

Respect, Recognition, and Public Reason

The liberal idea of public reason is understood by both its defenders and detractors to be based on an underlying principle of *mutual respect*. It is often assumed that in order properly to respect one another as free and equal citizens we are obligated to satisfy requirements of public reason by seeking suitable political justifications and sometimes exercising restraint in appealing to comprehensive doctrines in political discourse and decision-making. Critics have challenged this thesis in several ways. One strategy is to deny that respect for persons entails some or all of the requirements of public reason. This philosophical strategy has been pursued systematically through efforts to demonstrate precisely what respect for persons does and does not require of deliberating citizens.¹

In the case of John Rawls's political liberalism with its *idea of public reason*, a more straightforward route appears to be open to critics. They might simply search *Political Liberalism* and related writings for a clearly identifiable argument that is supposed to provide the normative grounding for public reason and its duty of civility.² For there seems to be an explanatory "gap" in Rawls's exposition of the idea of public reason, where we would hope to find convincing conceptual analysis connecting its requirements to political liberalism's underlying ideas of the person as a free and equal citizen and society as a fair system of cooperation.³ At one point, briefly discussing the topic in *Justice as Fairness*, Rawls proposes that if citizens hope to cooperate politically on the basis of "mutual respect," then they should seek political justifications "in the light of public reason."⁴ But the meaning of "mutual respect" and its relation to public reasoning are not explained. Nor is there any explicit

¹The most systematic treatment is Christopher J. Eberle, *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). See also Eberle, "What Respect Requires—And What It Does Not," *Wake Forest Law Review* 36 (2001): 305-52.

²John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, expanded ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

³Michael Perry, "Religious Arguments in Public Political Debate," *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review* 29 (1996): 1421-58, at p. 1454.

⁴John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, ed. Erin Kelly (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 91.

treatment of the concept of respect for persons as fellow citizens in "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited."⁵

An even stronger line of criticism suggests that the practice of public reasoning would actually involve a form of disrespect. Liberal accounts of respect for persons emphasize the capacity for thinking and acting on the basis of reasons.⁶ The Rawlsian political conception of the person is likewise based on general capacities for judgment, rationality, reasonableness and social cooperation. "In giving reasons to all citizens," Rawls writes, "we don't view persons as socially situated or otherwise rooted, that is, as being in this or that social class, or in this or that property and income group, or as having this or that comprehensive doctrine."⁷ But citizens might expect to have their particular ascriptive characteristics, cultural affiliations, and religious commitments—in short, their concrete identities—properly acknowledged in public political life. As Nicholas Wolterstorff has argued, "[w]e need a politics that not only honors us in our similarity as free and equal, but in our particularities."⁸ According to this line of criticism, which I refer to as the *disrespect charge*, citizens and officials who attempt to satisfy and hold one another to the requirements of public reason thereby demonstrate disrespect for their fellow citizens *as particular others*.

In what follows, I shall argue that respect for persons does in fact provide a sufficient normative foundation for public reasoning and that the disrespect charge fails. I begin in the first section by introducing the idea of public reason, identifying three main requirements for which democratic citizens and officials may be held accountable. The second section connects the norm of respect for persons to the Rawlsian political conception of the person as a free and equal citizen with a higher-order interest in exercising two basic moral powers. I then argue that persons who respect one another as free and equal citizens should attempt to satisfy the main requirements of public reason (section 3). In the fourth section, I propose and critically examine three interpretations of the charge that commitment to public reasoning would represent a failure to respect citizens as particular others. One interpretation focuses on the significance of observations, claims, and arguments that are made from the others' distinctive points of view (section 4.1). A second interpretation

⁵This essay is included in the expanded edition of *Political Liberalism*, pp. 437-90.

⁶Charles Larmore, *The Morals of Modernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), and "The Moral Basis of Political Liberalism," *The Journal of Philosophy* 96 (1999): 599-625.

⁷Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 481.

⁸Nicholas Wolterstorff, "The Role of Religion in Decision and Discussion of Political Issues," in Robert Audi and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds.), *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Convictions in Political Debate* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), pp. 67-120, at p. 111.

draws on the recognition theories worked out by Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth in order to suggest that deliberating citizens should appropriately acknowledge the value of particular group identities, minority cultures, or comprehensive doctrines (section 4.2). A third interpretation turns on an argument made by Wolterstorff and others that the requirements of public reason would interfere with some citizens' religious obligations as well as their pursuit of an ideal of religious integrity (section 4.3). I conclude that none of these interpretations adequately supports the disrespect charge.

1. The Requirements of Public Reason

Rawls refers to a democratic society's public reason as "the reason of equal citizens who, as a collective body, exercise final political and coercive power over one another in enacting laws and amending their constitution."⁹ Public reason is an "ideal of citizenship" with a corresponding "duty of civility": Ideally citizens and officials should be able to explain to one another how certain laws and policies are supported by "the political values of public reason."¹⁰ In place of a full interpretation of these ideas here, I shall identify three especially important requirements of public reason. As I see it, the *main requirements* of public reason are:

The Political Justification Requirement. Citizens and officials should seek suitable political justifications for their decisions regarding fundamental political questions, that is, constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice. According to the idea of public reason, suitable political justifications are justifications that are addressed to other citizens and based on ascertainable evidence, valid reasoning, and the values of a reasonable political conception of justice. They are also limited by a "criterion of reciprocity," which states that citizens and officials should sincerely believe that the reasons they would offer for their political actions are sufficient and that others might reasonably accept those reasons.

The Deliberation Requirement. Citizens and officials should be prepared to exchange reasons with one another in order to improve their decision-making and better understand their different claims, arguments, and conceptions of justice. Rather than treating pre-deliberative preferences and opinions as fixed and invariable, they should be willing to revise their political judgments through discussion and deliberation with others.

⁹Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 214.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 217.

The Restraint Requirement. In their political decision-making and in the public presentation of arguments in support of that decision-making, citizens and officials should sometimes exercise restraint in the appeal to their comprehensive religious and philosophical doctrines. In political decision-making and discourse in the public political forum, they should avoid relying solely on these doctrines in order to resolve questions about how to arrange the fundamental terms of political cooperation.

There are of course several additional features of public reason, some of which concern the important questions of when and how citizens and officials are to exercise restraint. Rawls suggests that the idea of public reason applies directly to political officials when deliberating about fundamental political questions in the public political forum, which includes courts, legislatures, and other governmental discourses, as well as campaigns for public office.¹¹ Thus a requirement of restraint is not extended to the background culture of civil society. As an ideal, public reason also applies to citizens when they enter the public political forum or vote on fundamental political questions. While requirements of public reason apply more stringently to certain officials, citizens should sometimes “think of themselves *as if they were legislators*,” and repudiate officials who would violate the requirements of public reason.¹² Finally, in Rawls’s “wide view” of public political culture, the restraint requirement is subject to a proviso, according to which “reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious or nonreligious, may be introduced in public political discussion at any time, provided that in due course proper political reasons—and not just reasons given solely by comprehensive doctrines—are presented that are sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines introduced are said to support.”¹³ With respect to fundamental questions of law or policy, political justifications should be based on adequate public reasons and the values of a reasonable political conception of justice.

2. Respect for Persons

Why should anyone acknowledge these requirements? An answer is suggested by Rawls when he claims that if citizens hope to cooperate politically on the basis of mutual respect, then they should seek political justifications in public reason.¹⁴ Indeed, I shall argue that the concept of respect for persons as fellow citizens can be understood to serve as the

¹¹See *Political Liberalism*, p. 443, for Rawls’s description of this three-part public political forum.

