

## On justification, idealization, and discursive purchase

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*Abstract: Conceptions of acceptability-based moral or political justification take it that authoritative acceptability constitutes, or contributes to, validity, or justification. There is no agreement as to what bar for authoritativeness such justification may employ. The paper engages the issue in relation to (i) the level of idealization that a bar for authoritativeness,  $\psi$ , imparts to a standard of acceptability-based justification,  $S$ , and (ii) the degree of discursive purchase of the discursive standing that  $S$  accords to people when it builds  $\psi$ . I argue that (i) and (ii) are interdependent: high idealization values entail low discursive purchase, while high degrees of purchase require low idealization values. I then distinguish between alethic conceptions of justification that prioritize ends that commit to high idealization values, and recognitive conceptions that favour high discursive purchase. On this basis, I argue for a moderately recognitive constraint on idealization. To render the recognitive discursive minimum available to relevant people at the site of justification,  $S$  should set  $\psi$  low enough so that it is a genuine option for actual people to reject relevant views in ways that  $S$  recognizes as authoritative.*

### 1. Authoritative acceptability?

In one way or other, conceptions of acceptability-based moral or political justification take it that acceptability, widely conceived, can constitute, or relevantly contribute to, validity, or justification.<sup>1</sup> Recent variants include:

1. For any moral or political “normative claim”  $\phi$  to be valid,  $\phi$  must meet a requirement of “reciprocity and generality”—i.e.,  $\phi$  must be acceptable equally (reciprocity) by all affected people (generality).<sup>2</sup>
2. To be (robustly) publicly justifiable,  $\phi$  must be justifiable by reasons “that are shared in the robust sense that they are reasons *for each* in virtue of being reasons *for all* of us,” or that are “‘reasons for me’ because they are ‘reasons for us’ and I regard myself as ‘one of us’.”<sup>3</sup>
3. The “goodness of good reasons, for a public moral theory, becomes entirely a function of their capacity to gain widespread agreement among reasonable people moved by a desire for reasonable consensus.”<sup>4</sup>
4. Exercises of political power are morally proper only if they are justifiable on the basis of political principles that are acceptable by all reasonable citizens.<sup>5</sup>
5. “Coercive law  $L$  is justified in a public  $P$  if and only if each qualified member  $i$  of  $P$  has sufficient reason(s)  $R_i$  to endorse  $L$ .”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I use the label “acceptability-based” justification in a wide sense that includes both consensus and convergence justification. On convergence and consensus: see Fred D’Agostino, *Free Public Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> This is Rainer Forst’s requirement, in one of its forms: see his “The Justification of Human Rights and the Basic Right to Justification: A Reflexive Approach,” *Ethics*, Vol. 120/4 (2010), p. 711-740; *The Right to Justification* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 6, 20f, 66, 214f.

<sup>3</sup> See Gerald F. Postema, “Public Practical Reason: Political Practice”, in Ian Shapiro, Judith Wagner DeCew (eds.), *Theory and Practice*, Nomos XXXVII (New York: New York University Press, 1995), p. 350.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Macedo, *Liberal Virtues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 46f.

<sup>5</sup> This captures part of John Rawls’s view of legitimacy: see his *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 217.

<sup>6</sup> See J. W. Boettcher, “Against the Asymmetric Convergence Model of Public Justification,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol. 18 (2015), p. 192.

6.  $L$  is justified in a public  $P$  iff  $L$  is justified by reasons,  $\varphi$ , that are intelligible to all members of  $P$ , where  $\varphi$  is intelligible to all member of  $P$  iff each member of  $P$  takes  $\varphi$ 's proponents,  $\varphi_i$ , to be "entitled to affirm"  $\varphi$  by  $\varphi_i$ 's evaluative standards.<sup>7</sup>
7. For a political proposal,  $\varphi$ , to be publicly justified,  $\varphi$  must be acceptable by "exemplary epistemic agents," i.e., "highly idealized versions of actual political subjects."<sup>8</sup>

While such conceptions evidently can vary greatly, all must qualify the kind of acceptability that they take to constitute, or contribute to, validity, or justification: where acceptability is said to have this status, some conception of the *authoritativeness* of acceptability must be in play. Call this *Authoritativeness Necessary*:

- AN      Acceptability can constitute validity, or justification, in relation to a given subject matter and in a given context only if it is, or counts as, *authoritative* relative to that subject matter and in that context.

There are many candidate conceptions of authoritativeness—e.g., standards of justification might seek reasonable, rational, coherent, respectable, or epistemically responsible, justified, and so on, acceptability. But it is not always in plain view what bar for authoritativeness a conception (or practice) of justification adopts. For instance, a justification practice, JP, might provide its bar for authoritativeness only indirectly, through restrictions on its constituency: thus, rather than defining as authoritative only "reasonable" acceptances, JP might accord full membership in its constituency only to "reasonable" people. At any rate, we do not know the content, status, or applicative yield of a standard of acceptability-based justification unless we know what kind of acceptability it counts as authoritative.

Hence, standards of acceptability-based justification, S, are indexed to their bar for authoritativeness. Whatever authority or merit S can have or impart to the views, principles, policies, and so on, that S applies to, it depends on S's bar for authoritativeness. If S sets that bar too high or too low, or distinguishes authoritative from non-authoritative acceptability in terms that are biased, improper, objectionable, or reasonably contested, S's suitability as a justification standard is in doubt—at least so long as moral or political justifications must do more than establishing views, principles, policies, and so on, as "conditionally reasoned,"<sup>9</sup> or hypothetically justified, on grounds that are relevantly disputed. Thus, while it matters greatly to set the bar for authoritativeness in the right place.

