Public Reason and Private Bias

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Introduction

Public reason theories argue that legitimate laws or political principles must be based on the right kinds of reasons – public reasons. For some theories, this means basing the laws on reasons that all citizens do (or could) share.\(^1\) Other theories argue that the reasons need only be “intelligible” to other citizens.\(^2\) Regardless, the idea is that, if the reasons supporting the law are of the right kind, the law will be publicly justified because it means that all citizens “could accept” it. And when all citizens could accept a law, theorists argue, it is permissible for the state to coerce citizens based on that law. This is because the law is, in a sense, one that each citizen could give herself.

John Rawls and other theorists often cite intuitions about fairness and desert as prototypical examples of public reasons. For Rawls, public reasons are those that are implicit in our public culture or operative in the public institutions of a liberal-democracy.\(^3\) Fairness is obviously at the core of many of our institutions, and few citizens would deny its importance. Desert is equally important to citizens and, while Rawls denies it has any value prior to the creation of institutions, he acknowledges that, once institutions have set up legitimate expectations, citizens deserve to have those expectations fulfilled.\(^4\)

While these two values are widely shared, citizens have different intuitions about how to apply them. Take the case of welfare, for instance. Some citizens intuitively believe that it is a matter of fairness to make sure that everyone has what they need to live a decent life. Other citizens disagree, arguing that those who do not earn their keep, do not deserve public assistance. For the latter, welfare is either not a requirement of fairness or is trumped, in this case, by the value of desert. Whichever side wins this debate, public reason theories consider it to be a legitimate public argument. Both sides are offering shared reasons, rather than relying on controversial considerations such as religious values or disputed ethical theories.

Even if the reasons are public, however, the reasoning may not be, and that negates the public character of the arguments. For example, opponents of welfare may cite the public reason of (post-institutional) desert in arguing against it. But, what makes them choose desert instead of fairness, or weigh desert over fairness, or interpret either in the ways that they do? These influences on our reasoning must also be justified to others, or the conclusion is not one that all citizens “could accept.”

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\(^1\) Most notably, John Rawls’.
\(^2\) These are “convergence” theories by theorists such as Gerald Gaus and Kevin Vallier.
For opponents of welfare, the influences on their reasoning that cause them to select, interpret, or weigh their public reasons are often not shared by others. Martin Gilens has argued that the strongest predictor of anti-welfare views among survey respondents is a respondent’s belief that welfare recipients are undeserving of government assistance.\(^5\) However, Gilens also found that the strongest predictor of respondents’ beliefs that welfare recipients are undeserving is the belief that African-Americans are lazy, which is not – at least for most\(^6\) public reason theories – a reason that is acceptable to all. Gilens’ work suggests that we have good reason to worry that the opposition to welfare is not based on public reasoning, since it may well be influenced, knowingly or unknowingly, in whole or in part, by racial bias. If you chose to emphasize desert because of racism, then your conclusion is not justified to me.\(^7\) And this is true even though all accept that desert is a valid consideration and therefore a public reason.

Public reason theorists have a ready response to this worry. Maybe some, or even all, actual opponents of welfare are influenced by an irrational bias, they might say. But, that is irrelevant to public reason theories, which only care about what reasonable people could accept. Reasonable people are idealized versions of actual people; they are actual people, when they are motivated and thinking in the right ways. Which means that reasonable people are, by definition, not irrational. So, as long as it is possible to oppose welfare based on public (and non-racist) reasons, then the opposition to welfare is a position that reasonable people could accept, and is therefore legitimate.

However, I will argue that public reason theories are committed to a concept of reasonable people that includes some form of irrational influence on their reasoning. The argument will proceed in three steps: 1) What reasonable people “could accept” cannot refer to “what it is possible to accept.” The meaning of “could accept” must contain some limitation or the acceptability requirement would be meaningless. Acceptable reasons could then include religious doctrines or abstruse philosophy, which would defeat the purpose of public reason theories. Instead, “could accept” means “likely to accept, given the features and conditions of reasonable people.”

2) Those features and conditions are set by the justification of the public reason theory, which tells us why we should care about what these people think, as opposed to people with other features, or under different conditions. More specifically, it is set by what I have elsewhere called the “diversity argument” – the argument for why we should justify political norms to people with diverse religious and ethical views. And, 3) No matter which diversity argument public reason theorists endorse, the relevant features and conditions of reasonable people will include some form of irrational influence, whether it is a reliance on heuristics, motivated reasoning, or implicit bias. If this is right, then it

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\(^6\) It is certainly not for Rawlsian “consensus” theories. But, even “convergence” theories would, I think, consider stereotypes to be unjustifiable. Gerald Gaus, for instance, argues that a person’s biases and heuristics-based reasoning are not justifiable to others, and stereotypes would fall into one or both of those categories. But, I am not certain what they would say, so I’ll leave the claim at “most public reason theories.”

\(^7\) And if your racism is subconscious, it may not even be justified to you, as I will discuss in the section on implicit bias.
seems impossible to meet the public reason requirement. If we must justify norms to biased people, and their biases are not justifiable to others, then it is hard to see how we can find norms that are justifiable to all. The “public’s” reasoning appears to be too unreasonable.

**Woulda, Shoulda, Coulda**

Public reason theorists argue that a coercive law is legitimate if it is based on reasons that citizens “could accept.” The law is one that citizens could give themselves, which makes it legitimate for the state to hold them to it. If citizens felt imposed upon, the state can then reply: you might not think it is the best possible law, but it is one that you could accept.

Of course, the effectiveness of this reply depends on what “could accept” means, and theorists have used it in many different ways. To narrow down the concept we need, it is helpful to start by saying what it is not. First, it does not refer to what actual people – or even the subset of people that are generally reasonable – would accept; it is not a purely predictive standard. Instead, there is a normative element to it. We want to know what actual citizens could accept if we held them to an appropriate normative standard, or we considered only their normatively relevant qualities, or we took into account normatively relevant circumstances.

However, it also does not refer to what they should accept; it is not a purely normative standard. If that were what it meant, then public reason would be no different than right reason. The state would merely be saying: “I don’t care what you think, we know the truth and you have to live by it.” This is the kind of imposition that public reason seeks to avoid.

For the same reasons, “could accept” cannot refer to what “it is possible for people to accept.” Unless there is some constraint on what is possible, this interpretation would allow reasonable people to accept anything, including religious doctrines or abstruse ethical theories. Since public reason rejects these possibilities, there must be some constraint built into the meaning of “could accept.”