¹²Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 444 (emphasis in original).

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 462.

¹⁴Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, p. 91.

normative foundation of the idea of public reason: citizens and officials should be willing to satisfy the requirements of public reason because they respect one another equally as persons. Before turning to this argument, however, an initial order of business is to clarify the meaning of "respect" and "respect for persons."

What is respect? How should we characterize the moral attitude of respect for persons? Philosophical analysis of the concept of respect often turns on a basic distinction between respect for another's merits or accomplishments and respect for another's status as a person.¹⁵ In the first case, respect implies esteem, a positive evaluation of the activities, characteristics, or excellences of the other. This form of respect is merited, and so it may rightfully be conferred to a greater or lesser degree, since some might deserve more admiration than others. However, the form of respect associated with respect for persons is something that is presumably due equally to all persons. Thus Stephen Darwall calls this latter attitude "recognition respect," distinguishing it from the "appraisal respect" that we might have for another's conduct or character. Recognition respect implies regard for some fact or feature as relevant for deliberation, and moral recognition respect is a normative attitude that places limits on our conduct and choices. This form of respect concerns "not how something is to be evaluated or appraised, but how our relations to it are to be governed. Broadly speaking, we respect something in the recognition sense when we give it standing (authority) in our relations to it."¹⁶

Thus an essential aspect of recognition respect for persons is the subject's acknowledgment of the moral standing of the other. In respecting the other as a person, we recognize the other's status as an equal member of the moral community and also make ourselves accountable to the other. Darwall characterizes this form of respect by means of four interdefinable ideas connected to our claim-making capacity: a claim, the authority to make it, the second-personal reason implicit in it, and our accountability to others.¹⁷ As persons, we have the authority to make

¹⁵See especially Stephen L. Darwall, "Two Kinds of Respect," *Ethics* 88 (1977): 36-49; "Respect and the Second-Person Standpoint," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 78, no. 2 (November 2004): 43-59; and *The Second-Person Standpoint* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), esp. pp. 119-47. Christopher Eberle draws on "Two Kinds of Respect" in elaborating his own "ideal of conscientious engagement" as an alternative to liberal accounts of public reasoning that require restraint. See Eberle, *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics*, pp. 84-88. On respect, see also Thomas E. Hill, Jr., *Respect, Pluralism and Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Stephen D. Hudson, "The Nature of Respect," *Social Theory and Practice* 6 (1980): 69-90.

¹⁶Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint*, p. 123.

¹⁷Darwall, "Respect and the Second-Person Standpoint," p. 45, and *The Second-Person Standpoint*, pp. 11-15.

claims and to hold one another responsible for complying with demands, and in doing so, we address one another in the second person. Persons who relate to one another in this way are governed by second-personal reasons for action, the kind of reasons engendered by or presupposed in requests, reproaches, complaints, commands, promises, and the like. These are reasons the validity of which depends on “presupposed authority and accountability relations between persons.”¹⁸ And it is in virtue of our dignity—our inestimable worth—that we can demand such respect for one another as persons. According to Darwall, dignity may be understood as “second-personal standing as an equal: the authority to make claims and demands of one another as equal free and rational agents. And respect for this dignity is an acknowledgment of this authority that is itself second-personal.”¹⁹

A second essential aspect of respect for persons is the acknowledgment of the aims, projects, and values of other persons. Persons have the ability to think and act, to reflect critically on their desires and aspirations, and to adopt ends for themselves. In giving appropriate weight to the other person’s status as a person, we also recognize the other as the source of various aims, projects, and values. This dimension of respect for persons need not imply a particular moral theory or philosophical theory of value. It is not necessarily based on the thesis that *only* the reflective endorsement of autonomous agents creates or confers value. This thesis, or something very similar, is often attributed to Kant, who seems to have held that what really warrants respect is the agent’s “end-setting capacity.”²⁰ But, from the more philosophically modest standpoint of political liberalism, we should simply say that others are committed to various aims, projects, and values, whatever their ultimate source, and that such aims, projects, and values are central to each person’s identity and self-understanding.

This last point is especially important. As persons, we have guiding attachments and commitments that contribute in a significant way to our sense of who we are and what it means for our lives to go well. Certain aims, projects, and values are identity-constituting, and so not reducible to a set of desires—even strong desires—that we happen to have.²¹ Rawls recognizes the importance of what Bernard Williams calls a “ground project,” a project or set of projects that gives a person’s life meaning and without which he or she might altogether lose interest in the

¹⁸Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint*, p. 8 (emphasis removed).

¹⁹Darwall, “Respect and the Second-Person Standpoint,” p. 43. See also *The Second-Person Standpoint*, p. 121.

²⁰I take this phrase from Robert Noggle, “Kantian Respect and Particular Persons,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 29 (1999): 449–78, p. 452.

²¹Noggle, “Kantian Respect and Particular Persons,” pp. 472–76.

future.²² Nor do commitments of this sort typically originate in individual acts of choice and creation. They are often experienced as having indispensable *cultural* and *social* dimensions, that is, as deriving from traditional values, beliefs, and doctrines and as bound up with the roles, institutions, and the common practices of a social group. As Thomas Hill observes, respect for others requires an acknowledgment of the social relationships that give their lives purpose and significance.²³ In respecting one another, persons give appropriate weight to the fact that their particular identities are typically constituted in this fashion.

We should bear in mind both aspects of respect for persons—that is, acknowledgment of the other's moral standing and identity-constituting commitments—when turning to Rawls's political conception of the person, one of the fundamental ideas of his political liberalism. Indeed, the interpretation of respect that I have sketched is also supported by an analysis of the basic moral powers associated with political liberalism's normative idea of the person; each moral power corresponds to one of the essential aspects of respect for persons. In addition to intellectual powers of reasoning and judgment and the capacity for social cooperation, persons are said by Rawls to have two basic moral powers as well as a higher-order interest in exercising these powers. First, there is the capacity for a sense of justice, that is, the ability to understand, apply, and act on a conception of justice. In virtue of this capacity, citizens are able to hold one another accountable for their claims and collective decision-making. Second, in exercising what Rawls calls rational autonomy, persons also have the capacity to pursue a conception of the good. Persons typically have a determinate, but still revisable, conception of the good, consisting of final ends, loyalties, and attachments to others. Moreover, their conceptions of the good are often located within traditions and formulated in terms of comprehensive philosophical or religious doctrines that account for the value and significance of various commitments.²⁴

That persons possess the basic moral powers is a companion idea to the political conception of the person as a free and equal citizen. According to Rawls, persons are equal in virtue of having the two moral powers to a minimum degree, so that they are capable of being fully cooperating members of society. Equal citizens are accorded the same rights, liberties, and opportunities as their compatriots. From the standpoint of political liberalism, citizens are to think of themselves as free in three ways. First, they are free to affirm and revise a conception of the good, a con-

²²Bernard Williams, "Persons, Character and Morality," in *Moral Luck* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 1-19. See also Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 31, and Hill, *Respect, Pluralism, and Justice*, p. 73.

²³Hill, *Respect, Pluralism, and Justice*, p. 80.

