness, but only if \(\varphi\) provides an ordering of political values that is \textit{more} complete than the orderings offered by any of \(\varphi\)’s competitors. To \textit{reject a pro tanto} justifiable conception of justice would thus mean to reject the conception that best serves the aim of public justification. Arguably, for Rawls, this would not be

\(^9\) Ibid, p. 386. 
\(^12\) On political values in political liberalism: see [omitted for blind review]. See also R. J. Leland and Han van Wietmarschen, “Reasonableness, Intellectual Modesty, and Reciprocity in Political Justification,” \textit{Ethics} 122/4 (2012), p. 730f. 
\(^13\) This simplifies. On this reading, to justify \(\varphi\) \textit{pro tanto} is to \textit{demonstrate}, or \textit{exemplify}, completeness by answering relevant questions exclusively in terms of \(\varphi\)’s political values. On another reading, it is a matter of providing reasons for \textit{the view} that \(\varphi\) is complete—reasons that may not employ political values. I adopt the first reading as it is better aligned with the view that \textit{pro tanto} justification instantiates public reasoning—and I assume here that if something is a stretch of public reasoning, or reasoning that (directly) aims for public justification, the standard of reciprocal acceptability by the reasonable applies to it.
reasonable. On a weak reading, \( \phi \) possesses *pro tanto* justification if it passes the threshold of completeness. And here it *can* be reasonable in Rawls’s sense to reject a *pro tanto* justifiable conception—e.g., if there is another conception that is more complete. In practice, these readings might come down to the same thing if only one *pro tanto* justifiable conception of justice is available. Still, I will go with the weak reading. In his later writings, Rawls allows for more than one variant of political liberalism, and so *pro tanto* justifiability is not an exclusive, positional merit, but a marker of a conception’s membership in the family of political liberalisms. On the assumption that this family can have more than one member, then, the fact that a conception of justice is *pro tanto* justifiable does not make it unreasonable (in Rawls’s sense) to reject it.\(^{14}\) (This will be important later in relation to full justification and reflective equilibrium, see sections 3 and 5.)

Two things need highlighting now. First, Rawls’s account of *pro tanto* justification crosses a view of how political justification should proceed with a substantive commitment to political values. He tells us that the political justification of a conception of justice must take the form of demonstrating that it provides answers to relevant political questions that serve the aim of public justification. This leaves open what values such a conception may contain—at least so long as it is open what values are publicly justifiable. Still, Rawls claims that completeness must be demonstrated exclusively in terms of political values. But these are not simply values that apply to the domain of the political and that are suitably acceptable by all relevant people—whatever their content, domain of application, or source of origin. Instead, political values are liberal in content, apply to the domain of the political *only*, and are part of a given political tradition. This builds substantive commitments into the idea of *pro tanto* justification. However, that completeness must be demonstrated in terms of such values turns on the view that they are publicly justifiable. Hence, even if we agree that political justification in a given society, \( S \), must take the form of demonstrating completeness in terms of values that, in \( S \), are publicly justifiable, we may or may not agree that (only) political values suit the purpose.

Next, consider the relationship between *pro tanto* and public justification. Rawls often suggests that when we justify *pro tanto*, we carry out public justification—as if public justification simply was a matter of promulgating what justifies *pro tanto*. This would render *pro tanto* justification more fundamental in the order of justification. But the above suggests a different picture. It suggests that we cannot know in terms of what values completeness must be demonstrated unless we know what values are reciprocally acceptable by reasonable people. That is, it seems to be by the *standard of reciprocal acceptability by reasonable people* that we must decide what values may enter the pool of values that *pro tanto* justification must draw on: it is *on the condition* that only political values are suitably acceptable that they alone may enter that pool. It thus seems that there is at least one respect in which public justification is more fundamental than *pro tanto* justification.

### 3. Full justification and justificatory neutrality

Consider next “full” justification. That \( \phi \) has full justification for an agent does not mean that \( \phi \) has *maximum* justification for the agent. Rather, it means that \( \phi \) can suitably be *integrated* with the agent’s doxastic perspective, including especially her comprehensive views. Full justification

is carried out by an individual citizen as a member of civil society. (I assume that each citizen affirms both a political conception and a comprehensive doctrine.) In this case, the citizen accepts a political conception and fills out its justification by embedding it in some way to the citizen’s comprehensive doctrine as either true or reasonable, depending on what the doctrine allows.\textsuperscript{15}

As I read this, it in effect claims that φ has full justification for citizens if they accept φ in such a way that φ integrates with—or becomes “in some way” embedded in—their comprehensive doctrines (this interlocks with the role of reflective equilibrium, see section 5, below). For Rawls, if agents accept φ in a doctrinally integrated way, their acceptance of φ is motivationally and reflectively stable, or more so than it would otherwise be. And if citizens know about one another that each accepts φ stably, each can attribute to others a stable willingness to comply with φ. Full justification can hence contribute to the stability of a political conception of justice and the institutions ordered by it.

Two observations are in place. First, if full justification is a matter of how well a conception of justice integrates with an agent’s doxastic perspective, then it, too, can come in degrees. One conception, φ\textsubscript{1}, can be more fully justified for Betty than another, φ\textsubscript{2}, if φ\textsubscript{1} integrates more fully than φ\textsubscript{2} with Betty’s comprehensive views. And φ\textsubscript{1} can be more fully justified for a greater or lesser number of people than φ\textsubscript{2}. Either way, it seems we may say that the degree in which φ possesses full justification is a function of how deep φ’s acceptance can be for an agent: the more fully φ can integrate with Betty’s comprehensive views, the deeper can her acceptance of φ be, and so the more fully justified can φ be for her.