Are some candidate conceptions of authoritativeness better than others? What constrains eligibility for the role? I shall take up the issue in relation to two themes: (i) the level of *idealization* that a bar for authoritativeness,  $\psi$ , imparts to a standard of justification, S, and (ii) the degree of *discursive purchase* that S accords to people when S adopts  $\psi$  (for now, let "discursive purchase" refer to the normative influence of an agent's actual say in justifications, or on its outcomes). Both (i) and (ii) impact eligibility. If  $\psi$  imparts to S an idealization value that is too high or too low, justifications by S will be objectionable. And if  $\psi$  entails that S allocates to people discursive standing of too much or too little purchase, justifications by S are, again, objectionable. Alas, as far as non-ideal justification between actual agents are concerned, considerations that favour higher, rather than lower, idealization values often pull in a different direction than considerations that call for higher, rather than

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<sup>7</sup> This captures parts of Kevin Vallier's view: see his "In Defence of Intelligible Reasons in Public Justification," *Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 66/264 (2015), p. 603.

<sup>8</sup> Steven Wall, "The Pure Theory of Public Justification," *Social Philosophy and Policy*, Vol. 32/2 (2016), p. 220. See also below.

<sup>9</sup> Onora O'Neill, *Toward Justice and Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 51.

lower, purchase.<sup>10</sup> Yet if  $\psi$ 's eligibility turns on whether  $S+\psi$  gives due weight to pro-idealization and pro-purchase considerations, how may  $\psi$  be calibrated?

With this question in the background, I pursue two aims. First, idealization (and its sibling, ideal theory) has received much attention in recent debate.<sup>11</sup> Many agree that high degrees of idealization can be problematic, but few deny that acceptability-based justification must involve at least some idealization (at least if we understand "idealization" in a sense close to "hypotheticalization," see section 3). But, it seems, there is little consensus as to *how much* idealization is permissible in moral or political justification, or how much is *too much*. My first aim is to suggest a way to think of *over-idealization* in the spectre of idealization values and degrees of discursive purchase. I shall suggest that  $S$  over-idealizes relative to a given group of people when  $S$ 's bar for authoritativeness puts authoritative rejections out of their actual reach. That is, at whatever level of idealization  $S$  sets that bar, it must set  $\psi$  *low enough* so as to make it a genuinely available option for such people to reject views that they are committed to reject in ways that  $S$  recognizes as authoritative. This at the same time marks a baseline of discursive purchase in relation to rejection rights.

Next, discursive purchase is rarely acknowledged as a relevant dimension in its own right in which to assess standards of justification. Often, it seems, the weight that  $S$  accords to an agent's say is seen as a mere function of the degree in which  $S$  idealizes. But this seems one-sided. True, discursive purchase and idealization are linked: as we shall see, high idealization values entail low degrees of purchase, while high degrees of purchase require low idealization values (section 3). But it does not follow that pro-idealization considerations must (always) take priority over pro-purchase considerations in calibrating standards of justification. *Alethic* views of justifications—an exemplary case here is Wall's recent "pure" theory of public justification<sup>12</sup>—prioritize pro-idealization considerations: they primarily serve ends that call for high idealization values (section 4). But there are other, *recognitive* views that pursue ends that call for high degrees of discursive purchase. One of my aims, then, is to lift the profile of discursive purchase. I suggest a moderately recognitivist case for the view that moral or political justification should give weight to pro-purchase considerations: it should set its bar for authoritativeness low enough so to enable relevant actual people to access what I shall refer to as the recognitive discursive minimum (sections 5 and 6).

I proceed as follows. Sections 2 and 3 elaborate on discursive purchase, idealization and the relationship between them. Section 4 distinguishes alethic and recognitive views of acceptability-based justification as responding differently to the complex pull of pro-purchase and pro-idealization considerations. Sections 5 and 6 argue that moral or political justification should give weight to pro-purchase considerations. Section 5 suggests that  $S$  over-idealizes when  $S$ 's bar for authoritativeness puts authoritative rejections out of the actual reach of relevant people. This also marks a baseline for minimal discursive purchase. At first sight, this rules out only strong alethicism—i.e., views that set aside recognitive concerns in

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<sup>10</sup> As Enoch in effect notes: see his "The Masses and the Elites: Political Philosophy for the Age of Trump, Brexit, and Netanyahu," unpublished manuscript, available at: [https://www.academia.edu/31050478/The\\_Masses\\_and\\_the\\_Elites\\_Political\\_Philosophy\\_for\\_the\\_Age\\_of\\_Brexit\\_Trump\\_and\\_Netanyahu](https://www.academia.edu/31050478/The_Masses_and_the_Elites_Political_Philosophy_for_the_Age_of_Brexit_Trump_and_Netanyahu)

<sup>11</sup> Hye Ryoung Kang surveys stages of the debate in "Can Rawls's Nonideal Theory Save his Ideal Theory?," *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol. 42/1 (2016), p. 32-56; Laura Valentini, "Ideal vs. Non-ideal Theory: A Conceptual Map," *Philosophy Compass*, Vol. 7/9 (2012), p. 654-664; Alan Hamlin, Zofia Stemplowska, "Theory, Ideal Theory and the Theory of Ideals," *Political Studies Review*, Vol. 12 (2012), p. 48-62; David Schmidtz, "A Realistic Political Ideal," *Social Philosophy and Policy*, Vol. 33/1 (2016), p. 1-11; Enoch, "Against Public Reason," in David Sobel, Peter Vallentyne, Steven Wall (eds.), *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 112-144.