²⁴Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, pp. 19-20.

ception that will typically organize and make sense of the aims, projects, and values essential to their identities. Second, citizens are free in the sense of being responsible for their ends. They are accountable to one another and capable of adjusting their aims, projects, and values in accordance with the demands of justice. Finally, citizens are the “self-authenticating sources of valid claims.”²⁵ Their claim-making authority is based neither on prior obligations to society nor on the particular social roles and positions that they might happen to occupy. Persons qua persons simply have the authority to make claims on one another’s conduct and to hold one another accountable.²⁶

3. The Respect Argument

To respect the other politically is to acknowledge the other as a free and equal citizen, with an interest in exercising the two moral powers, and to adjust one’s own choices and actions accordingly. But does respect for persons also imply that one must honor the idea of public reason? Is there a convincing argument that connects respect for persons as free and equal citizens to the requirements of public reason? I submit that a *prima facie* obligation to adhere to these requirements can be demonstrated from the following considerations, which I shall refer to as the “respect argument.”

Recall first that the requirements of public reason apply to fundamental political questions, that is, constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice. Constitutional essentials include basic rights and liberties as well as principles determining legal protections, an adequate social minimum, political structures and procedures, and the separation and scope of governmental powers. Matters of basic justice include additional principles covering social and economic inequalities.²⁷ In short, constitutional principles and principles of justice guide citizens in arranging their society’s basic institutional structure, which in turn provides the framework for the pursuit of a conception of the good. The basic structure determines in a fundamental way the distribution of resources, opportunities, and other primary goods, the likelihood of suffering certain burdens and hardships, and the limits of coercive power. It also has “deep and long-term social effects,” shaping “citizens’ character and aims, the kinds of persons they are and aspire to be.”²⁸ In short, the subject matter of public reason bears directly and significantly on the issue

²⁵Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 32.

²⁶On this point, see Darwall, “Respect and the Second-Person Standpoint,” p. 45.

²⁷On the difference between constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice, see Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, pp. 227-30.

²⁸Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 68.

of whether and how citizens are able freely to exercise their basic moral powers on an equal basis.

In light of this connection between the basic moral powers and fundamental political questions, all citizens have a stake in *how* these questions are resolved through political decision-making. Not just any decision or proposed set of political arrangements and institutions will do, since some decisions might significantly interfere with a citizen's projects and identity-constituting commitments. For this reason, it matters a great deal to citizens that their decisions are justifiable, that is, based on sufficient reasons and evidence. Citizens and officials aspire to make reasoned and informed political choices through a deliberative process. Hence they should have or search for justifications for their exercise of political power, especially with respect to constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice.²⁹

Moreover, because the political relationship between democratic citizens is a relationship of equals, it follows that *each citizen* is equally entitled to consideration in the reasoning that would justify political decisions. Political power is coercive power, involving a set of demands that affect everyone, at least on fundamental questions, and for which citizens collectively may be held responsible. To disregard the standing or the interests of others in settling such questions is to be prepared to exercise coercive power over them without addressing them as persons with the authority and responsibility to serve as co-legislators. It is, as Charles Larmore puts it, to treat them simply as a means to the end of public order or some other objective.³⁰ Thus, to respect other citizens is to address them as fellow deliberators and co-legislators by seeking justifications for the arrangement of political power that they might reasonably accept. One need not attempt the seemingly impossible task of locating reasons that all reasonable citizens will in fact accept; rather, one should seek reasons that one takes to have sufficient justificatory weight and that others might accept as at least consistent with their status as free and equal citizens who are due fair terms of cooperation.

But why must justifications be based on "public reasons"? And why should a citizen refrain from voting for or otherwise favoring a law based solely on nonpublic reasons that are derived directly from a comprehensive doctrine? After all, a citizen who exercises power solely and directly on the basis of a nonpublic, doctrinal rationale has a *reason* for her position, one that she might even expect others to accept as sufficient. She may believe that failure to accept this reason is primarily due to some error or epistemic vice on the part of others, that is, that they would ac-

²⁹I shall hereafter use the term "citizen" to refer to both citizens and political officials.

³⁰Larmore, *The Morals of Modernity*, p. 137.

cept it if they were properly informed and responsibly discharging their epistemic duties by reflecting on the relevant doctrinal truths.

The problem in this case is that a doctrinal rationale will typically serve as a justification *for others* only insofar as they are willing to adopt the standpoint of the doctrine in terms of which it is couched. Indeed that is often the only way that fellow citizens can be expected to evaluate or even have adequate access to various doctrinal claims and the evidential connections between those claims and the political judgments that are supposed to follow from them. Yet to demand that other citizens adopt the standpoint of a comprehensive doctrine in order to avail themselves of the justifying reasons for answers to fundamental political questions is to disregard their status as free citizens.³¹ It is to disregard their moral power freely to endorse a rival doctrine and conception of the good. Recognizing the other's freedom reasonably to reject any particular set of doctrinal claims, a citizen should instead seek political justifications based on public reasons and the values of a reasonable political conception of justice.

We can now summarize the main steps of the respect argument:

1. Respect for persons implies acknowledgment of others as free and equal citizens with an interest in exercising their basic moral powers.
2. Decisions regarding fundamental political questions (i.e., constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice) have an especially significant bearing on the exercise of citizens' moral powers.
3. All citizens have reason to seek justifications for decisions regarding fundamental political questions.
4. Citizens are entitled to equal consideration in the reasoning that would justify decisions regarding fundamental political questions.
5. In order to honor the equality of citizens, justifications for decisions regarding fundamental political questions should address other citizens as fellow deliberators and co-legislators by providing them with reasons for the exercise of power that they might accept as at least consistent with their status as free and equal.
6. Citizens are free to exercise their moral power reasonably to reject comprehensive doctrines and conceptions of the good.
7. In order to honor the freedom of citizens, justifications for decisions regarding fundamental political questions should not be based directly and solely on a comprehensive doctrine or conception of the good

³¹A similar suggestion is made by Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, in support of their deliberative-democratic principle of reciprocity: "[A]ny claim fails to respect reciprocity if it imposes a requirement on other citizens to adopt one's sectarian way of life as a condition of gaining access to the moral understanding that is essential to judging the validity of one's moral claims." Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 57.

that other citizens might reasonably reject.

8. Thus, in order to respect others as *both free and equal*, citizens (and officials) should satisfy the main requirements of public reason by deliberating with one another, pursuing suitable political justifications, and sometimes exercising restraint.

It is important to be clear about just what this argument demonstrates. According to the respect argument, citizens who respect others as free and equal should refrain from deciding fundamental political questions directly and solely on the basis of a comprehensive doctrine. They should also attempt to locate justifications in public reason for their decisions and votes, and they should be prepared to explain those justifications to others. However, even if sound, the respect argument is nevertheless limited in several ways. First, absent additional considerations, it does not show that the reasons comprised by a citizen's political justification must satisfy all of the desiderata proposed in Rawls's account of the idea of public reason, including the key condition that they be based on a reasonable political conception of justice that provides a more or less complete ordering of political values.³² Second, the respect argument does not answer the underlying moral question of *why* we must be committed to respect for persons, and so to respect for others as free and equal citizens. Thus, it does not rule out the possibility that a citizen or official might have other doctrinal obligations that are believed to override the prima facie obligation to satisfy requirements based on respect for persons as free and equal citizens.³³ Nevertheless, provided that the respect argument is sufficient to demonstrate the existence of such a prima facie obligation, the argumentative burden would seem to shift to the opponent of public reasoning.

4. The Disrespect Charge

Critics have expressed doubts about whether respect for persons really obliges citizens and officials to satisfy all (or even some) of the requirements of public reason. One leading alternative approach, for example, proposes that while citizens should pursue "public justifications" that are

³²On this point, see Paul Weithman, "Citizenship and Public Reason," in Robert P. George and Christopher Wolfe (eds.), *Natural Law and Public Reason* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2000), pp. 124-70.