Next, consider the role of comprehensive views in public justification. It seems that for φ to be publicly justifiable to Betty and Paul, φ must have at least some degree of full justification for each of them. After all, if φ does not have any degree of full justification for them, φ does not integrate at all with their comprehensive views. But then it would not be coherent for them to accept φ—which, I take it, entails that φ would not be reciprocally acceptable by them.\textsuperscript{16} This suggests: when reciprocal acceptability is present, full justification is present, too. And if no degree of full justification can be had, reciprocal acceptability cannot be had either. Now, this appears to elevate the role of comprehensive views in public justification. If φ’s public justifiability to Betty requires that φ can attain some degree of full justification for her, it seems to depend on whether φ can integrate with her comprehensive views. And it is natural to infer that comprehensive views hence constrain the contents of a publicly justifiable conception of justice.\textsuperscript{17}

Alas, Rawls denies this: he insists that the contents of comprehensive doctrines “have no normative role in public justification,”\textsuperscript{18} and so they do not constrain the contents of a publicly justifiable conception of justice. But in light of the above, this seems overstated: Rawls could at most claim that comprehensive views have no such role to play provided each reasonable person’s attempt to integrate a conception of justice with her comprehensive views comes down on the side of prioritizing this conception whenever it conflicts with her comprehensive views.

\begin{itemize}
\item[]\textsuperscript{15} Rawls, \textit{Political Liberalism}, p. 386. Emphasis added.
\item[]\textsuperscript{16} Rawls, \textit{Political Liberalism}, p. 387 f. See also next section.
\item[]\textsuperscript{17} At stages, Gaus reads Rawls along such lines: see his \textit{The Order of Public Reason} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 39-42.
\item[]\textsuperscript{18} Rawls, \textit{Political Liberalism}, p. 387. Emphasis added.
\end{itemize}
Does Rawls assume, then, that all reasonable people always go about such conflicts in this way? As a factual claim about the doxastic life of reasonable people, this seems implausible (unless special assumptions about reasonableness are in play). Some of them might sometimes go about things in this way. But then it cannot be ruled out that comprehensive views play a normative role in public justification.

It is no minor matter for political liberalism whether comprehensive views play such a role. What stands to be upheld here is its commitment to justificatory neutrality, i.e., the view that a conception of political justice must be justifiable on grounds that are not reasonably contested by the members of its constituency—where disagreement counts as reasonable if it can obtain between reasonable people without impugning their reasonableness. This commitment springs from political liberalism’s understanding of the requirements of public justification. For Rawls, if φ is the subject of reasonable disagreement between reasonable people, then φ is not reciprocally acceptable by them: public justification requires justificatory neutrality. He adds to this the (notorious) assumption that all comprehensive views are, or can be, contested reasonably and hence cannot serve as justifying grounds in public justification. On this view, the contents of comprehensive doctrines may not have a normative role in public justification as this would conflict with what public justification calls for.

Can full justification cohere with the commitment to justificatory neutrality? One reading is this. Yes, Rawls assumes that reasonable people, for the purposes of public justification, give priority to (some) political values where these conflict with their comprehensive views. But this is not a factual claim about their doxastic life. Rather, it expresses a normative condition of their reasonableness. Rawls takes it that reasonable people accept that a conception of political justice must be publicly justifiable to, or reciprocally acceptable by, reasonable people. But he also takes it that reasonable people rank the aim of public justification sufficiently high—high enough, that is, so as to prioritize for the purposes of basic justice values that are reciprocally acceptable by all reasonable people. Now, again, Rawls assumes that only political values are so acceptable. Hence, full justification does not confer on comprehensive views a normative role in public justification: the focus here is exclusively on reasonable people, while (i) reasonableness is taken to commit to the priority of the aim of public justification, and (ii) only political values are assumed to suit that aim.

What does this mean? Suppose reasonable Betty accepts a reasonable comprehensive doctrine, D. Now, comprehensive doctrines are reasonable only if they can be accepted by reasonable people without impugning their reasonableness. As a reasonable doctrine, then, D coheres with the commitments Betty has as a reasonable person, including her commitment to the priority of the aim of public justification and the contents of D, two outcomes are possible. Betty can modify the contents of D so as to better accommodate that conception’s political values. Or she modifies the content...
of that conception in light of other political values that can be better accommodated by \( D \). Either way, the aim of reciprocal acceptability by the reasonable has the last word: this is the aim that Betty’s doctrine must accommodate to be reasonable.

How does this relate to pro tanto justification? The standard reading of the relationship between pro tanto and full justification roughly is this: the conclusions of pro tanto justification are provisional and need confirmation through full justification, e.g., in order to ensure their stability. What I propose above goes beyond this. Whatever it takes for reasonable Betty to embed a conception of justice in her comprehensive views, in matters of basic justice she pursues full justification in ways that prioritize, or stay within the limits of, values that are reciprocally acceptable by all reasonable people. Now, according to Rawls only political values are suitably acceptable and may enter the pool of values that pro tanto justification draws on. When Betty pursues full justification, then, she prioritizes, or stays within the limits of, political values. But we also saw that different conceptions of justice can advance different sets, or orderings, of political values, while achieving some degree of pro tanto justification. Thus: when Betty prioritizes political values, she may or may not prioritize the particular ordering of such values advanced by a token variant of political liberalism. Two things follow. First, it can be true of reasonable Betty that she rejects a token variant of political liberalism, \( \phi \), if \( \phi \)’s ordering of political values does not suitably integrate with her comprehensive views. In this sense, pro tanto justification is provisional. Yet, second, it cannot be true of reasonable Betty that she rejects \( \phi \) if \( \phi \) is the only available conception of justice that is pro tanto justifiable, or if \( \phi \) has the highest degree of pro tanto justification. This goes beyond the standard reading. For Rawls, the pursuit of full justification may provide reasonable people with doxastic orientation within the normative space of political liberalisms, plural, but it cannot point them beyond that space.