To get such a constraint, while retaining the normative character of the concept, we must combine the normative and predictive elements just described. The normative element comes from the conception of “reasonableness,” which tells us what normative standard we should hold people to. Ultimately, the concept of reasonableness tells us why we should care about what such people think. For example, we may argue that it is appropriate to expect people to be rational but not omniscient, so the laws should be acceptable to such people. We must then ask what such people “could accept.”

However, unless we add in some predictive (or, more accurately, deductive) element, we return to the same problem as before – there is no limit on what such people could accept. It is possible for rational but not omniscient people to accept just about anything. For that matter, it is possible for all irrational and ignorant people to accept just about anything.
To get some constraint, we must consider one of two interpretations: Given their abilities and limitations, 1) what is the best that we can hope for from such people, or 2) what is it likely that such people will arrive at?

For example, Jonathan Quong takes the first approach. Quong suggests that all we need to know is the conception of justice that would be acceptable to citizens under the “best foreseeable liberal conditions.” In other words, when he asks what reasonable people could accept, he wants to know what people could accept in the best foreseeable liberal society. The normative character of reasonable people is determined by their being liberals of some sort – that is the standard we should hold them to. The deductive element comes from the requirement of foreseeability; we cannot imagine people having qualities, values, or information that is not “foreseeable.” We therefore want to know what such people under such constraints could accept. Or, to put it another way, we want to know what are the most robust liberal norms that they can accept, given the constraints.8

Meanwhile, Gerald Gaus (arguably) takes the second approach. He asks what people “would conclude” after “a respectable amount of good reasoning.”9 The normative element comes (in part10) from the standard he holds people to: “a respectable amount of good reasoning.” The deductive element comes from asking what people held to such a standard (or under such a constraint) “would conclude,” or, in my terms, would be likely to arrive at. This gives us the combination of normative and deductive elements that Rawls aimed at when he described his theory as a “reasonable hope.”11 Once we describe citizens and their conditions in the right way, we should then be able to deduce whether citizens-so-described would (or would not) accept the norms in question.

To take a simplified example, let us say that I was wondering whether my daughter “could accept” attending a particular summer camp. I already know that she would not accept it because she has said so. But, I am not therefore wondering whether she should accept it, in a way that makes no reference to her. Instead, I might be thinking: “She says she doesn’t want to go, but that’s just because she doesn’t know what summer camps are like and is afraid of leaving home. So, I should really ask myself whether she is likely to enjoy it once she gets there and knows what it’s like. Given that she tends to adapt to new things quickly, I think she could accept it.” Here, I have abstracted from some features of her that I have declared irrelevant (lack of knowledge, fear), focused on relevant features

8 To continue his argument: We then ask ourselves whether such people are ever likely to agree on a single conception of the good – whether we would predict it, under the best of circumstances. Since the answer is no, Quong can conclude that the most we can expect is that such people agree on liberal values that do not depend on any conception of the good. Therefore, he argues, we ought to prefer this neutral form of liberalism to Kantian and Millian versions.
9 A reasonable person, Alf, has “a sufficient reason R if and only if a “respectable amount” of good reasoning by Alf would conclude that R is an undefeated reason (to act or believe).” Gerald Gaus, The Order of Public Reason (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.250.
10 I will describe further relevant conditions in a later section, including that such people are under time and information constraints.
and circumstances (quick adaption, additional knowledge) and made a deduction about what such a person in such a situation would do.

In this same way, public reason theories must set a normative standard for reasonable people and then deduce what they are likely to accept. The normative and deductive elements of what “reasonable people could accept” work together to explain the two crucial questions in public reason theories: 1) why should we care about what such people think? And, 2) why are there limits on the political norms such people could arrive at?

**Diversity Arguments**

If what “reasonable people could accept” means what they are likely to (or the most they are likely to) arrive at, given the standard we should hold them to, then we now need to know what that standard is. To find the standard that each theory is committed to, we must look at the theory’s justification – at the reason why we are supposed to care about what such people think in the first place. If what these people think is relevant to deciding our political norms, it must be because of some qualities of these people, or circumstances they find themselves in.

I have argued at length elsewhere\(^{12}\) that we find those qualities and circumstances in what I call the theory’s “diversity argument,” so I can only briefly summarize that argument here. The diversity argument explains why reasonable people’s diverse views are relevant to deciding political norms. To take the most prominent example of a diversity argument, consider Rawls’ “burdens of judgment,” which claims that reasonable people will inevitably disagree on the good life because they have different life experiences and because evidence is complex, among other reasons.

In the course of telling us why reasonable people will inevitably disagree, however, the burdens also tell us who reasonable people are; in this case, they are people with different life experiences who find evidence complex. This also tells us the standard we must hold reasonable people to: we should expect reasonable people to be influenced by their life experiences and have difficulty with evidence on difficult moral questions. We should not demand more of them than that, but nor should we expect less. Implicitly, Rawls is arguing that, if people meet this normative standard, their views are relevant to deciding political norms.

Here is a simple way to see the point. The standard public reason argument goes as follows:

1. **Premise of PR Theories**: To be legitimate, political norms must be acceptable to reasonable people

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\(^{12}\) See my “Government For the People, By the Viewpoints: Realism and Idealism in Public Reason” (Under Review)
2. **Diversity Argument:** Reasonable people have diverse religious and ethical views of the good

3. **Conclusion:** So, political norms must be acceptable to diverse religious and ethical viewpoints

Once the theorist defends step two by explaining *why* reasonable people have diverse views (e.g., the burdens of judgment), she must then identify the features of reasonable people that she considers relevant to deciding political norms (such as their life experiences). So, we can now reformulate the argument as follows:

1. **Premise of PR Theories:** To be legitimate, political norms must be acceptable to reasonable people

2. **Diversity Argument:** Reasonable people have certain normatively relevant features that cause them to arrive at diverse views of the good

3. **Follows from Diversity Argument:** Political norms must be acceptable to people with certain normatively relevant features, which are likely to result in them accepting diverse views of the good.

4. **Conclusion:** So, political norms must be acceptable to diverse views of the good

To know the relevant qualities and circumstances of reasonable people, therefore, we must look at the various diversity arguments.

**Three Diversity Arguments**

Theorists have offered many justifications for why pluralism is relevant to political norms, but I will focus on three diversity arguments because they imply three very different conceptions of reasonable people. They conceive of reasonable people as: 1) ordinary moral reasoners, 2) highly competent reasoners, and 3) reasoners produced by free conditions. If I can argue that each of these diversity arguments commits us to seeing reasonable people as irrational in some way, then I have a good case for thinking that would be true on any diversity argument. To see how these diversity arguments work, I will explain how each one justifies the relevance of diverse religious and ethical views.