³³A similar difficulty arises when a citizen recognizes the requirements of public reason but encounters conflicting obligations that are also said to be based on the norm of respect for persons. On this problem, see Micah Lott, "Restraint on Reasons and Reasons for Restraint: A Problem for Rawls' Ideal of Public Reason," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 87 (2006): 75-95.

suitably addressed to others, respect for persons does not require them to exercise restraint in their political reliance on religious doctrine.³⁴ Several other philosophers approvingly cite a passage from William Galston's *Liberal Purposes* examining earlier conceptions of "neutral public discourse." Galston concedes that a norm of equal respect for persons may indeed direct citizens to offer an explanation for their exercise of coercive power. But it does not necessarily follow that a respectful explanation must draw on a pre-existing set of shared beliefs. "[W]e show others respect," Galston writes, "when we offer them, as explanation, what we take to be our true and best reasons for acting as we do."³⁵

This position is often connected to even stronger varieties of criticism. Jeffrey Stout, for example, denies that religious reasons must be supplemented by public reasons that are intended to convince a general audience of one's fellow citizens. According to Stout, a citizen might "proceed piecemeal," offering different religious or nonreligious reasons to different persons, each with his or her own idiosyncratic standpoint. Stout maintains that "[r]eal respect for others takes seriously the distinctive point of view each other occupies. It is respect for individuality, for difference."³⁶ Others argue that it is the practice of public reason itself that would run the risk of violating the norm of equal respect.³⁷ Thus Nicholas Wolterstorff examines a situation in which an addressee refuses to consider a speaker's reasons because those reasons are derived from the speaker's comprehensive doctrine. Wolterstorff characterizes the addressee's attitude in this case as involving a form of disrespect:

Such a response would be profoundly disrespectful in its own way. It would pay no respect to your particularity—to you *in* your particularity. It would treat your particularity, and you *in* your particularity, as of no account. Can that be right? Is there not something about the person who embraces, say, the Jewish religion, that I, a Christian, should honor? Should I not honor her not only as someone who is free and equal, but as someone who embraces the Jewish religion? Is she not worth honoring not only in her similarity to me, as free and equal, but *in* her particular difference from me—in her embrace of Judaism? Of course, I mean Judaism to be taken here as but one example among many. Are persons not often worth honoring *in* their religious particularities, in their national particularities, in their

³⁴See Eberle, *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics*, pp. 81-151. For criticism of Eberle's position, see my "Strong Inclusionist Accounts of the Role of Religion in Political Decision-Making," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 36 (2005): 497-516.

³⁵William Galston, *Liberal Purposes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 109.

³⁶Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 73.

³⁷Hence Patrick Neal argues that "a refusal to affirm the demands of public reason ... is not a failure to show equal respect for one's fellows. Indeed, if Galston is right, then it is the demand itself that comes closer to qualifying as showing a lack of equal respect for one's fellows." Patrick Neal, "Political Liberalism, Public Reason, and the Citizen of Faith," in George and Wolfe (eds.), *Natural Law and Public Reason*, pp. 171-201, at p. 197.

class particularities, in their gender particularities? Does such honoring not require that I invite them to tell me how politics looks from their perspective—and does it not require that I genuinely listen to what they say? We need a politics that not only honors us in our similarity as free and equal, but in our particularities. For our particularities—some of them—are constitutive of who we are, constitutive of our narrative identities.³⁸

Wolterstorff's concerns represent a version of what I shall call the "disrespect charge."³⁹ Citizens who recognize public reason's ideal attempt to satisfy its main requirements—that is, the political justification, deliberation, and restraint requirements—and also attribute the same responsibilities to officials, voters, and other politically active citizens. In attributing responsibility to others, a citizen expects that public reason's requirements will be satisfied, and considers failure to satisfy them to be sufficient grounds for criticism, especially in the case of governmental officials. According to the disrespect charge, this expectation and subsequent criticism demonstrate a failure to respect others—or even a form of disrespect for others—in their particularity, where "particularity" refers to a person's comprehensive doctrine, to membership in an identity group, or to social markers associated with identity group identification.⁴⁰

My defense of public reason against the disrespect charge depends on a wide interpretation of Rawls's "wide view" of public reason, an interpretation that cannot be presented here in full.⁴¹ But it also depends on first clarifying the meaning of the disrespect charge. Exactly how are citizens who both attempt to satisfy the requirements of public reason and attribute the same responsibility to others guilty of a form of disrespect? I shall propose and assess three answers to this question, each of which amounts to a different version of the disrespect charge. My primary focus will be on the "particularities" associated with religion and culture, as opposed to social positions that are structured by the categories of race, class, and gender. This approach, as I explain below, is motivated by what I take to be the more plausible interpretations of the disrespect charge.

³⁸Wolterstorff, "The Role of Religion," pp. 110-11 (emphasis in original).

³⁹The initial formulation of the disrespect charge and the more specific formulations that follow are my own. Wolterstorff's remarks serve mainly as a starting point and as one possible example of the charge.

⁴⁰Here I follow Amy Gutmann's definition of an "identity group": "Identity groups are politically significant associations of people who are identified by or identify with one or more shared social markers. Gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, and sexual orientation are among the most obvious examples of shared social markers, around which informal and formal identity groups form ... [W]hen a sizable group of people identifies *as* and therefore *with* each other, they constitute an identity group. When they act in an organized fashion in politics on the basis of their group identities—whether for the sake of gaining recognition for the group or furthering its interests—they are part of identity group politics." *Identity in Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 9-10.

⁴¹See my "Public Reason and Religion," in Thom Brooks and Fabian Freyenhagen (eds.), *The Legacy of John Rawls* (London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 124-51.

4.1. Consider first Wolterstorff's claim that honoring others involves listening to what they have to say and inviting them to report on how "politics looks from their perspective." Presumably citizens might in this way discuss the significance of race, class, gender, religion, or culture in political decision-making and efforts to promote social justice. One version of the disrespect charge (D1), then, would be based on the notion that public reason does not adequately encourage such discussion:

D1: Citizens who attempt to satisfy and hold one another to the requirements of public reason thereby demonstrate disrespect for others by failing to listen to and appreciate the observations, claims, and arguments that are made from the others' distinctive points of view.

Several considerations militate against accepting D1. Recall first that there is a deliberation requirement associated with public reasoning. Citizens would in general have to listen to one another in order to evaluate competing claims and arguments as they attempt to scrutinize their own political judgments and the judgments of others. Rawls observes that the duty of civility requires "a willingness to listen to others and a fairmindedness in deciding when accommodations to their views should reasonably be made."⁴² Furthermore, in listening to one another, citizens encounter more than just an exchange of public reasons. A second point is that, according to the wide view of public political culture, there are "positive reasons" for the introduction of religious doctrines and other comprehensive doctrines into political discussion.⁴³ By satisfying the proviso when presenting their comprehensive views, citizens demonstrate their commitment to constitutional democracy and also promote greater mutual understanding of their different perspectives. Rawls also suggests that public reasoning might be supplemented by various forms of nonpublic discourse—for example, declaration, conjecture, and witnessing—by means of which citizens discuss the relationship between comprehensive doctrines, reasonable political conceptions of justice and favored laws and policies.⁴⁴

Third, and most important, D1 seems to presuppose that citizens must exercise far more restraint than the idea of public reason actually requires. As we have seen, the restraint requirement applies only to the justificatory appeal to comprehensive doctrines in voting on and publicly deliberating about fundamental questions in the public political forum.