One upshot: full, pro tanto and public justification are integrated. As far as reasonable people and their reasonable doctrines are concerned, full justification must prioritize the values that pro tanto justification must draw on, i.e., values that are publicly justifiable, or reciprocally acceptable by reasonable people. And as before: we can concede this structure, and with it the priority of public justification, while bracketing the view that only political values tick the box. What values full justification must prioritize and pro tanto justification must draw on depends on what values are reciprocally acceptable by reasonable people. And so long as it is open what these values are, will it remain open, too, what values a conception of political justice must contain.

4. Public justification and the wide view of public political debate

Let me begin with the general idea of public justification that matters here—construed as a particularly robust, interpersonal form of public justification. Political liberalism’s variant of this idea will then fall into place.

There is, of course, no consensus as to how the idea of public justification should be understood. E.g., public justification is sometimes construed as public in an extremely thin, promulgatory sense as justification-in-public, or as a matter of laying out for others the reasons that, by the speaker’s light, justify \( \phi \). Evidently, there is no implication here as to what makes reasons good or what constitutes justification. On a slightly more robust view, public justification is justification by reasons that are both good and subject to a (weak) publicity constraint. On one recent view, for instance, to justify \( \phi \) publicly is to justify \( \phi \) by a subset of truly good (or “valid”) reasons, namely, those truly good reasons that at the same time are such that relevant people could, at a relevant level of idealization, come around to grasping their
goodness. Again, this leaves open just what it is that constitutes the goodness (or validity) of good reasons to begin with. The notion of public justification that matters for our purposes is more robustly public than this.

In generic terms, then, public justification in the sense relevant now is a robustly interpersonal, acceptability-based form of justification. For S to be publicly justifiable in this sense, S must be authoritatively acceptable by relevant (actual or possible) people, or be justifiable by reasons that are—where different views of public justification often construe different kinds of acceptability as authoritative and different groups of people as relevant. The robustly interpersonal character of public justification is reflected in the kind of reasons that it treats as authoritative, i.e., public reasons. Following Postema, public reasons are conceptually located between agent-neutral and agent-relative reasons. Agent-neutral reasons are reasons for every rational agent. Agent-relative reasons are reasons for individual agents only, or first person singular reasons. Public reasons are located between these categories: they are trans-individual, first person plural reasons. They are “relativized to some group or ‘public’, but, within that group, they are not relativized to any of its members.”

This group may not be fully inclusive, or universal in scope. Restricted public reasons suppose a restriction on the membership in the relevant group: they are reasons “for us” (e.g., peers, the right-minded, the reasonable), but not everyone counts as “one of us.” Unrestricted public reasons suppose no such restriction: “at the limit, unrestricted public reasons may be universal.” Finally, public reasons, or the special kind of public reasons that matters now, are robustly public: their acceptability by relevant people is (part of) what constitutes their status as reasons. They “are (...) ‘reasons for me’ because they are ‘reasons for us’ and I regard myself as ‘one of us’.”

For political liberalism, public justification is justification by restricted robustly public reasons. Political liberalism’s public reasons are reasons that are reciprocally acceptable by everyone included within the constituency of public justification—namely, reasonable people, or people political liberalism recognizes as reasonable. And these reasons count as justifying, good reasons because they are so acceptable. Macedo is most forthright about this two-fold point. In his terms, political liberalism “regards certain kinds of reasons as politically authoritative: moral reasons that can be openly presented to others, critically defended, and widely shared by reasonable people;” and so “the goodness of good reasons (...) becomes entirely a function of their capacity to gain widespread agreement among reasonable people moved by a desire for reasonable consensus” (where the sought-after agreement is seen as a matter of reciprocal, equal acceptability).

Let me apply this to Rawls. Consider, then, pro tanto justification. We saw that there is a respect in which pro tanto justification depends on public justification. That completeness must exclusively be demonstrated in terms of political values depends on the view that such values are reciprocally acceptable by reasonable people: the (alleged) reciprocal acceptability of these values by these people places them in the pool of values that pro tanto justification must employ.

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22 For this and the next two quotations: see Postema, “Public Practical Reason: Political Practice”, p. 349.
23 Macedo, Liberal Virtues, pp. 46. Emphasis added.
24 Ibid. Emphasis added.
Now, if only political values are suitably acceptable by the reasonable, only these values can serve as public reasons in political liberalism’s sense. Two things follow. First, demonstrating completeness exclusively in terms of political values is an exercise of public reason that can “aim for” public justification: it exclusively employs values that can serve as public reasons.

Second, pro tanto and public justification comply with the demand of justificatory neutrality—at least if these justifications invoke that sub-set of political values that are non-rejectable by the reasonable (and, for Rawls, some political values have this strong standing).