The first diversity argument I will consider comes from Gerald Gaus. Gaus argues that religious pluralism is relevant to deciding political norms because of our moral practices of blame and guilt, among others.\(^{13}\) If we want to be able to hold a person responsible for violating norms – to blame them or expect them to feel guilty – then those norms must be ones that the person could accept. Otherwise, we are just imposing an alien rule on him that he could never see the importance of.

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Now, since we want to hold most people responsible in this way, this acceptability requirement must apply to most people. That is, ordinary moral reasoners must be able to accept our norms. If ordinary moral reasoners must be able to accept our norms, then the reasoning for those norms cannot be beyond what we could expect from an ordinary citizen under ordinary conditions. And, ordinary conditions include the fact that ordinary people cannot spend a lot of time deliberating on moral issues; they only have access to easily available information; and they only have ordinary reasoning ability.\(^{14}\)

This justifies the relevance of diverse religious and ethical beliefs because we cannot expect such people to arrive at a singular ethical truth, if there is one. Such reasoning would exceed the ability of ordinary citizens, would take too much time, or would require information that is not close at hand. So, because we ought to accommodate what we can reasonably expect from ordinary people – what they are likely to do, given their constraints – we ought to accommodate the diverse religious views they are likely to arrive at.

This explanation for why reasonable people would have diverse religious beliefs seems innocent enough because it results in a kind of diversity that we find at least respectable. We can see the intuitive appeal of accommodating religious pluralism and considering those who hold different religions to be reasonable, even if they are mistaken. Given that the results are intuitively appealing, we might also see the cause as harmless. For example, we might say, with Gaus, that political norms should be acceptable to ordinary moral reasoners and ordinary moral reasoners have limited time for deliberation, access to information, and reasoning ability. When the results of these limitations are religious diversity, it may not raise any alarms. Considered as causes of religious diversity, limited time, information, and ability might be non-rational factors, but they do not seem like irrational ones.

The problem is that the same diversity argument that validates these non-rational factors must also validate certain irrational factors. To see why, consider the argument for accommodating religious diversity again:

1. To be legitimate, political norms must be acceptable to reasonable people
2. Reasonable people have certain normatively relevant features that cause them to arrive at diverse views of the good
3. Political norms must be acceptable to people with certain normatively relevant features (such as limited time), which are likely to result in them accepting diverse views of the good.

This third claim implies that political norms must be acceptable to people with beliefs that are likely to result from normatively relevant features. In other words, if political norms must accommodate religious diversity because it is the product of factors like

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p.255, 269.
limited time, then it must accommodate other beliefs that are likely to result from these limitations.

What kinds of beliefs are the results of factors like limited time, information, and ability? The kinds of beliefs that result from heuristics. According to social psychologists, when people have limited time and information to answer a question, they are likely to employ heuristics, which are quick and dirty rules of thumb. More specifically, heuristics “are mental shortcuts used when people are interested in assessing a “target attribute” and when they substitute a “heuristic attribute” of the object, which is easier to handle (Kahneman & Frederick 2002).”

This “attribute substitution” is helpful under time and information limitations because it is both “fast and frugal.” Fast refers to how quickly the judgment can be made, and frugal to how little one has to search for information. Heuristics are fast because they are the product of what psychologists call System I processing, which is “rapid, automatic, and effortless,” rather than System II processing, which is slower and more reflective. And, they are frugal because they often rely on information or rules that one already has, rather than requiring further thought or research.

Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, who pioneered the research into heuristics, offered a few different types of this reasoning that illustrate the pattern. The availability heuristic is when “people assess the frequency of a class or the probability of an event by the ease with which instances or occurrences can be brought to mind. For example, one may assess the risk of heart attack among middle-aged people by recalling such occurrences among one’s acquaintances.” Because we can recall information about our acquaintances easily and quickly, we tend to substitute that information for statistical information that we do not have.

Similarly, in the representativeness heuristic, “probabilities are evaluated by the degree to which ...A resembles B.” In Kahneman and Tversky’s example, people are given a sketch of a person, “Steve,” who is shy and withdrawn, with a passion for order and detail. When asked to rank the probability that Steve works as a farmer, salesman, pilot, or librarian, most people rank ‘librarian’ highest because the description matches their stereotype of a librarian. This example illustrates ordinary people’s tendencies under the third factor that Gaus believes is relevant to political norms: limited ability. Ordinary people do not just arrive at the judgment of librarian because they lack information and time, but because they have limited ability to reason statistically. In fact, many people already have the information required to judge the probability correctly, in that they know that there are many more farmers than librarians in the world, which means the prior

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19 Ibid., p.1124.
probability that Steve is a farmer is much higher. What they lack is the ability to infer that, even if the description is very representative of librarians, the prior probabilities still make it more likely that Steve is a farmer. In other words, ordinary people are poor statisticians, so they are likely to infer the wrong result.

As the phrase “fast and frugal” implies, it can be rational to rely on heuristics. In certain contexts, Gigerenzer argues, focusing on a small subset of the information can be more accurate.\(^{20}\) And, in general, it can be rational not to expend too much time or energy on a question when the stakes are low. But, as Kahneman and Tversky point out, relying on heuristics can also lead us astray in systematic ways, such as the insensitivity to prior probabilities in the previous example. Thinking about whether A resembles B might serve us well on some questions, but it will systematically get the answer wrong on probability questions.

Similarly, Cass Sunstein has argued that ordinary people rely on moral heuristics in ways that lead them to systematic error.\(^{21}\) For example, we assess penalties based on the heuristic “do not knowingly cause human death,”\(^ {22}\) even when there is no difference between knowingly causing a death and knowingly risking a death, which we assess more leniently. On questions of genetic engineering or sexual taboos, we rely on the heuristic “do not tamper with nature,”\(^ {23}\) even when “natural” processes cause more harm or “unnatural” ones cause no harm. And, we punish people and companies in ways that reflect our sense of outrage, even if the amount and type of punishment does no one any good or actually causes more harm.