⁴²Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 217.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 462. For further discussion of the role of religious convictions in the wide view, see especially William R. O'Neill, S.J., "Modernity and its Religious Discontents: Catholic Social Teaching and Public Reason," *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy* 20 (2006): 295-312.

⁴⁴I discuss witnessing below. See also my "Public Reason and Religion," pp. 131-32.

And, even with respect to public deliberation of this sort, comprehensive doctrines still may be introduced under the terms of the proviso and through forms of nonpublic discourse. To be sure, the idea of public reason instructs citizens sometimes to exercise restraint. But it also allows for ample discussion of relevant doctrinal claims and for an appreciation of the way in which religious and philosophical doctrines might support reasonable political conceptions. Moreover, at no point does Rawls propose a restraint requirement for the additional “perspective[s]” mentioned by Wolterstorff, namely, the perspectives associated with a citizen’s particular class, gender, or nationality. Nothing in the idea of public reason would prevent a citizen from explaining to his or her compatriots how a proposed policy might be understood or experienced differently from the standpoint of a particular social position or ethnocultural identity group.⁴⁵ For example, citizens who would be negatively affected by a proposed policy because they occupy disadvantaged social positions should consider engaging in public reason precisely in order to draw attention to this fact. Nor would norms of public reason prevent citizens from calling attention to and challenging the underlying attitudes, established patterns of value, and elements of the social structure that generate and sustain disadvantaged social positions along the lines of race, class, gender, or nationality.

4.2. A second version of the disrespect charge begins with Wolterstorff’s suggestion that a fellow Jewish citizen should be honored *in* her embrace of Judaism. One interpretation of this claim is that a citizen’s *affirmation* of a group identity or comprehensive doctrine should be met with recognition respect, regardless of which particular identity or doctrine happens to be affirmed. But it is difficult to see how such an interpretation would support criticism of the idea of public reason, which is based in part on respect for a citizen’s moral power to affirm a conception of the good. A more plausible interpretation of Wolterstorff’s claim, also suggested by his reference to Charles Taylor’s well-known essay on the politics of recognition, is that what we should honor in this case is our fellow citizen’s Judaism and/or Jewish identity.⁴⁶ On this interpretation, a citizen honors others by recognizing some *value* in their group identities or comprehensive doctrines. Thus we are led to the following formulation:

D2: Citizens who attempt to satisfy and hold one another to the requirements of public reason thereby demonstrate disrespect for others by failing to recognize or appropriately express the value of particular group identities or comprehensive doctrines.

⁴⁵Rawls only briefly discusses conflicts deriving from differences in status, class, occupation, ethnicity, gender, and race in *Political Liberalism*, p. 487.

⁴⁶Wolterstorff, “The Role of Religion,” p. 120, n. 14.

A straightforward reading of D2 implies that, in political deliberation and decision-making, each citizen should treat different group identities and comprehensive doctrines *as valuable*. So, in valuing Jewish identity, a non-Jewish citizen would approve of Jewish cultural practices and of identification with them as worthwhile, perhaps even actively seeking their preservation. Likewise, in valuing Judaism as a religious doctrine, a non-Jewish citizen would approve of its affirmation as good, or perhaps as based on good reasons. In other words, deliberating citizens would be expected to manifest something like an attitude of "appraisal respect" for one another in their particularities, positively appraising and esteeming doctrines that they nevertheless reject, and cultural practices that they do not happen to share.

Yet this model of respect is beset by obvious difficulties. First, in the case of rival comprehensive doctrines, some of the doctrinal claims that one citizen endorses are bound to conflict with claims that another citizen takes to be true and politically significant. To approve of rival doctrinal claims as good or as based on good reasons may strike a reasonable citizen as intellectually irresponsible. Similar considerations are relevant to a citizen's evaluation of cultural practices. There are also difficulties, much discussed in the literature on multiculturalism, stemming from reactionary cultural norms, culturally sanctioned repressive practices, endogenous cultural changes, and intracultural diversity and conflict.⁴⁷ Especially in light of struggles and changes within a cultural group, how does a nonmember determine its "authentic" beliefs, symbols, practices, and spokespersons? Which cultural norms would citizens at large value or attempt to preserve? Respect for others must include an acknowledgment of their freedom to revise traditional beliefs and practices and even to reject identification with an inherited cultural tradition.

A second interpretation of D2 draws on the recognition theories developed separately by Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth. Both argue that intact identity-formation and self-realization are dependent upon underlying processes of reciprocal recognition. According to Taylor, "identity is partly shaped by recognition ... [w]e become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence defining our identity, through our acquisition of rich languages of human expression," in interaction and dialogue with others.⁴⁸ Both also emphasize the harms of misrecognition, which can inflict psychic damage and undermine a person's sense

⁴⁷For a discussion of these problems, see Gutmann, *Identity in Democracy*, esp. chap. 1; Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), esp. chap. 4; and Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁴⁸Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in Amy Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 25 and 32.

of self-worth. Honneth distinguishes three types of practical relation-to-self—that is, self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem—each of which corresponds to a specific pattern of reciprocal recognition and a potential form of misrecognition or disrespect.⁴⁹ While self-confidence is threatened by physical abuse and self-respect is threatened by the denial of the basic rights that give all members of the political community equal legal standing, self-esteem depends upon the recognition of a person's concrete characteristics and achievements, which are seen by others as contributing to shared goals and values. When persons are systematically denigrated or insulted, or when a society's "hierarchy of values is so constituted as to downgrade individual forms of life and manners of belief as inferior or deficient," the result is a loss of self-esteem, as those affected can no longer properly regard their own abilities and traits as socially valued.⁵⁰

The question is whether the requirements of public reason would undermine self-esteem by encouraging misrecognition of the other in his or her concrete identity. Plainly they do not insofar as misrecognition is thought to result from denigrating or humiliating remarks. To be sure, in the case of comprehensive doctrines, citizens and officials in the public political forum will sometimes argue with one another over religious and philosophical questions that are relevant to decision-making. They may, for example, contest doctrinal claims that are introduced as justifications under the terms of the proviso; discursive challenges of this sort are to be expected in democratic political life. But, aspiring to be recognized as reasonable citizens in the Rawlsian sense, they would refrain from disparaging one another on the basis of religious conviction or group identity.

The misrecognition question is more complicated when we turn to ethnic and cultural groups and to the constellation of values comprised by a society's dominant culture. In place of the political values of public reason, members of a cultural majority might deliberately or perhaps just unwittingly substitute dominant cultural values that "downgrade" minority beliefs and practices. The headscarf controversy in France is often cited as an example, where substantive values associated with the policy of *laïcité* are said to be imposed on Muslim students and others. Indeed, contributions to the literature on multiculturalism highlight cases in which, as Habermas puts it, a "majority culture ... abuses its historically acquired influence and definitional power to decide according to its own standards what shall be considered the norms and values of the political culture which is expected to be equally shared by all."⁵¹

⁴⁹Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, trans. Joel Anderson (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996).

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁵¹Jürgen Habermas, "Religious Tolerance—The Pacemaker for Cultural Rights," *Philosophy* 79 (2004): 5-18, p. 14. See also Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking Recognition," *New Left*

Many citizens, ethnic and cultural minorities included, have reason to be concerned about the "fusion" of a supposedly shared political culture with a "divisive majority culture," especially when it informs deliberation about how to arrange the basic institutional structure that secures their rights and opportunities.⁵² But it seems unlikely that widespread commitment to public reasoning would either uniquely bring about or significantly contribute to misrecognition, exclusion, and an unwarranted pressure to assimilate. Democratic political institutions are never completely neutral, as a dominant societal culture is often protected and reinforced through educational practices, family law, public holidays, and other governmental activities.⁵³ Societal norms and values are also significantly influenced by religious traditions, even in secularized societies.⁵⁴ Political conflicts over these issues are bound to arise in multicultural and pluralistic societies, with or without the practice of public reasoning.