Public justification, then, is restricted in scope and content. How does this sit with Rawls’s “wide” view of public political culture—or of “public reason,” as Neal calls it?25 (I return to an issue of labels shortly.) Following Neal, the wide view relaxes Rawls’s “inclusive” view—which marks a more inclusive departure from his initial, “exclusive” view. On the exclusive view, reasonable citizens may not invoke non-political or non-public values or reasons in public political debate. Period. Rawls later opts for a more permissive view of public political debate.26 On the inclusive view, reasonable people may invoke non-political or non-public values and reasons in public political debate provided (i) this strengthens the idea of public reason and (ii) these values or reasons are at the time accompanied by political values or public reasons. The final, wide view relaxes this by replacing (ii) with the weaker condition that reasonable people must at least “in due course” provide “public reasons to support the principles and policies our comprehensive doctrine is said to support.”27 Thus, Rawls finally concedes that the reasonable may invoke non-political values or non-public reasons in public political debate so long as doing so remains suitably tethered to public reason.

Now, all but Rawls’s exclusive view seem to run up against key commitments of political liberalism, such as the views (i) that public reasoning aims for public justification and complies with the standard of reciprocal acceptability by reasonable people; or (ii) that public justification should avoid reasonable disagreement and may invoke as justifiers only public reasons; or (iii) that only political values are public reasons. For if public political debate may invoke non-political values or non-public reasons—as both the inclusive view and the wide view would have it—it will attract reasonable disagreement. But if it does this, it will not comply with the standard of public justification and hence will not instantiate public reason—or at last not on the interpretation that I attached to these things here.

Can Rawls’s wide view cohere with these key commitments? Yes, it can. Note first that Rawls, while he develops the exclusive and the inclusive view as views of public reason, refers to the wide view as a view of public political culture.28 And he contrasts what people may do on the wide view and what they must do to meet the constraints of public reason.29 Thus, the shift in labels might matter: it might herald that not all stretches of debate that instantiates public political culture—or public political debate, for short—must instantiate public reason. Now, the wide view can cohere with the key commitments referred to in the last paragraph if it does not relax or contradict the constraints of public reason. And the wide view does not need to relax or

26 Rawls, Political Liberalism, p. 247f.
27 Rawls, Political Liberalism, p. 453. See also p. 462ff.
28 Ibid. Neal seems to overlook this.
29 Rawls, Political Liberalism, p. 455ff, 461ff.
contradict these constraints if we understand it in light of a distinction between two idioms of public political debate: (i) one idiom that instantiates reasoning that (directly) aims for public justification and that hence must meet the constraints of public reason, and (ii) another idiom that does not (directly) pursue this aim and hence may be less restrictive. (And reasonable people are able to differentiate between these idioms: Rawls evidently takes it that they can know what values are political, what it means to reason in terms of these values, and what it takes to aim for public justification.) So construed, the wide view does not entail that public political debate instantiates public reason even when it invokes non-political values or non-public reasons. Rather, it reflects a more differentiated view of public political debate. It supposes that public political debate is not co-terminus with the exercise of public reason. And it concedes that such debate hence does not have to meet the constraints of public reason in all its instantiations—even though it must remain tethered to public reason (where this caveat distinguishes it from non-public and non-political debate).30

Thus, the wide view does not relax or contradict the constraints of public reason, and hence it can cohere with the key commitments referred to above.

5. The internal conception: two variants
Consider next the status of public justification in the order of justification. Two views of that status matter now. Both are variants of an internal conception of political liberalism31 according to which a political and liberal conception of justice must be publicly justifiable only to reasonable people, or people political liberalism recognizes as reasonable.

The first view is what I called earlier the ideal theory view. On this view, public justification supposes the context and the resources of a Rawls-type ideal, well-ordered society—which itself is part of the second stage of Rawls’s Justice as Fairness (JF). This is the ideal of a society of reasonable citizens (in political liberalism’s sense) that is governed by a conception of justice that these citizens share as a trumping, “mutually recognized point of view from which citizens can adjudicate their claims of political right on their political institutions or against one another.”32 And as this conception is so shared, it serves in this ideal society as a “public basis of justification.”33 Public justification hence is justification between people who already accept a conception of justice, or its values, as reasonable, or authoritative. And so public justification builds on, and proceeds in terms of, this conception, or its values. It hence does not justify this conception, but supposes its authority. It tests whether this conception can maintain stability by regulating matters of basic justice in ways that find the ongoing moral support of all reasonable citizens. In political liberalism’s order of justification, then, it cannot be fundamental.

On the deep view, the standard of reciprocal acceptability by reasonable people plays a role also at another, fundamental level of argument—and this not as part of ideal theory. It is useful here to put matters in terms of two questions. Suppose we are reasonable and consider what conception of political justice to adopt here and now. One question (Q1) we face is whether

30 Ben Cross makes a similar point when he distinguishes between public justification and political conversation—where the latter refers to stretches of public political debate that are not held to the standard of reciprocal acceptability by reasonable people. See his “Public Reason and the Exclusion of Oppressed Groups,” accessible at http://usyd.academia.edu/BenCross.
31 See Quong, Liberalism without Perfection, esp. p. 6, 138f.
32 Rawls, Justice as Fairness, p. 32ff.
33 Rawls, Political Liberalism, p. 100f, 143f, 192.
to adopt a political and liberal conception, or a non-political or non-liberal one. If we answer Q1 in favor of adopting a political and liberal conception, the next question (Q2) we face is what token political and liberal conception to adopt.