<sup>12</sup> Steven Wall, "The Pure Theory of Public Justification."

calibrating relevant justification standards, such as Wall's view of "pure" public justification—but the view can be amplified to rule out more. Section 6 advances a moderate cognitive case for this view. Drawing on Rawls's insight that we see ourselves as "self-authenticating" sources of valid claims, I suggest that the avoidance of over-idealization in relevant justification practices is instrumental to making available to relevant people what I will call the cognitive discursive minimum. Section 7 concludes.

Before I start, let me address one concern. D'Agostino argues that reasonableness—he construes it in Scanlonian/Rawlsian terms—is part of the conditions for politics which, in turn, enable public political justification, i.e., a form of acceptability-based justification.<sup>13</sup> When the conditions for politics are at hand, then, perhaps a conception of the authoritativeness of acceptability is readily available? Says D'Agostino:

[B]eing reasonable is clearly a condition for politics generally and for public justification specifically. People who are not prepared to listen to others, or people who expect others to abide by arrangements that they are not themselves prepared to abide by, clearly cannot come to any uncoerced agreement about the terms of their relations with one another. (...) The circumstances of politics are those features of our world that make political activity necessary—that is, disagreement and mutual dependence. The conditions for politics are those features of our personalities that make political activity feasible—that is, reasonableness and recognition of the burdens of judgment. The limits of politics are therefore encountered whenever we find ourselves in the circumstances of politics without the conditions being realized. If we disagreed with one another in a state of mutual dependence but did not think of one another as reasonable, we would not be able to resolve our disagreement politically.<sup>14</sup>

This makes a good point, but it oversimplifies. First, even if we agree on a politically basic notion of the reasonable, there is a difference between interlocutor-recognition as reasonable and the content of our standards of justification. Betty and Paul might recognize each other as reasonable interlocutors, while she reasonably believes, and he reasonably rejects, that public justification must count as authoritative only rational (as opposed to reasonable) acceptability. The point: whatever puts us in the conditions for politics does not directly translate into a calibration of standards of public political justification.

Second, it seems part of the circumstances of politics that we *disagree* as to what skills, capacities, virtues, and so on, we may require in others as a matter of their basic political reasonableness. And whatever puts us in the conditions for politics (if they are ever fully met) must cohere with the expectation of such disagreement. At any rate, perhaps Betty takes it that her relationship with Paul meets the conditions for politics only if he is reasonable by her lights—and *vice versa*. And perhaps these conditions truly obtain only if each is reasonable by the others' lights. Still, they can disagree about the standards of public reason-giving.

Third, perhaps we should graft ideas of the reasonable that people actually adopt onto the standard of public justification, e.g., by somehow defining its bar for authoritativeness in their terms. There is more than one way to try this despite disagreements about reasonableness. E.g., one way might be a *convergence* approach. E.g., we might take it that  $\phi$  is valid only if relevant agents each can accept  $\phi$  "reasonably" in terms of a conception of reasonableness that they, but perhaps not others, endorse (perhaps provided that relevant others can recognize that conception as one of reasonableness).<sup>15</sup> But that this is problematic.

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<sup>13</sup> D'Agostino, *Free Public Reason*, p. 25f.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> This amounts to a relative of Vallier's view. See his "In Defence of Intelligible Reasons in Public

Such a standard of justification adopts a single bar for authoritativeness across all agent-specific views of reasonableness: i.e., a bar low enough to count as authoritative any discursive input that at least one input-provider construes as reasonable. And depending on how permissive their views of reasonableness are, this might set this bar *too low*. At any rate, it invites reasonable contestation and stands in need of justification.

Another approach might be to employ an O'Neill-type method of *abstraction*.<sup>16</sup> E.g., we might argue that  $\phi$  is valid only if each relevant agent can accept  $\phi$  "reasonably" by a conception of reasonableness that is abstracted from, and hence entailed by, their respective conceptions of reasonableness. Say, Betty might believe that reasonableness commits us to be prepared to give others reasons that are good by our own standards. Paul might believe that it commits us to be prepared to give others reasons that all should accept. But both must accept the more abstract view that reasonableness involves a commitment to reason-giving.<sup>17</sup> But this leaves us with similar concerns. If a conception of reasonableness,  $R^*$ , is accurately abstracted from conceptions  $R_1$  and  $R_2$ ,  $R^*$  cannot identify anything as unreasonable that  $R_1$  or  $R_2$  identify as reasonable. Hence, a standard of justification that defines its bar for authoritativeness in terms of an abstract conception of reasonableness must count as authoritative any input that input-providers deem reasonable. And this, too, might set that bar too low. Thus, it invites reasonable contestation and stands in need of justification.

This is not to reject convergence or abstraction approaches. Far from it: the view I advocate is compatible with such approaches. Rather, the point is that these approaches already *suppose* that the relevant bar may be set at a low level. But we would first need reasons to place it at such a permissive level to then have license to employ convergence or abstraction strategies.

## 2. Discursive purchase

Discursive purchase is a property of the discursive standing that acceptability-based justification accords to people. Thus, I start with discursive standing.<sup>18</sup>

The views of justification that matter now take it that  $\phi$ 's acceptability constitutes, or contributes to,  $\phi$ 's validity, or justification. Where authoritative acceptability has this strong, justification-constitutive role, relevant people have the standing of recipients and co-authors of justification. Thus, if  $\phi$  is valid, or justified,  $\phi$  not only applies to them, but it does so, in a strong sense, "in their name" (Nagel).<sup>19</sup> In different terms: relevant people are here being accorded constitutive discursive standing, or discursive respect.<sup>20</sup> A justification practice, JP, that accords this standing to people does two things:

- (i) JP accords people discursive standing: JP attaches positive value or weight to  $\phi$ 's authoritative acceptability by them;
- (ii) JP takes there to be a justification-constitutive direction of fit between  $\phi$ 's acceptability and  $\phi$ 's authority: JP takes it that  $\phi$  depends for its normative authority on its authoritative acceptability.