Widespread acceptance of the practice of public reasoning might actually prove to be quite useful in challenging an overreaching dominant culture, in at least three ways. First, in seeking political justifications based on a reasonable political conception of justice, members of a majority culture must ask themselves how their claims and arguments would be received by persons who do not share the same historical or linguistic traditions, doctrinal commitments, or background cultural affiliations. They should attempt to distinguish a shared or shareable political culture from the more comprehensive majority culture from which a shared or shareable political culture may have emerged historically. Public reasoning would in this way improve political deliberation and decision-making by encouraging the requisite self-reflection along with the consideration of diverse points of view.

Second, from the perspectives of members of minority cultures and/or persons occupying disadvantaged social positions, an idea of public reason provides conceptual resources for diagnosing and challenging the particular form of injustice characterized by Anthony Simon Laden as the denial of "fully equal respect."⁵⁵ Laden distinguishes the basic re-

Review 3 (2000): 107-20, and "Social Justice in an Age of Identity Politics," in Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, trans. Joel Golb, James Ingram, and Christiane Wilke (New York: Verso, 2003), pp. 7-109. Fraser interprets misrecognition as a form of status subordination sustained by institutionalized patterns of cultural value that impede parity of participation in social life.

⁵²Habermas, "Religious Tolerance," p. 14.

⁵³Gutmann, *Identity in Democracy*, p. 43. See also Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 108.

⁵⁴See the "Cultural Traditions Axiom" advanced by Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart in *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 17 and 218.

⁵⁵Anthony Simon Laden, "Reasonable Deliberation, Constructive Power, and the

spect made possible by legal recognition and the extension of basic rights from “fully equal respect,” in which others are recognized as fully equal participants in the construction of a shared relationship. According to Laden, the denial of fully equal respect is often associated with a form of misrecognition not adequately theorized by Honneth. Fully equal respect is undermined when “constructive social power,” the power to determine the boundaries, relevance, and status of social identities, is distributed asymmetrically, as is the case, for example, in societies characterized by pervasive racism. The exercise of constructive social power sets out “the range of possible meaningful identities” and also “ties many of those identities to objective facts.”⁵⁶ Its asymmetrical distribution means that one or more groups are relatively powerless to resist the construction and imposition of an identity. Laden argues that in such a situation reasonable political deliberation between citizens is jeopardized, especially (but not only) when the rejection of a citizen’s claims or reasoning is supported by the dominant understanding of his or her nonpolitical identity, an identity that is imposed by those who yield a greater degree of constructive social power. Under such conditions, laws and policies that aim at the redistribution of constructive social power are implied by the very idea of reasonable political deliberation. Moreover, in calling for this redistribution, misrecognized groups and persons are able to appeal to the political identity that they share with the powerful, namely, the identity of free and equal democratic citizens who reciprocally recognize one another as co-authors of their ongoing system of political cooperation.⁵⁷

A third point is that the content of public reason—that is, the family of reasonable political conceptions of justice—provides the normative resources for deliberating about and defending many laws and policies advanced under the rubric of “the politics of recognition.” Of course, recognition claims that entail the violation of basic individual rights are inconsistent with the political values of public reason, which are based first and foremost on respect for *persons*, and not groups, associations, or worldviews. But Honneth maintains that many proposals for the recognition of cultural identity ultimately follow from the recognition principle of legal equality. Members of cultural groups might demand exemptions

Struggle for Recognition,” in David Owen and Bert van der Brink (eds.), *Recognition and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, in press). Laden’s treatment of Honneth and his discussion of fully equal respect draw on the theory of deliberative liberalism convincingly developed in his *Reasonably Radical: Deliberative Liberalism and the Politics of Identity* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001). Laden’s account of reasonable political deliberation and its corresponding principle of public reason are quite similar to the Rawlsian ideal of public reason that I defend here. See especially *Reasonably Radical*, pp. 99–130.

⁵⁶Laden, *Reasonably Radical*, pp. 152–53.

⁵⁷Laden, “Reasonable Deliberation.”

from existing laws that significantly interfere with their defining practices, claiming the same legal protections already enjoyed by the majority.⁵⁸ Or, in light of historical injustices, they might demand resources or preventative measures, such as assistance for instruction in a native language. In these cases, proponents would be calling for the "elimination of obstacles that unjustifiably disadvantage or have disadvantaged a social group in carrying on its cultural life relative to the majority culture."⁵⁹ Examining the arguments for and against specific cultural rights is beyond the scope of the present essay. It is worth observing, however, that in discussions of multiculturalism, these arguments often conceive of cultural rights as *individual* rights that are justified on *liberal-democratic* grounds such as protecting personal identity, maintaining equality, promoting good citizenship, or securing the conditions necessary for making meaningful choices.⁶⁰ Supporting justifications for such rights might be formulated in terms of the values of a reasonable political conception, which is supposed to guarantee for citizens basic rights, liberties, and opportunities as well as the "all-purpose means to make use of their political freedoms."⁶¹

Consider debates about English-only initiatives in U.S. public education, such as Arizona's Proposition 203, approved by voters in 2000. Proposition 203 replaces bilingual education with English-only instruction and sheltered English immersion, supposedly in order to teach all students English as rapidly and effectively as possible.⁶² In public deliberation,

⁵⁸ Axel Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," in Fraser and Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?* pp. 110-97, at p. 165. Honneth acknowledges that other political measures, such as bestowing public honors or celebrating cultural achievements, arise from the demand that a minority culture be "socially esteemed for its own sake." This demand, Honneth argues, would require a different kind of justification, since it exceeds the "normative horizon of both the equality principle and the achievement principle" (p. 167).

⁵⁹ Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," p. 165. See also Laden, *Reasonably Radical*, pp. 159-85, explaining how his own deliberative liberalism counters charges that liberalism is assimilationist. Laden argues that while certain "form features" of citizenship, such as freedom and equality, are fixed, citizens themselves determine the more specific "content features" of their citizenship and may challenge such features when they give rise to undue burdens on their nonpolitical identities.

⁶⁰ Habermas defines cultural rights as rights "guaranteeing all citizens equal access to those associations, communication patterns, traditions and practices, which they respectively deem important in order to develop and maintain their personal identity" ("Religious Tolerance," p. 16). On the importance of such rights for maintaining identity, see also Avishai Margalit and Moshe Halbertal, "Liberalism and the Right to Culture," *Social Research* 61 (1994): 491-510. For the leading defense of cultural rights as necessarily implied by a commitment to liberal freedom and equality, see Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, esp. chaps. 5-6. On support for cultural groups as instrumental for good citizenship, see Michael Walzer, *On Toleration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), esp. pp. 104-12.

⁶¹ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 450.