It is plain that Rawls appeals to public justification as part of an answer to Q2—as captured by the ideal theory view. He offers JF as an attractive variant of political liberalism partly because JF, in a well-ordered society governed by it, could be applied to political matters in ways that are suitably acceptable by the reasonable. If he is right, then JF is stable, or self-selective, under social conditions of the sort it prescribes; hence, JF is not self-defeating. Thus, one possible reason to reject JF does not obtain. However, that JF is not self-defeating means little if we do not opt for a political liberalism to begin with. Whatever good the appeal to public justification at JF’s second stage accomplishes, therefore, it systematically depends on a favorable response to first question, Q1.

Now, Rawls invokes the standard of reciprocal acceptability by reasonable people also in response to Q1—albeit indirectly. This goes beyond the ideal theory view, and it is part of what motivates the deep view. Consider Rawls’s argument from overlapping consensus. For Rawls, political legitimacy is possible only if political power accords with a conception of justice that is the subject of an overlapping consensus between the reasonable comprehensive doctrines of reasonable people.34 This applies within a well-ordered society, but it also applies here and now, in actual regimes that are not well-ordered (where not all doctrines or people are reasonable).35 But why does a reasonable overlapping consensus matter? It matters that a conception of political justice is compatible with reasonable doctrines because its incompatibility with any such doctrine entails that it is not reciprocally acceptable by the reasonable people endorsing it: to ensure a reasonable overlapping consensus is to ensure reciprocal acceptability by reasonable people. Next, Rawls takes it that a conception of political justice can gain such a consensus only if it avoids reasonable disagreement. And so he applies a principle of toleration “to philosophy itself,” or to normative theorizing about political justice—which, in his view, calls for the avoidance of reasonable disagreement in such theorizing—to work out a conception of political justice that can avoid reasonable disagreement between reasonable people.36 But, for Rawls, non-political or non-liberal conceptions of justice cannot avoid such disagreement: only a political and liberal view, if any, can. This is why he here and now (re)formulates JF as a doctrinally autonomous, political form of liberalism.

If we stand back, this suggests that the standard of reciprocal acceptability by reasonable people plays a deep role. For political liberalism, this standard serves, or is part of what serves, as a standard of theory selection for the domain of the political. It states a condition that any conception of political justice must meet to enable a legitimate exercise of political power—a condition that applies in a well-ordered society, but also here and now, in the actual world.

To further fix ideas, let me pinpoint a contrast between the deep view and the ideal theory view (I shall elaborate further on differences between these views below). We have seen that the ideal theory view construes public justification as supposing the normative context of an ideal, well-ordered society. If we adhere to this understanding, the commitment to public justification becomes a for-then commitment only: it becomes a commitment to something like,

34 See Rawls’s liberal principle of legitimacy, Political Liberalism, p. 217, 143f, 192.
35 See [omitted for blind review].
36 Rawls, Political Liberalism, p. 9f.
(i) \( \varphi \), to enable a legitimate exercise of political power in an ideal, well-ordered society, must be reciprocally acceptable by the reasonable people of that ideal, well-ordered society.

But (i) cannot exhaust the picture. Even if something is obligatory, valuable, or useful, in ideal conditions, it may not be so in non-ideal conditions—this marks a well-known impediment to applications of ideal theory views of justice and justification to non-ideal contexts and problems.\(^{37}\) Thus, even if \( \varphi \) can attain public justification in JF’s ideal, well-ordered society—so that \( \varphi \) could then serve as a basis for political legitimacy—\( \varphi \) might nevertheless here and now be illiberal roughly in the way in which, for Rawls, Kant’s and Mill’s liberalisms are illiberal.\(^{38}\) Correspondingly, second, a commitment to (i) is compatible with a rejection of the following:

(ii) \( \varphi \), to enable a legitimate exercise of political power in a given actual society, must be (or approximate what is) reciprocally acceptable by the reasonable people of an ideal, well-ordered society;

(iii) \( \varphi \), to enable a legitimate exercise of political power in a given actual society, must be (or approximate what is) reciprocally acceptable by the reasonable people of that actual society.

Hence, by itself, (i) implies little for the conditions of political legitimacy and the role of public justification for the purposes of political legitimacy here and now. And so (i) would leave Rawls with little reason to apply the principle of toleration “to philosophy itself” here and now, and to attempt to (re)formulate JF in such a way that it can here and now avoid reasonable disagreement and be reciprocally acceptable by the reasonable. But political liberalism aims to say much about the conditions of political legitimacy and the role of public justification for these purposes here and now. And Rawls does take himself to have reasons to do these things. On the deep view, then, (i) can capture only part of the story. Yes, for Rawls, a conception of political justice should meet an ideal theory test of overlapping consensus—this helps to ensure that this conception is not self-defeating, and hence that one possible reason not to accept it does not obtain. But Rawls also adopts (iii) for at least one actual case, i.e., the case of Western democratic societies such as the United States of his time.

Next, let us take note of two further normative devices that Rawls’s political liberalism employs: the criterion of reflective equilibrium (CRE) and the Original Position (OP). I argued elsewhere that both integrate seamlessly into the deep view—let me sketch the upshot of this reading.\(^{39}\) As to CRE, it prominently plays a meta-theoretical role.\(^{40}\) CRE tests how well a conception of political justice as a whole articulates “our” considered convictions of political


\(^{38}\) Rawls, Political Liberalism, p. 143, 145; see also [omitted for blind review].