So, if political norms must accommodate the likely results of our limited time, information, and ability, they will have to accommodate the results of heuristic reasoning, which can be systematically irrational, on both empirical and moral questions.\(^ {24}\) In other words, if political norms must be acceptable to reasonable people, and reasonable people


\(^{21}\) “Heuristics, which are quick and simple decision procedures, also create illusions in morality. One reason is that many moral beliefs depend on consequences and probabilities, for which we often lack adequate evidence, and then we have to guess these probabilities. Such guesses are notoriously distorted by the availability heuristic, the representative heuristic, and so on... Even when moral beliefs do not depend on probability assessments, moral beliefs are affected by the so-called ‘I agree with people I like’ heuristic (cf. Chaiken and Lord, Ross, and Lepper as discussed by Haidt 2001). When people whom we like express moral beliefs, we tend to go along and form the same belief. When people whom we dislike oppose our moral beliefs, we tend to hold on to them in spite of contrary arguments. This heuristic often works fine, but it fails in enough cases to create a need for confirmation.” Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, “Moral intuitionism meets empirical psychology,” In Terry Horgan & Mark Timmons (eds.), Metaethics After Moore. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p.353.


\(^{23}\) Ibid., p.539.

\(^{24}\) Some philosophers, such as Gigerenzer, defend our reliance on heuristics in part, saying that they are neither rational nor irrational on their own. Instead, their rationality depends on the context in which they are deployed. If this is true, then I will amend my argument to suggest that whether reasonable people think rationally or irrationally will depend on the deliberative environment they are in. I will return to this point in the conclusion.
have these limitations, then political norms must be acceptable to (sometimes) irrational people.\(^{25}\)

At this point, I want to reiterate my main argument, because public reason theorists are still likely to object that I have misunderstood the concept or purpose of “reasonable people.” Of course reasonable people will not rely on heuristics, they might say, because reasonable people, by definition, reason well. They may have limitations typical of ordinary people – they are not omniscient and cannot understand complicated philosophies – but they do not make irrational mistakes. That is why Rawls says that reasonable people engage only in “correct…reasoning”\(^{26}\) and Gaus says they engage in a “respectable amount of good reasoning” (Emphasis added).

While this is certainly right as a characterization of Rawls’ and Gaus’ description of reasonable people, I am arguing that they are not free to assign just any characteristics to reasonable people. If they were, then Kantians can claim that reasonable people accept Kantian liberalism, while utilitarians make them utilitarians, and so on. Public reason theories must explain why reasonable people disagree about the good, so they are committed to offering an argument for why reasonable people will diverge. This argument will take the form: Reasonable people diverge because of XYZ qualities and so political norms must accommodate the likely result of XYZ conditions. This in turn commits them to accommodating any likely result of XYZ conditions, which includes heuristic reasoning. Or, at most, it commits public reason theories to accommodating the best we can hope for given XYZ conditions. If this is right, then Gaus is committed to saying that political norms must be acceptable to those who rely on heuristics because that is the best we can hope for from ordinary reasoners with limited time and information.

**Motivated Reasoning**

One may still object that this problem is unique to Gaus’ diversity argument because it implies that reasonable people are just ordinary reasoners. Ordinary reasoners may be prone to irrationality, one might argue, but that is exactly why reasonable people must be better than that. Leland and van Wietmarschen offer such a conception.\(^{27}\)

Leland and van Wietmarschen argue that, for the diversity argument to work, public reason theories must conceive of reasonable people as highly competent reasoners. If reasonable people were merely ordinary reasoners, then others would have no reason to care what they think. You do not, for example, think your child should have a say in

\(^{25}\) To take another example, Gigerenzer suggests that there is a “one reason decision making heuristic,” which would violate the public reason requirement to take into account a balance of public reasons, not just place all weight on a single reason.

\(^{26}\) “An explanation of the right kind is that the sources of reasonable disagreement – the burdens of judgment – among reasonable persons are the many hazards involved in the correct (and conscientious) exercise of our powers of reason and judgment…” John Rawls, *Political liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p.55-56.

major household decisions; he simply doesn’t know enough. So, to convince you to take another person’s views into account, you must believe in his epistemic merit. His epistemic competence would give you a good reason to accommodate his beliefs. If you were convinced, for instance, that a highly competent person held different religious views to yours, you would therefore have some epistemic reason to accommodate his religious views. For that reason, public reason theories must accommodate reasoning that is reasonable to expect of highly competent reasoners. And, since even highly competent reasoners hold a variety of religious faiths, we ought to accommodate religious pluralism in deciding political norms.

If an argument like this works, then it might solve our previous problem with heuristics since we could now assume that reasonable people are highly competent. So, unlike ordinary reasoners, they could devote sufficient time to reasoning, have all the available information, and have sufficient reasoning ability. Such thinkers, we can assume, would not have trouble with Bayesian statistics and would not rely on moral heuristics when they are inappropriate to the case. They would not be irrational in such ways.

Even under this diversity argument, however, we are committed to seeing reasonable people as irrational in another way. If political norms must accommodate diverse views because highly competent people have diverse views, then we are committed to accommodating other ways in which highly competent people reason. And, while highly competent thinkers may not rely on heuristics (at least on important moral questions), social psychology suggests that they are still susceptible to other forms of irrationality.

Consider the problem of motivated reasoning. Sunstein conducted a study in which, when presented with evidence supporting the existence of man-made climate change, climate change “acknowledgers” tended to increase the strength of their belief that climate change was occurring. When presented with evidence that it was not occurring, however, their views barely changed. And the same was true of climate change deniers. Both sides responded to evidence asymmetrically.28,29 Another study showed that, when acquiring

28 “We find that people who doubt that man-made climate change is occurring, and who do not favor an international agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, show a form of asymmetrical updating: They change their beliefs in response to unexpected good news (suggesting that average temperature rise is likely to be less than previously thought) and fail to change their beliefs in response to unexpected bad news (suggesting that average temperature rise is likely to be greater than previously thought). By contrast, people who strongly believe that man-made climate change is occurring, and who favor an international agreement, show the opposite asymmetry: They change their beliefs far more in response to unexpected bad news (suggesting that average temperature rise is likely to be greater than previously thought) than in response to unexpected good news (suggesting that average temperature rise is likely to be smaller than previously thought). The results suggest that exposure to varied scientific evidence about climate change may increase polarization within a population due to asymmetrical updating.” Cass R. Sunstein, Sebastian Bobadilla-Suarez, Stephanie C. Lazzaro, and Tali Sharot, “How People Update Beliefs about Climate Change: Good News and Bad News,” Cornell Law Review, 102(6), p.1431.
29 “…Brian Gaines and his colleagues (2007) found in a series of repeated interviews with college students in late 2003 and 2004 that “all partisan groups, strong Republicans included, held reasonably accurate beliefs” about the Iraq War and updated those beliefs as circumstances changed; however, Democratic and Republican students differed greatly in their interpretations of pertinent facts, causing the authors to conclude that partisans “effectively used interpretations to rationalize their existing opinions” rather than to
testimonial evidence, Democrats tended to give more credence when the same presenter was labeled a Democrat than when he or she was labeled a Republican. In both cases, our prior ideology or party affiliation influences the way in which we acquire and weigh new evidence.

