

INTRODUCTION

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How can individuals holding different views and beliefs live together in a stable and harmonious society? How can they successfully cooperate in a society marked by reasonable pluralism? As Giulia Bistagnino points out in her paper in this issue, professor Gaus's public reason liberalism set out in his masterly *The Order of Public Reason* has been the most influential position in the recent philosophical debate concerning these questions.

The present issue pays tribute to the originality and philosophical and political relevance of Gaus's contribution. It brings together two of the three papers from the Rijeka Gaus conference (the third paper has been given by Enes Kulenovic), and a guest contribution not presented in Rijeka, together with Gaus's précis of his work and answer to commentators. We specially thank professor Gaus for his willingness to engage in the dialogue, and his detailed, sharp and original answers.

As we mentioned, Gaus has kindly provided a Précis of his master-work, and we are happy to start the collection of papers with it. It begins with a succinct characterization of the order of public reason itself. It is a social order that is structured by a non-authoritarian social morality and thus a free moral order that is endorsed by the reasons of all, in which all have reasons of their own, based on their own ideas of what is important and valuable, to endorse the authority of social morality. Is such an order possible? The key lies in social morality, and Gaus summarizes his Deliberative model of coming to an agreement about the right kind of social morality. The Précis would be, we think, useful to readers of the book itself, since it brings together the main ideas in a very clear and concise way. Let us now pass to papers, starting from substantive, and then moving to methodological issues.

Baccarini's paper is structured around two main concerns. The first regards the appropriateness of the use of Gaus's account of the ideal of agents as free and equal as endogenous to our moral practice, and of the foundation of public justification. The worries are related to the use of the concept of having a reason that Gaus makes in his book, as well as to the aptness of his account of our moral practice from the viewpoint of our moral phenomenology. The second concern regards the implications of Gaus's model of public reasoning for issues of distributive justice. The primary intention here is to show that egalitarian liberalism, and not classical liberalism, is the most

appropriate result of such a model of justification.

In his reply, Gaus remarks the role of the endorsability of the reactive attitudes. He says that “a distinctive feature of OPR is that public justification is intrinsically necessary to achieve certain goods — the goods of maintaining the reactive attitudes of resentment and indignation, guilt, and our practices of moral responsibility. We cannot (not may not) achieve these goods without justification (as we can coerce without justification)”. Gaus offers analyses of the possible counterexamples that Baccharini indicates as worries for his theory, in order to reject them.

At the end of his reply, Gaus discusses the worry of controversy. In his detailed explanation, Gaus indicates where controversy appears in OPR and the reasons to reject the worry.

The two methodological papers, by Bistagnino and Miscevic, stress the contrasting aspects of Gaus’s rich and intriguing methodology. Bistagnino stresses Gaus’s trust in the social given: the available social morality is not just a contingently suitable starting point, but our sole way of access to “Sittlichkeit”. Accordingly, she places Gaus on the Hegelian side of Kant-Hegel divide. And indeed, she finds a fault in this, to her opinion, excessively fact-oriented approach.

In his systematic and detailed reply to Bistagnino Gaus looks for the middle way between social conventionalism and extreme moral individualism. For him moral rules, actually in force, must be consistent with the moral autonomy of its participants, endorsable by them, in order to perform the function he assigns to them. He stresses that “/T/he ability to stand back from our social rules, and decide whether they correspond to one’s idea of an acceptable way of living together is fundamental to being an autonomous person.”

In contrast to Bistagnino, Miscevic in his paper stresses the more Kantian-Rawlsian side of Gaus’s methodology, in particular its extensive use of thought-experiments (TEs, for short). In his paper “A hierarchy of armchairs” he tries to place Gaus’s methodology in a wider context of reflection about political TEs from Plato to Rawls and Gaus himself. He notes that in spite of heavy insistence on factual historical information Gaus stays firmly in the thought-experimental tradition: the information is, in his scenario, fed to the *imagined* Members of Public, who, in their turn, reflect about it and discuss it. Miscevic sees the method as in fact involving iterated TEs, a new and original piece of methodology, answering to the problems that have haunted Rawls’s methodology of veil-of-ignorance.

Gaus replies to Miscevic by distinguishing mental TEs from mental models. The former are indexical, the later not; the later involve simulation of a reasoning not actual reasoning and endorsement of the conclusion. When I run a mental model I am not interested in forming my own judgment about the results of the model; rather I am interested in running it according to *its* rules, values and parameters, and making a judgment about what results are implicit in it. He defends the claim that Veil-of-ignorance is a model, not a mental TE. Similarly, when you, the reader, engage in

modeling the deliberation of the Members of Public, you are not running a mental TE in the first person, but merely simulating the functioning of the Members.

We thank professor Gaus and we hope that this collection of papers throws a new light on some the main problems of the theory of public reason, and on Gaus's paramount contribution to it, both on the substantive and on methodological side.

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