\(^{39}\) [Omitted for blind review] and [omitted for blind review].

justice, from the point of view of “you and me;” a conception that meets this test “is the one most reasonable for us.” Rawls here adopts the perspective of the reasonable: what matters for his purposes are the reflective equilibria not of everyone, but of reasonable people. Now, CRE does not compete with, but is a condition of, public justification: it specifies in what way φ is to be acceptable by each relevant person for this to count toward φ’s public justification. For Rawls, each must be able to accept φ in a way that satisfies CRE. Accordingly, Rawls tells us that public justification entails reflective equilibrium.

This point is reflected in the role of full justification. Since CRE is a condition of public justification, φ cannot be publicly justifiable unless φ attains full justification for each reasonable person. This is so if we (trivially) take it that reasonable Betty cannot accept φ in a way that meets CRE unless φ integrates with her comprehensive views—and, recall, this may not ask for much: full justification comes in degrees. All this suggests that Rawls builds a coherentist condition of personal justification into his view of interpersonal, public justification: for φ to be reciprocally acceptable by the reasonable in the right way, each of these people must be able to be personally justified in accepting φ; and for this to be so, φ must be able to achieve (a relevant degree of) coherence for each of them.

OP, in turn, models at the level of JF how the reasonable participants of deep public justification deliberate about the selection of principles of basic justice. Rawls argues that they would select JF’s substantive principles and values; and he uses the latter to specify, amongst other things, an idea of the good citizen: this is the idea of a reasonable person who embraces JF’s principles and values (the inhabitants of JF’s well-ordered society are good citizens in this sense). This additional, OP-dependent idea of the reasonable person is part of JF’s attempt to reconstruct the self-conception of the reasonable participants of deep public justification. Thus, Rawls tells us that OP is “a means of public reflection and self-clarification,” or a tool that helps “us”—and here, too, he adopts the perspective of reasonable people—to attain “greater coherence among all our judgements; and with this deeper self-understanding we can attain wider agreement among one another.” Alas, if the outcomes of OP mismatch the considered judgments of the reasonable participants of deep public justification, then they decide from the standpoint of their self-conception whether to adjust OP or their self-conception. Adjustments can go both ways, but their self-conception retains the last word.

It emerges that the job of a conception of political justice for Rawls is not to provide a standpoint from which to independently assess or vindicate the self-conception of the reasonable participants of deep public justification. Rather, it is its job to reconstruct the content of this self-conception. Accordingly, a conception of political justice will be fully reasonable in Rawls’s sense only if all reasonable participants of deep public justification can coherently accept the reconstructive suggestions that it offers.

6. The deep view and the ideal theory view
Let me now contrast the deep view with a recent variant of the internal conception, namely,

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41 For this and the next quotation: see Rawls, Political Liberalism, p. 28.
42 See Justice as Fairness, p. 29 and p. 31; Political Liberalism, p. 384, n. 16.
43 See Rawls, Political Liberalism, p. 11f, 16ff, 22-28, 66-82, 94, 97f.
44 [Omitted for blind review] and [omitted for blind review].
Quong’s view. This helps to bring the deep view into sharper focus. For Quong, then, political liberalism does not aim
to justify liberalism to a radically diverse constituency, one that may include people who reject liberalism’s most fundamental values. Rather, the aim is to understand how liberal rights and institutions can be *publicly justified to the constituency of an ideal democratic society*.  

I suggest that the overlapping consensus represents the *first* stage in the justificatory process. We *begin* by identifying the common ground that reasonable citizens would share in an *ideal, well-ordered liberal society* regardless of their other differences. … On this revisionary account of political liberalism, the core ideas of freedom, equality, fairness, and reasonable pluralism are assumed to ground a commitment to public reason and a liberal conception of justice, but the core ideas are not themselves subject to any test of public justification, *nor do we check to see if these values can be the subject of an overlapping consensus amongst real citizens here and now*.  

This squarely situates overlapping consensus in ideal theory. For Quong, the idealized citizens of an ideal, well-ordered society are justificatory constituency of the argument from overlapping consensus, or public justification. His version of the internal conception, then, is a case of the ideal theory view.  

As we saw earlier, Quong’s view is not the only version of an ideal theory view. Another version is a view he aims to improve on, i.e., what he rightly calls the “common view” of the role of overlapping consensus, or of public justification, for that matter. This view, too, situates the test of overlapping consensus in ideal theory. But it situates it at secondary stage of justification. On the common view, this test examines whether JF’s principles and values, as they have been arrived at through OP, can attain an overlapping consensus in a well-ordered society governed by these principles and values. And, Quong adds, proponents of the common view tend to assume that the argument from OP supposes “an independently defined constituency of persons.”  

The deep view and Quong’s ideal theory view agree that the common view is inadequate. Since his political turn, Rawls seeks to accord a more fundamental role to the test of overlapping consensus, or public justification: he now requires JF at *all* levels of generality, or in its *entirety*—including JF’s principles and values, OP, and all considerations at JF’s second, stability-considering stage—to pass that test. And in this role, the test exclusively addresses comprehensive doctrines or people that are “reasonable” in a sense that is compatible with political liberalism’s political values. This profoundly changes political liberalism’s justification architecture: an overlapping consensus between reasonable doctrines, or reciprocal acceptability by the reasonable people who endorse them, now is fundamental in the order of justification.