⁶² I rely on Daniel Gonzalez, "Proposed Ban on Arizona Bilingual Education Stirs Uproar," *The Denver Post*, October 8, 2000; and Wayne E. Wright, "The Political Spec-

eration prior to the referendum, proponents claim that fluency in the dominant language is necessary in order to take advantage of various social and economic opportunities, while opponents respond by pointing out that successful English-language acquisition is a primary goal of bilingual education. But some opponents might also be worried that the Proposition 203 campaign is motivated less by empirical evidence concerning the effectiveness of bilingual education and more by nativist anxieties about Hispanic immigration or desires for more complete assimilation to a dominant Anglo-Protestant culture. They might further contend that a sizable linguistic minority can reasonably expect education in its first language to be treated as a basic public good and supported by the state.⁶³ Members of the Navajo Nation, a historically disadvantaged indigenous people, might argue—as they did in fact argue—that Proposition 203 could significantly interfere with tribal language programs that directly serve the goal of cultural preservation. As I see it, versions of all of these arguments are available within the domain of public reason. That is, commitment to public reasoning would not prevent Arizonans from appealing to their ethnocultural particularities or even to cultural rights in voicing their opposition to (or support for) a proposed policy concerning basic educational opportunities.

4.3. A third version of the disrespect charge is based on what is by now a familiar challenge to liberal accounts of political justification and public reasoning. The objection is presented quite forcefully by Wolterstorff, who observes that some citizens consider themselves to be religiously obligated to base their political decision-making on their religious views.⁶⁴ For these citizens, important choices and activities should be directly guided by religious convictions. Insofar as a standard of public reason instructs them sometimes to set aside these convictions in political decision-making, it interferes with their ability to discharge their religious obligations and to achieve a religiously unified life. Interference of this sort is said to amount to a violation of the free exercise of religion.

tacle of Arizona's Proposition 203," *Educational Policy* 19 (2005): 662-700.

⁶³Stephen May, "Misconceiving Minority Language Rights: Implications for Liberal Political Theory," in Will Kymlicka and Alan Patten (eds.), *Language Rights and Political Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 123-52, at p. 147. See also Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, pp. 96-97, discussing the different linguistic protections due to immigrants and national minorities.

⁶⁴Wolterstorff, "The Role of Religion," p. 105. See also Wolterstorff, "Why We Should Reject What Liberalism Tells Us about Speaking and Acting in Public for Religious Reasons," in Paul Weithman (ed.), *Religion and Contemporary Liberalism* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1997), pp. 162-81, at p. 177. Jürgen Habermas also takes up this line of criticism against Rawls in "Religion in the Public Sphere," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14 (2006): 1-25.

With its emphasis on the integrity of a conscientious and well-lived religious life, this objection has been called the “integralist objection.”⁶⁵ Elsewhere I have responded to closely related criticisms that the idea of public reason is infeasible and unfair to religious believers.⁶⁶ The question at hand is whether the integralist objection supports a more plausible interpretation of the disrespect charge. Hence:

D3: Citizens who attempt to satisfy and hold one another to the requirements of public reason thereby demonstrate disrespect for others by disregarding or interfering with their pursuit of religious integrity.

Respect for persons does involve an acknowledgment of the significance of citizens’ religious commitments. As I have argued already, in respecting others we should give appropriate weight to the fact that particular, context-bound aims, projects, and values are central to each person’s identity and self-understanding. Religious doctrines and traditions are a principal source of these aims, projects, and values, and so the fact that there are religiously based identity-constituting commitments should be a matter of recognition respect. In this general sense, Wolterstorff is right to suggest, in the lengthy passage quoted earlier, that we need a politics that honors us “in our particularities” because our particularities are “constitutive of who we are, constitutive of our narrative identities.” But does a politics that includes the requirements of public reason fail to honor citizens in this way?

We should begin by making a distinction between two dimensions of integrity. A first dimension concerns the conscientious attempt to identify, understand, and satisfy one’s obligations. Both religious and nonreligious citizens typically have ultimate ethical commitments that are often derived from authoritative sources such as God, reason, tradition, or nature; they also rely on their moral consciences in discerning that certain choices, actions, and forbearances are morally wrong.⁶⁷ To ask others to ignore or fail to satisfy obligations based on ultimate ethical commitments is, at least in some cases, to ask them to violate their conscience and to compromise their integrity. Call this concern with a person’s interest in satisfying important obligations the *conscience dimension*.

⁶⁵I take this term from Mark Jensen, who responds to the objection in his “The Integralist Objection to Political Liberalism,” *Social Theory and Practice* 31 (2005): 157-71. Jensen refers to Nancy Rosenblum’s use of the term in her “Introduction” to Rosenblum (ed.), *Obligations of Citizenship and Demands of Faith* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 3-31.

⁶⁶Boettcher, “Public Reason and Religion,” pp. 132-39.

⁶⁷I take the phrase “ultimate ethical commitments” from Gutmann, *Identity in Democracy*, p. 168. On the concept of conscience, see especially Hill, *Respect, Pluralism and Justice*, p. 261.

sion. It is a second dimension of integrity, what we might call the *unity dimension*, that Wolterstorff emphasizes when he points out that some religious persons aspire to have religious teachings "shape their existence as a whole."⁶⁸ For these citizens, choices and judgments associated with a variety of social roles, including familial, civic, institutional, and professional roles, should be consistently rendered by the faithful application of a religious doctrine. As Nancy Rosenblum observes, given the "sense of alienation ... which comes from being 'forced' to live what is described as the divided life of believer and citizen," the integralist seeks instead to achieve a "religiously integrated existence."⁶⁹

How might the requirements of public reason compromise integrity? There are several possibilities. First, imagine a religious citizen who follows the restraint requirement by withdrawing support from a religiously favored law or policy for which she lacks an adequate political justification. In this case, the restraint requirement seems to demand that she alter her vote or advocacy on an issue that she would otherwise resolve on the basis of her religiously informed moral conscience. Second, depending on a citizen's particular religious doctrine, even to affirm the restraint requirement at all may be contrary to a religious obligation. The requirement sometimes to exercise restraint would obviously conflict with an obligation always to discuss and decide political questions solely on the basis of a religious doctrine. Third, in attempting to satisfy all three main requirements of public reason, persons must think of themselves as *citizens*, that is, as occupying a particular civic role that carries the deliberative and justificatory responsibilities outlined in section 1. This kind of political self-understanding would interfere with a strong aspiration for religious integration and the desire to close the cognitive and psychological divide between the roles of believer and citizen. The unity dimension of a citizen's integrity would in this way be compromised.

Yet these considerations are not sufficient to sustain the disrespect charge. Regarding the unity dimension, there are bound to be a variety of obstacles to the goal of unity in religiously pluralistic, culturally diverse, and socially differentiated democratic societies. As a practical matter, we can expect that most citizens will have had the experience already of encountering alien beliefs and practices and of satisfying and balancing various role-specific requirements in their communities, professional lives, and other nonpolitical domains. Moreover, citizens who satisfy the requirements of public reason would still be able to find the *motivation* for much of their political activity in religious conviction. Nevertheless we can certainly imagine persons for whom acceptance of the restraint re-

⁶⁸Wolterstorff, "The Role of Religion," p. 105.

⁶⁹Rosenblum, "Introduction," p. 15.

quirement, or even the deliberation and political justification requirements, would significantly interfere with the goal of a fully religiously integrated existence. Consider a citizen or official whose religious views lead him not only altogether to reject the requirements of public reason but also to be actively involved in political advocacy and decision-making. I maintain that it would not be disrespectful in this case to continue to attribute responsibility for public reason's requirements or to criticize failure to acknowledge them. Rejection of the idea of public reason by a politically active citizen suggests a willingness to arrange the basic institutional structure and authorize the use of coercive power according to comprehensive views that others reasonably reject. If the argument of section 3 is sound, this attitude shows a lack of regard for a higher-order interest of other citizens, implicitly presupposing restrictions on the exercise of their moral powers that would not apply to the unity-seeking citizen. This is a political attitude that other reasonable religious and nonreligious citizens merely tolerate; they need not refrain from criticizing it.