Constitutive discursive standing contrasts with weaker, justification-derivative forms of

Justification," esp. p. 603ff.

<sup>16</sup> On abstraction: see O'Neill, *Toward Justice and Virtue*, 38-44.

<sup>17</sup> See Thomas M. Besch, "On Political Legitimacy, Reasonableness, and Perfectionism," in *Public Reason*, Vol. 5/1 (2013), 58-74.

<sup>18</sup> The below is best seen in conjunction with the discussion of discursive purchase in Besch, "On Discursive Respect," *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol. 40/2 (2014), pp. 207-231.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Nagel, "The Problem of Global Justice," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 33/2 (2005), p. 121.

<sup>20</sup> See Besch, "On Discursive Respect," p. 208f.

discursive standing. The key difference concerns (ii). Where JP accords to people derivative discursive standing vis-à-vis  $\phi$ , JP attaches value to  $\phi$ 's acceptability, or what it regards as valuable forms of acceptability. But JP does *not* take it that  $\phi$  depends for its authority on its acceptability. People here are recipients and clients, but not co-authors, of justification; JP might value unanimity or consent, but seeks “ideal unanimity” or “normative consent”.<sup>21</sup>

Consider now discursive purchase. We consider purchase when we consider what normative influence an agent's discursive standing accords to the agent, given her actual deliberative resources—widely conceived so as to include whatever views, skills, attitudes, volitions, interests, preferences, capacities, and so on, she actually draws on in her practical reasoning. Discursive purchase is not a matter of the influence of non-actual, ideal agents with ideal deliberative resources; nor is it a matter of the influence of actual agents with idealized deliberative resources. Instead, it is a matter of the normative influence of actual agents, given their actual deliberative resources. The category of purchase helps to describe, and account for, whatever normative distance there is, if any, between the way in which actual agents actually go about their practical reasoning (say, when they try to reason well by their lights), and the way in which they would have to go about their reasoning for relevant justification practices to recognize their reasoning as authoritative. Amongst other things, it is through this distance that we encounter the normativity of justification. In a sense, then, the category of purchase helps to earth that normativity by indexing it to a relevant baseline.

Specifically, the label “discursive purchase” focuses our attention on two things: as part of the concept of discursive purchase, (i) the degree of normative influence that an agent's discursive standing accords her in relation to other agents; and as a correlate of this, (ii) the value, worth, or use, that having, or being accorded, this influence can have for the agent. While these things can come apart, they usually are entwined: other things being equal, as the normative influence of Betty's standing increases, so does its value, worth, or use, for her. And as this influence decreases, so does its value, worth, or use. Of course, this does not hold if Betty does not welcome such influence to begin with, or if she believes that valuable degrees of such influence cannot exceed a certain level. But I shall simplify and assume that increases of the purchase of an agent's discursive standing favourably correlate with increases of the value, worth, or use, that this standing has for the agent.

As to *degrees* of discursive purchase, compare two justification practices on opposite sides of a continuum. JP1 accords Betty actualist discursive respect. JP1 adheres to a standard of justification that accords Betty constitutive discursive standing, and it builds its standard of justification on a bar for authoritativeness that adults like Betty easily meet anyway, given their *actual* deliberative resources. Say, according to JP1's justification standard, if Betty cannot actually accept  $\phi$  in light of her *actual* views and volitions, given at least minimal criticality and local coherence, this is evidence that  $\phi$  is not authoritatively acceptable by Betty. This would give Betty a real measure of normative influence in JP1, or on its outcomes: for it is readily within her reach to exercise what, in JP1, counts as an authoritative normative say. Accordingly, her discursive standing is rich in discursive purchase.

By contrast, JP2 accords Betty *counterfactualizing* discursive respect. JP2 adheres to a standard of justification that accords her constitutive discursive standing, but the standard builds on a bar for authoritativeness that adults like Betty are unlikely, or unable, to ever meet. Say, JP2's justification standard takes Betty's rejection of  $\phi$  to count as authoritative only if some ideal condition holds—e.g., only if Betty would reject  $\phi$  if she was ideally reasonable, ideally knowledgeable, or ideally responsible epistemically, or some such. If

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<sup>21</sup> On ideal unanimity: see Nagel, *Equality and Partiality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 33f. On normative consent: see David Estlund, *Democratic Authority* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 10.

Betty coherently rejects  $\phi$ , this would not count as evidence against  $\phi$ 's authoritative acceptability so long as Better Betty—i.e., Betty's ideal twin who meets all ideal conditions—would not reject  $\phi$ . This leaves Betty with little normative influence, if any, wherever her voice does not match Better Betty's voice. JP2 would accord Betty discursive standing that has very little purchase.

Several things spring to mind. First, justification practices that accord people constitutive discursive standing might not accord them much of a meaningful normative say—as illustrated by Betty in JP2. To accord people a meaningful normative say, their discursive standing must also be rich in purchase. Second, distinct justification practices can accord people standing of the same abstract kind, while their standing relevantly differs in purchase. E.g., JP1 and JP2 accord people constitutive discursive standing, but while the fact that Betty coherently rejects  $\phi$  carries positive weight in JP1, it may mean little in JP2. Thus: discursive standing that is *formally* equal in being of the same abstract kind can be *substantively* unequal in being relevantly unequal in terms of its discursive purchase.