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46 Quong, *Liberalism without Perfection*, p. 6; see also p. 157. Emphasis added.
48 Quong, *Liberalism without Perfection*, p. 163ff.
49 Ibid. The common view conceptualizes the role of overlapping consensus in light of the account of stability in Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice*, e.g., pp. 453-462.
50 Quong, *Liberalism without Perfection*, p. 166.
However, the deep view and Quong’s ideal theory view differ in their conceptualization of this change. Once overlapping consensus, or public justification, assumes a fundamental role, political liberalism faces a notorious problem: if the constituency of an overlapping consensus, or public justification, included on equal footing people who endorse doctrines that cannot cohere with core liberal political values—such as values of freedom, equality, mutual respect, public reasonableness, and so on—political liberalism would be self-defeating. Now, Quong recognizes that political liberalism avoids this problem by including within that constituency only doctrines or people that are “reasonable” in a sense that is compatible with these values. But he seems to infer from this that the test of overlapping consensus, and public justification, must exclusively be situated in ideal theory. Thus, the second passage at the beginning of this section moves from the observation that the test of overlapping consensus is the first stage of political liberalism’s justification straight to the view that political liberalism begins by identifying ground that is shared by the citizens of an ideal, well-ordered society. And so this test becomes the first stage of a justification that does not actually take place: as it is situated in ideal theory, it is a justification between the not-actually-existing citizens of a not-actually-existing ideal, well-ordered society. The commitment to public justification thus becomes a for-then commitment only (see above).

The deep view does not draw this inference. One exemplary observation might suffice now to indicate why we should not draw it. Yes, Rawls premises (reasonable) overlapping consensus on reasonable pluralism. And “reasonableness” here does have a meaning that favors core liberal political values. But he uses two notions of reasonable pluralism—one strong, one weak—and as we disentangle them, it emerges that overlapping consensus plays a role not only in ideal theory. On the strong notion, a plurality of comprehensive doctrines instantiates reasonable pluralism only if all of these doctrines are reasonable. This notion is in use when Rawls writes:

[a well-ordered society] is one in which there is diversity of comprehensive doctrines, all perfectly reasonable. This is the fact of reasonable pluralism, as opposed to the fact of pluralism as such.

This fits to the ideal theory view. Only in an ideal, well-ordered society is there a plurality exclusively of perfectly reasonable doctrines. Alas, on the weak notion, a plurality of comprehensive doctrines instantiates reasonable pluralism even if not all of these doctrines are reasonable:

[The fact of reasonable pluralism] is the fact that free institutions tend to generate not simply a variety of doctrines and views … Rather, it is the fact that among the views that develop are a diversity of reasonable comprehensive doctrines. These are the doctrines that reasonable citizens affirm and that political liberalism must address.

Rawls tells us here that political liberalism, when it pursues the aim of overlapping consensus, may address only a subset of the doctrines that are present, i.e., reasonable doctrines, or the doctrines of reasonable people. It follows that political liberalism pursues this aim also outside

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51 See the second quotation above, and Quong, Liberalism without Perfection, p. 6f, 138f, 166ff, 180ff.
52 On the content of reasonableness: see [omitted for blind review] and [omitted for blind review].
53 Rawls, Political Liberalism, p. 24 n. 27. Emphasis added.
54 Rawls, Political Liberalism, p. 36. Emphasis added.
an ideal, well-ordered society, when not all doctrines that are present are reasonable. Thus: yes, political liberalism, when it pursues the aim of overlapping consensus, only addresses doctrines or people that are reasonable in a sense that favors core liberal political values. But it does this (i) in an ideal, well-ordered society (where all doctrines are perfectly reasonable) and (ii) outside an ideal society, in the actual world (where not all doctrines are reasonable).

Hence, Quong’s ideal theory view cannot be accurate. (ii), above, not only is an option that is systematically open for Rawls’s political liberalism. It also is the option Rawls takes to reconcile the elevated role of overlapping consensus, or public justification, with political liberalism’s need to include within its constituency on equal footing only doctrines or people that are reasonable in a sense that favors core liberal political values. Thus, the deep view does not deny that, for Rawls, conceptions of political justice must pass an ideal theory test of overlapping consensus. But the deep view it that political liberalism aims at an overlapping consensus between reasonable doctrines, or reciprocal acceptability by reasonable people, in the actual world. Rawls claims for at least one actual society that a conception of political justice, φ, enables a legitimate exercise of political power in that actual society only if φ is reciprocally acceptable by the reasonable people of that actual society.

At stages, Quong concedes that political liberalism aims to address actual people. While he claims that actual citizens are not included in the constituency of overlapping consensus, this, he insists,

should not be misunderstood to mean that political liberalism is not also addressed to real citizens … Each of us ought to recognize [political liberalism’s values] as very great values, ones which should regulate the way in which we treat our fellow citizens. The normative conclusions of political liberalism thus provide us with powerful reasons to behave in certain ways, and not others, in our current world.55

Yes, political liberalism addresses actual people. But Quong cannot conceptualize this in terms of public justification. In his view, no actual person is included in the constituency of public justification. Only the not-actually-existing reasonable citizens of a not-actually-existing ideal, well-ordered society are. And so he effectively equates the standing that political liberalism accords to actual people with the standing it accords to the unreasonable. On Quong’s view, political liberalism accords to actual people, including reasonable and unreasonable people, the discursive standing of recipients, but not co-authors, of its justifications and conclusions—or what I call elsewhere derivative discursive standing.56 But political liberalism accords this standing only to the unreasonable. To reasonable people, including actual people, it accords the standing of recipient and co-author of its justifications and conclusions—or constitutive discursive standing, for short.57 This is true in Rawls’s case (or so the deep view claims), and perhaps more clearly so in the case of other forms of political liberalism.58 To us Macedo’s terms, public justification aims to employ reasons that “can be widely seen to be good by persons such as they

55 Quong, Liberalism without Perfection, p. 159.
56 On derivative and constitutive forms of discursive standing: see [omitted for blind review].
57 Ibid.
58 Macedo, Liberal Virtues, chapter 2; Larmore, The Morals of Modernity, chapters 6 and 7; “Political Liberalism: Its Motivations and Goals.”
are,” provided these people pass political liberalism’s threshold tests of reasonableness.59 Thus, Quong’s view recognizes that political liberalism distinguishes between members and non-members of the constituency of public justification; but unlike the deep view, it does not accommodate that political liberalism draws this distinction along a reasonable/unreasonable divide, and not an ideal/non-ideal divide.