What about the conscience dimension of integrity? Recall first that the idea of public reason imposes no legally enforceable requirements; its requirements are part of a moral-political *ideal* of citizenship.⁷⁰ Its interference is thus always limited to expectations about the conduct of others and subsequent attempts at moral-political criticism and persuasion. Moreover, the conceptions of justice that provide the content of public reason guarantee citizens' rights to free speech and liberty of conscience. Thus, with respect to the conscience dimension of integrity, citizens are free to reject the restraint requirement and to act politically solely on the basis of their religiously informed moral conscience. That is, political liberalism with its idea of public reason recognizes and protects a citizen's *right* to decide fundamental political questions as he or she sees fit. But it also encourages citizens to do more. In exercising their rights, citizens are not exempt from additional civic obligations or from criticism by their compatriots, who are often directly affected by their political choices. After all, citizens are accountable *to one another* for their political claims and their collective decision-making. Thus we should understand the idea of public reason to be an example of what Robert Audi calls an "involuntary ideal." Failure to fulfill the requirements of an involuntary ideal subjects a citizen to criticism, "even if one may in various cases avoid it because of, say, a stronger conflicting demand."⁷¹

In the case of a conflicting demand on a particular issue, Rawls has discussed a form of nonpublic discourse by means of which citizens ex-

⁷⁰Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, pp. 213 and 444.

⁷¹Robert Audi, *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 85.

press their religiously motivated dissent from legitimately enacted decisions. Citizens engage in *witnessing* by appealing to comprehensive grounds in their political dissent. Although they are committed to public reasoning, these citizens still feel compelled to convey “the deep basis of their strong opposition” while “bear[ing] witness to their faith by doing so.”⁷² As a form of “nonpublic” but still *political* discourse, witnessing is addressed to an audience of fellow citizens, who should make a good faith effort to appreciate the grounds of another citizen’s dissent as well as the religious significance, for the other, of bearing witness. I submit that they should also attempt to understand why a reasonable citizen might on occasion depart from a restraint requirement that he or she otherwise endorses as part of an ideal of citizenship, and adjust their criticism accordingly. This interpretation of the role of witnessing is consistent with Rawls’s claim that in honoring public reason citizens “give very great and *normally* overriding weight to the ideal it prescribes.”⁷³

Consider the case of a citizen, Christian, whose concern for the plight of immigrants to the U.S. stems in part from his religious convictions. Coming to the aid of the vulnerable stranger is enjoined by both the Gospel’s Samaritan story and by the social teaching of Christian’s religious tradition.⁷⁴ After reflecting on this tradition, deliberating with others, and searching his conscience, he decides to support not only bilingual education programs for immigrant children but also more general legalization measures that would better protect the rights of undocumented adult immigrants living and working in the U.S. Christian is morally committed to these positions as a matter of conscience. Note that the restraint requirement would affect Christian’s decision only insofar as he is voting or advocating in the public political forum and only if he fails to identify a sufficient political justification for his position. And even if Christian were to fail to identify a sufficient political justification, which seems unlikely, he is still within his rights in acting on the basis of his conscientiously held convictions. He might turn to witnessing and other forms of nonpublic discourse in order to mitigate the criticism of others or allay fears about his general commitment to public reason. This example suggests that by recognizing the liberty of conscience and attending to nonpublic discourse, citizens are able to respect one another as persons for whom conscientiously held convictions are an essential dimension of integrity.

The issues at stake in this example might nevertheless give rise to additional questions about political liberalism’s ideal of citizenship. I

⁷²Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 466, n. 57.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 241 (my emphasis).

⁷⁴In the Catholic tradition, for example, see the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ pastoral letter on migration, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 2003).

have followed Rawls and others in referring to citizens (and officials) as the agents who are due sufficient political justifications and responsible for satisfying requirements of public reason. One of the idealizing assumptions of political liberalism is that citizens are fully cooperating members of a society that they enter by birth and exit by death. But in actual contemporary democracies, there are also persons who participate in social life without having the status of fully cooperating *citizens*.⁷⁵ In the U.S., migrants, refugees, legal permanent residents, and illegal immigrants make significant contributions to the economy and to local communities where they reside. They are also sometimes significantly affected by political decision-making processes from which they are formally excluded. All persons, regardless of their political status, share an interest in exercising their basic moral powers. How then do citizens incorporate due respect for noncitizens in their political deliberation and decision-making? This important question, which I must leave aside for now, calls for further reflection on how an idea of public reason based on respect for persons might be extended or adapted in light of cross-border interdependence, globalization, and the increasing importance of transnational institutions and a framework of international human rights.⁷⁶

5. Conclusion

Whether requirements of public reason should be included in an ideal of liberal-democratic citizenship cannot be determined simply by analysis of the norm of respect for persons. Other considerations are also relevant in assessing the idea of public reason. We should attempt to understand the consequences of the practice of public reasoning, under both ideal and nonideal conditions. For example, critics allege that public reason's requirements, were they to be applied in existing unjust societies, would have the effect of weakening religiously motivated struggles against injustice. This is an especially important consideration insofar as churches and religious citizens are often instrumental in advocating and mobilizing support for persons who are incapable of full cooperation and for immigrants and others who are not accorded full citizenship status. Concerns of this sort are not addressed by the respect argument that I have presented.

That argument does show, however, that the essential aspects of respect for persons—that is, recognition of their moral standing and their identity—

⁷⁵Paul Weithman, *Religion and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 19-20.

⁷⁶Rawls's own approach to this question is to identify the public reason of a Society of Peoples, discussed only briefly in *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), at pp. 54-58.

constituting commitments—are reflected in the Rawlsian conception of the person as a free and equal citizen with an interest in exercising basic moral powers. Citizens who respect one another as free and equal should attempt to satisfy the main requirements of public reason, namely, the political justification, deliberation, and restraint requirements. In this way they acknowledge one another as co-legislators equally entitled to reasons for the exercise of coercive power on fundamental political questions and as unique persons who are free to affirm different religiously and culturally informed conceptions of the good and comprehensive doctrines.

A second goal of this essay has been to explain why citizens who attempt to satisfy and hold one another to the requirements of public reason would not thereby demonstrate disrespect for others in their particular, concrete identities. These requirements would not prevent citizens from engaging in a robust discussion of how proposed laws or policies might affect persons or be understood differently by them in virtue of their race, class, and gender or their ethnocultural or religious identity. Nor would requirements of public reason threaten self-esteem by resulting in the misrecognition of persons as members of ethnic groups or minority cultures. Deliberating citizens are not necessarily obligated to value or attempt to preserve specific cultural beliefs and practices; but they are free to propose and defend specific cultural rights and to challenge the implicit value assumptions or assimilating tendencies of a dominant majority culture. Finally, the idea of public reason is consistent with respect for others as religious believers who pursue an ideal of religious integrity. By recognizing basic rights and acknowledging the importance of witnessing and other nonpublic discourse, citizens respect the conscience dimension of integrity. And, while public reasoning might sometimes interfere with the unity dimension of integrity, given conditions of reasonable pluralism, this interference does not amount to a form of disrespect. In short, citizens and officials who attempt to satisfy and hold one another to the requirements of public reason are able to maintain respect for one another both in their particularities and in their role as free and equal citizens.⁷⁷

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