Third, discursive standing that is of the same abstract kind can vary in purchase also *within* a single justification practice. What purchase the standing has that JP can allocate depends, as well, on (i) the bar for authoritativeness that JP adopts—e.g., on how high or low JP sets that bar relative to the resources of relevant people—and on (ii) the level of deliberative resources relevant people bring to the task of justification. As to (ii), consider JP3. It accords to Dominant Group and Marginal Group constitutive discursive standing and applies to all people the same bar for authoritativeness,  $\psi$ —thus, their standing is equal in a formal terms. But their standing can still be substantively unequal if it relevantly differs in purchase. E.g.,  $\psi$  might fit the way in which members of Dominant Group typically deliberate anyway, while members of Marginal Group meet  $\psi$  only if their views first undergo filtering, second-guessing, preference-laundering, and so on. At any rate: purchase differentials can arise within a given justification practice when it applies the same bar for authoritativeness to agents who relevantly differ in deliberative resources.

One question this raises is this: what level of purchase should justification practices accord to relevant people—specifically, is there a minimum level of purchase? I begin engage the question after I consider idealization and its relationship to discursive purchase.

### 3. Idealization and purchase

The discursive purchase of the standing that a justification standard can allocate and the degree in which it idealizes are related: higher, more “radical” degrees of idealization entail lower degrees of purchase, and higher degrees of purchase require lower, more “populist” idealization values.<sup>22</sup> Call this the *Idealization Purchase Relation* (with “S” for a standard of acceptability-based justification and “DR” for a relevant set of deliberative resources):

- IPR     Idealization and discursive purchase are related:
- (i) if S's degree of idealization is high relative to DR, S allocates discursive standing that is low in purchase relative to DR: other things being equal, high degrees of idealization entail low degrees of discursive purchase;
  - (ii) if S allocates discursive standing that is rich in purchase relative to DR, S is low in its degree of idealization relative to DR: other things being equal, high degrees of discursive purchase require low degrees of idealization.

Take again JP1 and JP2, above. JP2's justification standard sets its bar for authoritativeness high relative to people's deliberative resources. In this respect, JP2's standard has a high

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<sup>22</sup> Vallier uses the terms “populist” and “radical” in relation to idealization values: see his “Against Public Reason Liberalism's Accessibility Requirement,” *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 8 (2011), p. 371ff.

idealization value. But the higher this bar is set relative to people's resources, the harder it is for them to register what counts as an authoritative say. And so Betty's discursive standing in JP2 had little purchase. JP1's justification standard sets the relevant bar low relative to the relevant resources. In this regard, JP1's standard has a low idealization value. Hence, it is easy for Betty to register an authoritative say and so her standing has much purchase. The question of how high or low that bar is set, then, is linked to the question of how rich or poor in purchase the discursive standing is that the standard allocates, and *vice versa*.

IPR looks self-suggesting. But as the conceptual terrain here is complex, it is best to elaborate. I focus on IPR's notion of idealization and degrees of idealization. A good point of departure is O'Neill's concern that idealization

can easily lead to falsehood. An [assumption, conception, theory, standard] idealizes when it ascribes predicates—often seen as enhanced, 'ideal' predicates—that are false of the case in hand, and so denies predicates that are true of that case. (...) Insofar as contemporary theories of justice start by assuming 'ideal' conceptions of persons, rationality or independence (...) they assume rather than establish specific ideals. If they then do not offer reasons for starting from these idealizing assumptions (...) [they] will, strictly speaking, be inapplicable to the human case.<sup>23</sup>

This intertwines two things. Take a conception of citizens as reasonable people who are wholeheartedly committed to honour fair, reciprocally acceptable terms of cooperation. This conception can serve as a descriptive or a normative model of citizens. In the first role, it refers to actual citizens in descriptively selective terms—terms that might be true of some citizens, but that are likely false of others. To base inferences about actual citizens on this conception hence “can easily lead to falsehood.” In the second role, the conception specifies an ideal that some citizens might relevantly reject, and that hence might be in need of justification. Thus, when conceptions of justice build on this ideal without justifying why it should be accepted, they (problematically) “assume rather than establish specific ideals.”

The notion of idealization is often used to flag O'Neill-type concerns: theories are said to “idealize” to convey that they depict their subject matter in potentially inaccurate, selective terms, or invoke normative models or ideals that need, but lack, justification. There are many other, non-pejorative uses of the notion. A particularly prominent use draws on Rawls's idea of ideal theory. Roughly, a theory idealizes in this sense if it supposes for its justifications or applications relevantly enhanced counterfactual conditions, such as conditions of full compliance or full reasonableness. Another prominent usage surfaces when Enoch writes that theories of public reason idealize when they “go hypothetical” in construing acceptability as justificatory only if it is qualified, or reasonable,<sup>24</sup> or when Vallier notes that idealization in standards of acceptability-based justification “determines which reasons are accessible.”<sup>25</sup>

Relevant here is idealization in a non-pejorative sense on the lines of the last usage just indicated—a sense that aligns it with *hypotheticalization*. Specifically, what matters are idealizing standards of acceptability-based justification that apply *outside* ideal theory. Why focus on these? Consider three justification practices (with “S” for a standard of justification):

- JNN     *Non-ideal theory, for-now principles*. S identifies what principles are suitably acceptable by *actual* people in the *actual* world; if  $\phi$  meets S,  $\phi$  counts *now*, for *actual* people in the *actual* world, as valid, or justified.
- JIT     *Ideal theory, for-then principles*. S identifies what principles are suitably acceptable by *ideal* citizens of an *ideal*, well-ordered society; if  $\phi$  meets S,  $\phi$

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<sup>23</sup> Onora O'Neill, *Toward Justice and Virtue*, p. 41.