Dan Kahan’s work offers further evidence that political reasoning is motivated by our prior ideology or party identity. Kahan has argued that the distorting effects of party identity are the only way to explain the “clustering” of otherwise unrelated political positions that party members tend to take. There is no ideology that explains the clustering of anti-gun control and anti-abortion views, for example; the best explanation is that people adopt the position of their party (or group) and then find reasons to justify it. In other words, rather than respond to the evidence, people often engage in motivated reasoning.

If reasonable people were Gaus’ ordinary reasoners, then they would certainly be susceptible to these irrationalities as well. Sunstein’s subjects engaged in motivated reasoning when presented with ample information and given time to deliberate, so they are even more likely to do so under information and time constraints. Both studies suggest that, rather than evaluate new evidence independently, which would take time, ability and effort, ordinary reasoners often only accept evidence that is in line with previous beliefs or that is presented by someone in their group.

Perhaps highly competent reasoners would not be susceptible to these kinds of motivated reasoning? Kahan argues that, on the contrary, highly competent reasoners are more likely to engage in politically motivated reasoning, perhaps because they have greater ability to further their motivation—such as the desire to affirm their party’s platform—by summoning reasons to support it.

High numeracy—a quantitative reasoning proficiency that strongly predicts the disposition to use System 2 [“conscious, effortful”] information processing—also magnifies politically motivated reasoning. In one study, subjects highest in Numeracy more accurately construed complex empirical data on the effectiveness of gun control laws but only when the data, properly interpreted, supported the position congruent with their political outlooks. When the data properly interpreted was inconsistent with their predispositions, they were more disposed than low numeracy subjects to dismiss it as flawed. If this is how people use their reasoning proficiencies to assess evidence about contested facts in the real world, then we would expect to see exactly what observational studies consistently find: namely, a progressive increase in political polarization

as individuals of opposing outlooks become even more proficient in critical reasoning (Kahan et al., Peters, Dawson & Slovic 2013).\textsuperscript{32}

If Kahan and others\textsuperscript{33} are right, then there is reason to think that, even under this second diversity argument, highly competent people will be irrational in at least this one sense: they will be motivated reasoners. Further research has suggested that experts may be just as biased as ordinary people in other ways, such as in the effects of cultural background\textsuperscript{34} and framing effects\textsuperscript{35} on their moral intuitions.

\textbf{Stereotypes and Implicit Bias}

A third diversity argument – very different from the first two – also commits us to seeing reasonable people as irrational in particular ways. Jonathan Quong argues that reasonable people will hold diverse views of the good because disagreement is inevitable in any liberal society. Because all liberal societies offer freedoms of association, speech and conscience, their citizens will inevitably form different social, spiritual, and ideological groups, which will lead to religious and ethical pluralism.\textsuperscript{36}

As with the other diversity arguments, we must now ask what else liberal freedoms are likely to result in? If we must accommodate religious pluralism because it is the inevitable result of liberal freedoms, then we must accommodate other results of these freedoms as well. To see what these might be, let us think about how liberal freedoms are supposed to lead to religious pluralism. The basic thought seems to be this: under freedom of speech and association, liberal citizens tend to form social and spiritual

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p.12.

\textsuperscript{33} More support from Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels: “In fact, the more information the voter has, often the better able she is to bolster her identities with rational-sounding reasons…But she may be just as impervious to evidence as anyone else…” Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels, \textit{Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), p.268

\textsuperscript{34} Anna Drożdżowicz, “Philosophical expertise beyond intuitions,” Philosophical Psychology, 31:2, p.253-254.

\textsuperscript{35} S. Matthew Liao , Alex Wiegmann , Joshua Alexander & Gerard Vong, “Putting the trolley in order: Experimental Philosophy and the Loop Case,” Philosophical Psychology, 25:5, 661-671.

groups with those who share their faith or values. Forming these groups leads to the reinforcement of their initial beliefs as well as the further divergence of norms from group to group. At some point, these norms develop into more formal systems of thought and practice – into religions. Since this pluralism is the inevitable result of the tendency to form self-selected groups, it must be accommodated.

What are the other results of self-selected groups? One is the effect I have just described: various forms of motivated reasoning. Just as liberal freedoms lead people of the same religion to form “in-groups,” those freedoms also lead people with similar ideologies to do so. The result is many of the familiar biases that social psychologists have pointed out: polarization and groupthink.

But, there is an even more concerning possibility: another inevitable effect of self-selected groups is the development of explicit racial stereotypes and, more controversially, implicit racial biases. After all, under free conditions, people are even more likely to form insular racial groups than insular religious ones. Between 1977 and 2005, a majority of white Americans moved to predominantly white neighborhoods, while only 2% moved to black neighborhoods. Social groups appear to be even more segregated: “one study claims that 3/4 of whites and 2/3 of blacks have no members of the other group in their social networks.”

As Elizabeth Anderson argues, these facts alone can lead people to hold various explicit stereotypes and biases about other racial groups. How might socializing in a racially homogenous community lead to this objectionable reasoning? First, the racial segregation

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37 An analysis of people’s residential moves shows between 1977-2005 shows, among other things, that 56.8% of white families moved to a predominantly white neighborhood, while only 2% moved to black neighborhoods. Residential segregation by income has increased over that time to the point where, in 2010, 46% of housing was either in exclusively high or low-income areas. Daniel Fowler, “Study: Residential Segregation Still a Problem in U.S.,” American Sociological Association News, May 29, 2012, http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/documents/press/pdfs/ASR_June_2012_Kyle_Crowder_News_Release.pdf