Still, it remains open what form the internal conception should take, all things considered. Rawls’s writings are often ambiguous in the ideal/non-ideal dimension. And what form the internal conception should take depends, as well, on what renders political liberalism—including variants of the project other than JF—maximally coherent and best able to reach its aims. For now, though, the above suffices: it sharpens the focus on the deep view, and it brings out a strength of the deep view as a variant of the internal conception.

8. Conclusion
For Rawls, a conception of political justice must have pro tanto justification, full justification and, most importantly, it must be publicly justifiable, or reciprocally acceptable by reasonable people. Full justification prioritizes the sort of values pro tanto justification must draw on in demonstrating completeness: namely, publicly justifiable values—which, for Rawls, are only “political” values. He aligns these things with the help of two suppositions: (i) reasonable people, when matters of basic justice are at stake, prioritize values that are reciprocally acceptable by all reasonable people. And (ii) only Rawls-type political values are so acceptable. As public justification includes within its constituency only reasonable people, then, political values can serve for all members of its constituency as public reasons. This coheres with the wide view of public political debate. On the deep view, not least, public justification plays a meta-theoretical role here and now. Rawls claims for at least one case that a conception of political justice can enable political legitimacy in an actual society only if it is reciprocally acceptable by the reasonable people of that actual society.

We have seen, as well, that this part of political liberalism’s justification structure can come apart from Rawls’s commitment to political values. What values pro tanto justification must draw on and full justification must prioritize depends on what values are reciprocally acceptable by reasonable people. Rawls supposes that only political values are so acceptable, and construes reasonableness accordingly. But if we (plausibly) regard it as an open question what values are reciprocally acceptable and what idea of reasonableness the standard of reciprocal acceptability may build on, then it remains open what values a conception of political justice must contain. And so it will be open, as well, whether such a conception applies to the domain of the political only, what tradition, if any, its values must be drawn from, and whether these values are liberal in content. This opens the door toward post-political siblings of political liberalism—views that share (part of) its justificatory structure but that do not premise it (exclusively) on political values or political liberalism’s idea of reasonableness.

Where does this leave political liberalism? It sharpens the focus on a defining challenge for political liberalism—a challenge that springs from its way to avoid self-defeat, given the role of overlapping consensus. This is not the challenge to explain why φ’s ability to attain an ideal theory overlapping consensus has significance for the choices of actual people, actual political justification, political legitimacy here and now, and for theory-selection under non-ideal

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59 Macedo, Liberal Virtues, p. 46f; see also pp. 41, 44, 50, 71.
conditions (beyond the consideration that the absence of this ability is one reason not to accept \( \varphi \)). This may be a defining challenge on an ideal theory view—and it may be hard to meet. But it only scratches the surface. A more fundamental challenge is to explain how political liberalism—even if it is reciprocally acceptable by people that are “reasonable” in political liberalism’s sense and can attain an ideal theory overlapping consensus—can be more than a stretch of exclusionary public dogma if (i) the scope of public justification is restricted to reasonable people but (ii) many people to whom its principles apply are not reasonable in this sense, or cannot actually accept coherently the relevant core liberal political values.

This is a well-known problem. It targets political liberalism’s restrictions on the scope of public justification, and it calls into question its view of what it takes to duly respect citizens. After all, if, as political liberals argue, citizens are being properly respected only if the political principles that apply to them are equally acceptable by them, then on what grounds can full inclusion within public justification depend on meeting political liberalism’s threshold test of reasonableness? And even if public political justification must be premised on a less-than-fully inclusive conception of the reasonable, and so must be restricted in Postema’s sense (see above), why premise it on political liberalism’s conception, rather than a more inclusive one?\(^\text{60}\)

As the deep view reminds us, then, the prospects of the project of a political liberalism depend not so much on whether we find ways to make ideal theory relevant for non-ideal purposes. Rather, it depends on whether political liberalism can devise a credible response to the problem of public dogma. It may very well be able to devise such a response—alas, the jury on this is still out.\(^\text{61}\)

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\(^{60}\) That this is a defining challenge for political liberalism has been seen since the early days of Rawls’s political turn: see Jean Hampton, “Should Political Philosophy Be Done Without Metaphysics?,” *Ethics* 99 (1989), and “The Moral Commitments of Liberalism” in David Copp, Jean Hampton, John R. Roemer (eds.), *The Idea of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

\(^{61}\) Unlike many other political liberals, Larmore takes on the problem of public dogma in its depth. He embeds his version of (deep) public justification in a contextualist conception of justified belief according to which political liberalism’s key commitments are not in need of justification to begin with—even if they are contested by the unreasonable. But if this need is not present, public dogma does not occur. See his “Political Liberalism. Its Motivation and Goals,” pp. 76-85; *The Morals of Modernity*, parts I, III, and *The Autonomy of Morality*, p. 4f, 12. For a discussion of Larmore’s response to the problem of public dogma: see [omitted for blind review] and [omitted for blind review].