<sup>24</sup> Enoch, “Against Public Reason,” p. 117.

<sup>25</sup> Vallier, “Against Public Reason Liberalism's Accessibility Requirement,” p. 371ff.



counts *then*, for *ideal* citizens of an *ideal* society, as valid, or justified.  
 JIN *Ideal theory, for-now principles.* S identifies what political principles are suitably acceptable by *ideal* citizens of an *ideal* society; if  $\phi$  meets S, then  $\phi$  also counts *now*, for *actual* people in the *actual* world, as valid, or justified.

JNN and JIN employ S to structure a relationship between actual people—e.g., a Nagel-type political relationship between actual citizens such that principles that meet S apply to them “in their name.”<sup>26</sup> In this sense, these justification practices apply S to actual people—and here the question arises what normative influence these people have in these practices, or in arriving at these principles. And so questions of discursive purchase arise—this makes such practices relevant now. By contrast, JIT structures an ideal, hypothetical relationship between the non-existent, ideal citizens of a non-existent, ideal society. If we leave things strictly at that—rather than applying ideal theory principles to the actual world—the question of the normative influence of actual people in arriving at these principles seems out of place.

Standards of acceptability-based justification that apply to actual people involve some degree of idealization, or hypotheticalization. As registered in AN, above, they construe as justifying not what actual people *actually*, without normative qualification, accept, or not reject, but what people can, could, or would authoritatively accept, or not reject, e.g., when they are reasonable, rational, coherent, or when they deliberate respectably. Standard idealization targets include people’s deliberative resources and the way they put them to use. (To simplify, I henceforth think of the latter as an expression of doxastic, epistemic, or other norms that people follow and subsume it under their deliberative resources.) As soon as these things are subjected to filters, constrains, or requirements, so that a gap opens between how relevant people actually deliberate and how they should deliberate, or would deliberate if they did so authoritatively, idealization occurs. As that gap widens, idealization values increase.

Turning next to *degrees* of idealization, it is not always apparent to what degree justification standards idealize. At any rate, their idealization value cannot always be read off their linguistic surface. One reason for this matters now. To make the point with an example, it seems straightforward that

S\*  $\phi$  is valid only if  $\phi$  is reciprocally acceptable by reasonable people, and people are reasonable only if their justification-relevant behaviour has property *P*,

idealizes to a high degree if *P* is such that within the group of relevant people—i.e., the people to whom S\* is being applied—no-one can instantiate *P* despite best efforts at using all available deliberative resources (say, First Group). S\* seems to idealize to a lesser degree if *P* is such that all relevant people instantiate *P* effortlessly anyway when they deliberate about matters like  $\phi$  (Second Group). But now hold S\* and *P* constant, and treat the groups as variables. S\* would have a high idealization value relative to First Group, but a low idealization value relative to Second Group. And if we do not know to which group S\* is to apply, or what resources their members have, then we do not know whether S\*’s idealization value is high or low. The point: S\*’s idealization value varies with, and depends on, the deliberative resources of relevant people.

This, I submit, generalizes. Standards of acceptability-based justification that apply outside ideal theory idealize as soon as they invoke relevant authoritativeness constraints. The degree in which they idealize varies with, and depends on, the deliberative resources of relevant people: idealization values are relativized to these resources. Two questions spring to mind. What people, seen as subjects of deliberative resources, matter for the assessment of idealization values? As I focus on justification practices like JNN and JIN, the self-suggesting

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<sup>26</sup> Nagel, “The Problem of Global Justice,” p. 121.

answer is that these are the actual people to whom these standards apply. However, second, should the idealization values be relativized to actual people's *actual* resources, or their—again—idealized, filtered resources? Let me index them to the resources that relevant actual people *actually* have. This is not the only possibility. E.g., we might relativize idealization values to the resources that actual people should have, or would have if their respective points of view were suitably enhanced or perfected—which gives us, say, *normative* or, say, *idealized* idealization values. This might be useful for some purposes other than the ones pursued here. But what matters here are actual people as they are. I hence continue to think of degrees of idealization as relativized to the actual resources of relevant actual people.

Suitably construed, then, idealization values and degrees of purchase fall in the same normative horizon. Both are anchored in the actual deliberative resources of actual people and turn on whether there is a normative gap between their actual reasoning and authoritative reasoning. As IPR registers, the greater this gap is for a given standard, the higher is the standard's idealization value, and the lower the purchase of the standing it can allocate. And the richer in purchase that standing is, the lower must be the standard's idealization value.

#### 4. Alethic and recognitive conceptions

IPR underscores what often is plain: considerations that favour higher, rather than lower, idealization values can pull in a different direction than considerations that favour discursive standing of higher, rather than lower, discursive purchase. E.g., there might be reasons to idealize S's bar for authoritativeness,  $\psi$ , to a high level so as to enable justifications to aside as non-authoritative epistemically less-than-suitably responsible discursive input. But this is objectionable if  $S+\psi_1$  cannot accord all relevant people discursive standing of high-enough purchase. Conversely, we might have reasons to build S on  $\psi_2$  if this allows justifications to accord people high-purchase standing—or even a qualified veto.<sup>27</sup> Still,  $S+\psi_2$  is objectionable if it commits justifications to count as authoritative, say, unreasonable discursive input. Thus, what weight should we give to pro-idealization and pro-purchase considerations in calibrating justification? Conceptions of justification respond differently to the pull of these considerations: some give strict priority to pro-idealization concerns, while others give much weight to pro-purchase concerns.