38 “Americans’ core social networks tend to be dominated by people of the same race or ethnic background. However, the degree of racial and ethnic diversity in Americans’ social networks varies somewhat according to their particular race or ethnicity. Among white Americans, 91% of people comprising their social networks are also white, while five percent are identified as some other race. Among black Americans, 83% of people in their social networks are composed of people who are also black, while eight percent are white and six percent are some other race. Among Hispanic Americans, approximately two-thirds (64%) of the people who comprise their core social networks are also Hispanic, while nearly 1-in-5 (19%) are white and nine percent are some other race.” Daniel Cox, Juhem-Navarro Rivera, Robert Jones, “Race, Religion, and Political Affiliation of Americans’ Core Social Networks,” PRRI, Aug 3 2016, https://www.prri.org/research/poll-race-religion-politics-americans-social-networks/


may lead to a host of biases toward less familiar racial groups. Anderson argues that segregation does so, initially, by producing actual differences between groups: higher rates of poverty, unemployment, different dialects, different social norms, denies services and role models and concentrates social ills.\textsuperscript{41} People’s unfamiliarity with these other groups then produces psychological effects that exaggerate these real differences and skew their understanding of the causes. The “attribution bias”\textsuperscript{42} leads him to attribute the cause of these disadvantages to other groups based on individual qualities of their members, while he attributes disadvantages within his own group to structural causes. The “shared reality” bias inclines him to “align perceptions and judgments with [his] group,” which leads him to underestimate the prejudice that others experience and the effects it has on them.\textsuperscript{43} Finally, the “just world bias” inclines him to believe that, if other groups are not succeeding at the same rate as his, it must be because they are lacking in some way because, in his mind, the system is fair.\textsuperscript{44}

Second, rather than merely exaggerate actual differences caused by segregation, segregation also leads to the formation and reinforcement of explicit stereotypes about other groups with no basis in fact. Stereotyping, Anderson continues, is a natural response to objects or groups that one lacks frequent contact with, and therefore lacks more individualized knowledge of. These stereotypes are reinforced by the knowledge one does have, which comes mostly from the media. Since the dominant media imagery is that of the dominant group, the media feeds into prevailing stereotypes of subordinated racial groups, in part through the “illusory correlation bias,” which “disposes people to form stereotypes about a group with which they have little contact on the basis of unusual events such as sensational crimes.”\textsuperscript{45,46}

While the connection between segregation, the media, and explicit racial stereotypes is fairly uncontroversial, many social psychologists also argue that the same causes produce \textit{implicit} racial biases, which are often defined as unconscious associations between a racial group and a negative affect or judgment.\textsuperscript{47} Efren Perez has offered an example of how media control by the dominant group can lead to such automatic associations.\textsuperscript{48}

Perez argues that much of the opposition to immigration is driven by implicit biases against Latinos. Like Gilens, he cites a longstanding pattern of associations in the media

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p.44.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p.47.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p.46.
\textsuperscript{46} One might object that self-selection based on race is not inevitable in any liberal society. However, in that sense of inevitable, self-selection based on religious ideology is not inevitable either. We might also say that, even if racial self-selection is not inevitable, some self-selection is inevitable, based on some trait. Whatever those groups are based on, they will form stereotypes and implicit biases about other groups due to unfamiliarity.
\textsuperscript{48} Efrén Pérez, \textit{Unspoken Politics: Implicit Attitudes and Political Thinking} (New York: Cambridge University Press).
between illegal immigration and Latinos, despite the fact that a substantial portion of illegal immigrants are not Latino and most Latino immigrants are not here illegally. This near-exclusive focus by the media has led to an automatic association in many people’s minds between immigration and Latinos and Latinos and something negative (illegality), which Perez demonstrates through both survey work and a test for implicit bias, called the Implicit Association Test (IAT). He argues that those who possess these implicit biases are already predisposed to favor reasons against immigration, before they even consider the reasons in the immigration debate.

...broaching the issue of immigration will spontaneously activate people’s implicit attitude toward Latino immigrants, thus making these evaluations mentally accessible to people... Lodge and Taber (2013) have established that affective responses like these often bias one’s retrieval of considerations from memory, in particular, by recruiting considerations that are congruent with one’s initial affective response. I extend this affective contagion mechanism to one’s processing of political information. Specifically, I hypothesize that people will judge political issues according to the direction and intensity of their implicit attitudes, even when these are contradicted by explicit political information immediately before them. In other words, individuals will interpret political information in a manner that is consistent with the direction of their implicit attitudes. This takes place, I maintain, because the interplay between implicit attitudes and explicit political reasoning is subconscious – that is, citizens are unaware of how their implicit attitudes shape the more deliberative aspects of their decision making...49

Between explicit stereotypes and implicit biases, reasonable people are likely to hold some form of irrational bias. And this is true no matter which diversity argument we endorse. As I have been arguing here, one or both of these biases are an inevitable effect of liberal values and institutions. Freedom of association, combined with the natural human tendency to form in-groups and out-groups, allows us to live in communities with only in-group members. Since one of the predominant lines along which we form in-groups is race, this leads most Americans to live, work, socialize, or be educated in largely racially homogenous communities. This segregation, in turn, contributes significantly to the explicit and implicit biases described above, many of which can be traced back to important liberal values.

We are similarly committed under the other two diversity arguments. Ordinary conditions include only easily accessible information, which, given segregation, will not include much information about other racial groups. The response of ordinary reasoners is to rely on heuristics like stereotypes to fill the gaps in their understanding, so we can expect ordinary reasoners to hold some stereotypes as well. And, assuming that implicit biases are at least somewhat unconscious and difficult to control, it is very likely that ordinary reasoners will hold some implicit racial biases as well.

49 Ibid., p.112.
Nor does the situation improve if we raise our expectations to highly competent reasoners, based on the second diversity argument. As Perez and Gilens both point out, highly educated people are equally likely to hold implicit biases, and are equally susceptible to believing media-reinforced stereotypes, such as that most poor people are African-American.

So, no matter which diversity argument public reason theorists rely on to justify the accommodation of religious diversity, they will be committed to accommodating one or more forms of irrational reasoning. This means that, just as we should expect reasonable people to have different religious views because of influences like their varied life experiences, we should also expect reasonable people to arrive at beliefs due to influences like heuristic reasoning, motivated reasoning, and racial bias. So, even if their reasons are public, there is cause to worry that their reasoning is not – that they arrived at those public reasons in ways that other reasonable people could not accept. As in the examples of welfare and immigration cited earlier, reasonable people may offer reasons based in fairness, desert, prosperity or security. But, they may be selecting, interpreting, or ranking those public reasons based on explicit or implicit biases.

**Not Just Reasons, But Reasoning**

At this point, however, public reason theorists may offer two important objections, which I will consider in turn. The first objection asks why it should matter if reasonable people’s reasoning is irrational, as long as they arrive at the right kinds of reasons or norms. After all, public reason theories are about relying on shared (or shareable) norms in political decision-making, so it should not matter how they got there.

To see why this is mistaken, we must consider how public reasons are supposed to contribute to mutual acceptability. In other words, how does the fact that I offer you only public reasons to support my proposal make that proposal – which you disagree with – nevertheless acceptable to you? In what follows, I will assume a conception of public reasons as shared (or shareable) reasons, though I will footnote an analogous argument for other conceptions.50

There are three ways in which public reasons might make a proposal more acceptable. First, the public reasons themselves are reasons you find valid – you share them. So, at least the content of my reasoning is acceptable to you, even if you disagree with how I weigh my reasons or the conclusion I draw from them. Second, the fact that I rely only on

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50 In convergence theories, public reasons do not have to be shareable by all, but they do have to be “intelligible” to all. That is, as a Hindu, I do not have to share your Christian beliefs, but I do have to see how, if one had your reasons, one would arrive at your conclusions. If you and I both have intelligible reasons to support the same law – if we “converge” on that law – then that law is acceptable to both of us. Convergence theorists like Gaus are concerned, not just with the reasons people use, but with their reasoning. Reasons must be intelligible, for Gaus, because others have to be able to see that a particular norm is justified to that person. If reasons are unintelligible, others can’t know that the person could actually accept the conclusion. So, in the same way, if people are known to reason irrationally, then saying that they could accept some norm would not tell us whether the norm was justified to the person. It would give us reason to worry that the person accepted the norm in a way that doesn’t reflect their true reasons.
public reasons in arriving at my conclusion shows you that I arrived at it in a way that you can accept – I followed an appropriate reasoning procedure, which gives you more confidence in my conclusion. There were no known distorting factors or other reasons for you to believe that I was not reasoning clearly or in good faith. And third, offering you public reasons shows you that I am a reasonable person – that I come to conclusions based on reasons and evidence, rather than my own wishes, and that I will therefore be responsive to further evidence and better arguments. In some or all of these three ways, public reason theorists argue, requiring citizens to offer each other only public reasons makes their proposals mutually acceptable.

If you have good reason to worry that my reasoning is influenced in objectionable ways, however, it undermines all three ways in which public reasons were supposed to make my proposals justificatory. First, the reasons that I presented to you, although “public,” now appear to be a mere cover for a deeper influence, which undercuts their justificatory value as reasons. Second, if the principle behind public reason theories is that a conclusion is acceptable to others when one arrives at it in an acceptable way, then the fact that a major factor in my conclusion is one that you actively reject means my conclusion has violated that principle. And third, if offering you public reasons was supposed to show you that I am a reasonable person – that I come to conclusions based on reasons and evidence, rather than my own wishes, and that I will therefore be responsive to further evidence and better arguments – then the fact that some part of my mental process is immune to reason is a problem. It is a problem that, even when my implicit attitudes “are contradicted by explicit political information immediately before” me, my reasoning is still guided by unconscious biases rather than reason and evidence. This shows that, on this issue at least, I am an unreasonable person.

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51 More generally, the purpose of the shareable reasons requirement is to make sure that all could accept a conclusion based on a process of reasoning others can accept. But why should this be limited to the reasons, rather than including the reasoning? If I relied only on shareable reasons to arrive at my endorsement of freedom of association, but I made inference from one public reason to another in a way that was contradictory or unwarranted, you would rightly object that I was not justified in endorsing that conclusion. The point of the shareable reasons requirement is to show others that you followed an appropriate reasoning procedure, which gives you more confidence in my conclusion.

52 A Rawlsian might respond by citing his “proviso” to the requirement on citizens. Instead of requiring that citizens arrive at their conclusions in a way that others can accept, the proviso insists only that they know that they could have arrived at their conclusions in an acceptable way, even if they did not. It is meant to allow for public arguments that invoke private values, such as, for instance, the civil rights protests that invoked the invoked Biblical claims, such as the equality of all people in God’s eyes. As long as the proponents of civil rights knew that they could support the same civil rights based only on public reasons, their actual reasoning was acceptable to all, even if it were influenced by claims that others could not accept.

However, in addition to the fact that the proviso is intuitively problematic (how could a racist saying that he could provide a non-racist defense of his proposal justify it to others?), it does not solve the problem of objectionable influences. After all, every version of the public reason requirement allows for the possibility that citizens think there’s a better, non-public, argument for the same conclusion. It simply requires them to offer a public defense that is sufficient to justify the conclusion. The proviso just makes this explicit by allowing citizens to cite both the argument they consider best, and a sufficient public argument. However,
value of public reasons, the public-ness of the reasoning is just as important as that of the reasons.

Excluding Controversial Reasoning

The second objection is more pressing. Under a Rawlsian theory, reasonable people are able to bracket their controversial views when engaged in public reasoning. So, they are able to put aside their religious beliefs because they know that other people do not share them. Similarly, one might argue, reasonable people can simply bracket their irrational influences and all the beliefs that they lead to. Once they do that, their reasoning and their reasons will be acceptable to all, so even if reasonable people are irrational in some ways, it would not affect the kinds of norms that a public reason theory would endorse.53

Granting this description of reasonable people, however, we must still ask how reasonable people are likely to think, given their normatively relevant features. One of those features, we now add, is their motivation to rely only on shared reasons and influences. However, their other features and conditions remain the same, based on the diversity argument we endorse. Reasonable are still ordinary or highly competent or inevitable products of liberal freedoms. Even if such people are motivated to exclude irrational and objectionable reasoning, are they likely to do so?

It does not seem reasonable to expect that they would eliminate all forms of irrational reasoning. Ordinary people under time, information, and ability constraints are likely to rely on heuristics, even if they are motivated not to. Heuristics are needed precisely because the information or expertise needed to avoid them is not available, at least not to this version of reasonable people. Highly competent people may avoid reliance on heuristics based on the statistical abilities and information we can attribute to them, but since both arguments are coming from the same person, if we have reason to worry that their reasoning is tainted by objectionable influences, then both the private and public arguments are equally worrisome, no matter which they regard as best. If they are implicitly biased against Latinos, for instance, we still have reason to worry that the public values they consider sufficient to justify their conclusion on immigration were actually chosen, interpreted, or ranked based on bias and not on their merits. So, the public reason requirement on citizens with the proviso is susceptible to the same problem: on issues where we have good reason to worry that public reasons are influenced in ways that others would reject, invoking public reasons is undermined.