Consider, then, alethic and recognitive conceptions of moral or political justification—a non-exhaustive and tentative distinction that relates to, but cuts across, Rorty's distinction between objectivity views and solidarity views.<sup>28</sup> These conceptions are located on opposite sides of the idealization/purchase continuum owing to the different priorities in light of which they calibrate their standards of justification. Take alethic conceptions first. They take it that

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<sup>27</sup> Forst, "The Justification of Human Rights and the Basic Right to Justification," p. 719.

<sup>28</sup> Roughly, Rorty's distinction is between objectivity views that take reasonable thought to aim at truth (where truth is construed in correspondence-theoretical terms) and solidarity views that take it to aim at acceptability by relevant people. See Richard Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity," and "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy," both in Christopher Voparil, Richard Bernstein (eds.), *The Rorty Reader* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 227-238, 239-258. Some alethic views are not objectivity views. E.g., Habermas's discourse ethics is anti-realist and thus not an objectivity view. But it is an alethic view in aiming at truth-analogue validity; accordingly, it strongly idealizes (it idealizes deliberation indirectly, by idealizing its discursive context). See Jürgen Habermas, "Diskursethik—Notizen zu einem Begründungsprogramm," in his *Diskursethik*, Vol. 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), pp. 31-115. Many recognitive views are solidarity views. But some espouse ideas of weak objectivity: see Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 110ff. Others assume that the kind of respect that public justification should express really is of value: see Larmore, "Political Liberalism: Its Motivation and Goals," p. 76ff, Larmore, *The Autonomy of Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), chapter 6. Not least, some conceptions of acceptability-based justification are neither alethic or recognitive. E.g., Gauthier-type, Hobbesian views pursue non-recognitive prudential goals, such as individual or collective safety: see David Gauthier, "Public Reason," *Social Philosophy and Policy*, Vol. 12 (1995), 19-42.

moral or political justification must give priority to alethic ends, widely conceived, or must primarily aim at conclusions that, in some robust and reflectively stable sense, are *true*, *truth-analogue*, or *objective*. Alethic conceptions typically regard discursive input as authoritative only if it has high levels of epistemic merit, responsibility, or respectability. But as actual people are imperfect as epistemic agents, alethic conceptions tend to idealize more, rather than less. Thus, while they can vary greatly in their conceptual, metaphysical, or other underpinnings—e.g., they can be realist or constructivist, perfectionist or anti-perfectionist—these conceptions share a commitment to alethic ends that requires high idealization values. Accordingly, they tend to allocate to relevant actual people, given their actual deliberative resources, discursive standing of very low purchase.

Wall's theory of "pure" public justification is exemplary here. In considering the degree in which public justification should idealize the agents it fully enfranchises—which indirectly specifies the sort of acceptability that it counts as authoritative—he insists that "the *only* relevant considerations are epistemic or truth-related."<sup>29</sup> For Wall, acceptability-based, public justification must be calibrated in highly idealized terms that ensure that acceptable, public reasons at the same time are "valid" reasons. "Valid" reasons *truly* are good, and *truly* apply to people—and they have this rank not because they are acceptable by actual people. For Wall, a "*valid reason* is a reason that applies to a person whether or not he appreciates, or even can appreciate, it."<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, public justification fully enfranchises only ideal, exemplary epistemic agents, who are "highly idealized versions of actual political subjects," and who exercise ideal and accurate "skill in forming judgments, accessing evidence, and applying [reliable] standards of reasoning."<sup>31</sup> Thus, for Wall,  $\phi$  counts as publicly justified if epistemically ideal agents would not reject  $\phi$ .<sup>32</sup> Still,  $\phi$  count as publicly justified *to real people* when their ideal, epistemically exemplary twins would not reject  $\phi$ —where real people have discursive standing of very little purchase, if any.<sup>33</sup> If Betty cannot coherently accept  $\phi$ , this does not count against  $\phi$ 's justifiability so long as her idealized, epistemically exemplary twin Better Betty would not reject  $\phi$ . Writes Wall:

Decreasing the degree of idealization, however, would amount to a compromise with rational epistemic justification. On the view I am proposing, public justification expresses the demand to justify political arrangements to subjects understood as exemplary agents. It does not ask state officials to tailor their justifications to the epistemic defects of actual subjects.<sup>34</sup>

Plainly, if, in calibrating the standard of public justification, the only relevant ends are alethic, lowering its bar for authoritativeness would compromise its ability to pursue these ends.

Recognitive conceptions attach much weight to pro-purchase considerations. They take it that moral or political justification should give much weight to, if not prioritize, recognitive ends, widely conceived: its standards and terms should cohere with, or express, proper recognition of, or respect for, relevant actual people—or their dignity,<sup>35</sup> autonomy,<sup>36</sup> or

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<sup>29</sup> Wall, "The Pure Theory of Public Justification," p. 218; my emphasis.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 207; p. 209, 215-20.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 220.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 216f., 218.

<sup>33</sup> See *ibid*, p. 209f, 222f, and below. I leave open whether the discursive standing that Wall's pure public justification accord to real people is best construed as constitutive discursive standing of extremely low purchase, or as derivative discursive standing: in the limiting case—e.g., a case like Wall's—their purchase can be indistinguishable. See Besch, "On Discursive Respect," p. 208f, 216-220.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 220.