53 I should note that this response is not available to two kinds of public reason theories. The first is convergence theories, which allow for people’s “private” reasons and reasoning to influence the political norms that they could accept. Under a convergence account, if reasonable people were biased and those biases influenced their choice of political norms, then the norms that those norms would not be justified to the biased person, in the sense of following rationally from their core reasons.53

The second is any consensus theory that allowed private reasons to influence the public consensus, as the “overlapping consensus” requirement is sometimes said to do. Rawls describes the overlapping consensus requirement as part of a wide reflective equilibrium in which each person adjusts their private and the public conception, back and forth, until the two are consistent. If this process allows for the influence of private, sometimes biased, reasoning on the public conception, then the public conception is no longer based solely on shared reasoning. For similar reasons, Jonathan Quong rejects this account of the overlapping consensus as a check on the public conception and instead says that private reasons have no influence on public reasoning.
are they likely to avoid motivated reasoning? Given that highly competent reasoners seem more likely to engage in motivated reasoning, despite their competence, it seems likely that they are not aware that they are employing motivated reasoning. As competent thinkers aiming at the truth, they would presumably eliminate that influence on their reasoning if they could. The fact that this influence is amplified suggests that they are unaware of it.

It is more likely that reasonable people – on any diversity argument – can eliminate the reliance on explicit stereotypes, such as the stereotype of African Americans that Gilens ascribes to many welfare opponents. However, it is also likely that reasonable people on any diversity argument will be unable to eliminate the influence of implicit stereotypes, since they are, under most definitions, unaware of them. Social and political psychologists have argued that, since implicit biases like these merely reveal the norms and realities of the environment a person grew up in, nearly everyone has them to some degree. Implicit biases are the automatic and instantaneous connections we make between groups and associated ideas, traits, or emotions. These associations happen so quickly that we are not even aware of them or how they affect our thinking. The challenge of implicit biases is that we can be fully sincere in invoking public reasons and supporting conclusions based on them.

There are psychologists and philosophers who object to this (or any) conception of implicit biases. Some argue that implicit biases are at least sometimes conscious and at least sometimes under our control. But, I am not aware of any suggestion that our automatic associations between groups and judgments or emotion are often conscious or under our control. And, even if we are unconvinced by the implicit bias literature, there is likely to be some form of unconscious reasoning that relies on stereotypes in ways that we are sometimes unaware of. As long as these influences cause us to select, interpret, or weigh public reasons in ways that we are sometimes unaware of or are unable to control, we cannot expect reasonable people to successfully exclude their irrational reasoning.

54 Jules Holroyd Scaife, R., & Stafford, T. “What is implicit bias?” Philosophy Compass, 12(10), p.4-5.
55 One might further argue that, if implicit biases potentially influence important public values such as fairness and desert then, even if reasonable people are aware of them and able to exclude them, there is a potential problem. Reasonable people cannot simply exclude all their judgments that might proceed from biased reasoning or they will not be able to address most political questions. If partisanship were a distorting factor, for instance, then we could not have legitimate laws on many of the issues that American citizens care most about right now.
56 Despite my arguments, public reason theories may continue to insist that reasonable people are not irrational and that it is impermissible to define them that way. Theorists could concede that there is no descriptive feature that separates the good kind of non-rational influences that lead to religious diversity from the bad kind that lead to racial bias. Instead, the difference is normative; the good kinds are the influences we should tolerate and the bad kinds are the influences we should not. Jonathan Quong might offer a response like this. As mentioned, Quong argues that public reason theories should begin by assuming the truth of basic liberal values. We should then conceive of reasonable people with that liberal filter in mind. So, we would only conceive of reasonable people with influences that are consistent with basic liberal values, while excluding all other influences. That would, at least arguably, filter out at least some of the objectionable influences I have cited. It may be inconsistent with the value of equality, for instance, to be influenced by implicit biases that produce a negative association with other racial groups. Since reasonable people are defined as liberals, perhaps we can exclude such influences.
Conclusion

Public reason theorists began with the problem that even reasonable citizens disagree in their political conclusions. This problem could be solved, they argued, if reasonable citizens could at least consider the reasons behind the conclusions to be justifiable to all. In a sense, theorists shifted the focus of justification from the outcome of deliberation to the reasoning process. However, it now appears that the reasoning process is also not justifiable to all – even the seemingly public reasons are compromised by objectionable influences.\footnote{If the problem is that these public reasons are not fully justifiable to all, what can we do? The heuristics and biases literature offer two suggestions. First, we can limit the problem. We might say that we need only worry about public reasons when there is some positive evidence that they may be influenced in objectionable ways, as in the welfare and immigration cases I have described. More specifically, following a suggestion by Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, I might argue that reasonable people only need added justification for public reasons when their reasoning appears “partial, controversial, emotional, subject to illusion, [or] explicable by dubious sources.”\footnote{Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, "Moral Intuitionism Meets Empirical Psychology." In Metaethics after Moore, edited by T. Horgan and M. Timmons, 339-65. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.}}

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And second, we can follow Gigerenzer in arguing that, even if we acknowledge that reasonable people rely on heuristic reasoning, that does not necessarily make their reasoning unjustified. To see whether they are justified, one must look at the context in which they use that reasoning; there are some contexts in which it is rational to rely on less information and faster processing. Similarly, we may be able to propose institutional arrangements or norms that mitigate any concerns from relying on heuristics or biases in political reasoning. This is a possibility that I will develop in future work.

Briefly, I find three problems with this kind of normative response to the problem of objectionable influences. First, we might wonder whether this normative response would address all potential objectionable influences on idealized reasoning. Perhaps implicit racial bias is inconsistent with a belief in equality, but motivated reasoning and the group identities that produce it seem consistent with liberal values. Second, idealizing people to reason solely from liberal values requires a level of idealization that is inconsistent with even the minimal amount of realism that public reason theories require. And third, saying that some influences are in and some are out for normative reasons is an arbitrary response. If we want to know which features of real people are relevant to political justification, the answer ought to be more than: “the features we intuitively think should be relevant.” After all, public reason’s critics do not think any features are relevant at all. For them, political justification is about truth, not what people think.\footnote{57 And this holds no matter what conception of “public reasons” we consider. If public reasons are shareable reasons, but those reasons are chosen based on prior motivation and implicit bias, then the conclusion of shareable reasons will still be unjustified. And, if public reasons are intelligible reasons, but the connection between people’s reasons and their conclusions depends on non-rational influences, then their reasoning will not be intelligible to others.}