<sup>35</sup> Forst, "The grounds of critique: On the concept of dignity in social orders of justification," in

capacity for reasons,<sup>37</sup> their right to justification,<sup>38</sup> freedom and equality,<sup>39</sup> “robust” moral selfhood,<sup>40</sup> and so on. Importantly, recognitive conceptions attach a special interpretation to what this calls for: they take it that justifications will properly recognize or respect people only if it accords them high-purchase discursive standing—so as to accord them a meaningful normative say in relevant matters, if not a (qualified) veto. Hence, recognitive conceptions construe justification in terms that idealize less, rather than more.

Political liberalism is an example (if we read it as claiming that public justification should occur also in the actual world).<sup>41</sup> Political liberals insist that a public justification of political principles should not construe considerations as good reasons that relevant people relevantly disagree about—Rawls refers to “reasonable” people and disagreements—as this would not suitably respect these people. To respect “the freedom and equality of citizens,” political liberals suggest, the “goodness of good reasons” should be construed “entirely [as] a function of their capacity to gain widespread agreement among reasonable people.”<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, to respect other people “when coercion is involved is (...) to require that political principles (...) be as justifiable to them *from their perspective* as they presumably are to us”<sup>43</sup>—where “them” refers to (at least) all actual “reasonable” people “to which such principles are to apply.”<sup>44</sup> This kind of respect is the “moral basis of the liberal principle that the fundamental rules of political association are legitimate only if they can be the object of reasonable agreement.”<sup>45</sup> Thus: an idea of respect here calls for a form of justificatory neutrality that gives much weight to what actual “reasonable” people can or cannot actually accept. Public justification hence accords them discursive standing of high purchase. By implication, public justification cannot prioritize alethic ends: “reasonable” people “reasonably” disagree about the nature of role of (robust) truth, objectivity, or truth-analogue validity, in public reasoning. Thus, alethic ends give way to an aim of respect—which in turn calls for justifications that actual “reasonable” people can agree or converge on.

In passing: it might be argued that the distinction between alethic and recognitive conceptions is not one between conceptions of justification, but one between these and conceptions of deliberation: while justification is a domain of alethic ends, recognitive ends may be salient in public deliberation, seen as an activity of reason-giving between people. In response: we are free to reserve “justification” for justifications that prioritize alethic ends—

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*Philosophy and Social Criticism* 37/9 (2011), p. 965-976.

<sup>36</sup> Forst, “The Justification of Human Rights and the Basic Right to Justification,” p. 719.

<sup>37</sup> Larmore, “Political Liberalism: Its Motivation and Goals,” in: David Sobel, Peter Vallentyne, Steven Wall (eds.), *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 79.

<sup>38</sup> Forst, “The Justification of Human Rights and the Basic Right to Justification,” p. 719; *The Right to Justification*, p. 21, 212.

<sup>39</sup> Macedo, *Liberal Virtues*, p. 46f.

<sup>40</sup> See Gerald J. Postema’s seminal “Public Practical Reason: An Archeology,” in *Social Philosophy and Policy* 12 (1995), esp. p. 76-85.

<sup>41</sup> Such a reading is advanced in Besch, “Political liberalism and public justification: the deep view,” manuscript under review (2017), and *Über John Rawls’ politischen Liberalismus* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1998). The deep view departs from a prominent ideal theory view of public justification, according to which political liberalism conceptualises and applies public justification strictly in ideal theory, in a Rawlsian ideal, well-ordered society. On the ideal theory view: see Jonathan Quong, *Liberalism without Perfection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>42</sup> Macedo, *Liberal Virtues*, p. 46f.

<sup>43</sup> Larmore, “Political Liberalism: Its Motivation and Goals,” p. 78. Emphasis added.

<sup>44</sup> Larmore, *The Morals of Modernity*, p. 137.

<sup>45</sup> Larmore, “Political Liberalism: Its Motivation and Goals,” p. 79.

just like proponents of cognitive views are free not to follow such a linguistic policy. For my purposes, I count alethic *and* cognitive conceptions as views of *justification*. On this policy, it is a substantive question what weight moral or political justification should give to pro-purchase and pro-idealization considerations, or cognitive and alethic ends.

## 5. Authoritative rejections

Should we follow alethic or cognitive ends or priorities? The question can be taken up from many angles, e.g., epistemic, metaphysical, moral, or political angles, amongst others. I will take it up from this angle: even as we give weight to alethic ends, how much weight should we minimally give to cognitive ends? Are there cognitive constraints on idealization? Can we set, on cognitive grounds, a criterion for over-idealization?

One way to look at matters is to consider rejection rights. Recall IPR: the more a justification practice idealizes its bar for authoritativeness, the less readily available it is for relevant actual people to register in this practice authoritative rejections. How available should this be for people—say, when they by their own lights conscientiously try to reason well? Here is one view that springs to mind—call it *Authoritative Rejection Available* (for an agent *A*, relevant views  $\phi$  that apply to *A*, and a relevant justification practice *JP*):

ARA If, upon consideration, *A* cannot coherently accept  $\phi$ , it should be a genuinely available option for *A* to reject  $\phi$  in ways that *JP* counts as authoritative.

That is: at whatever level of idealization *JP* sets its bar for authoritativeness, *JP* should set it *low enough* to make it a genuine option for actual people, given their actual deliberative resources, to reject relevant views in ways that *JP* recognizes as authoritative. This limits the idealization values of justification practices, or their standards, and it sets a mark for *over-idealization*: justification practices (or views of such practices) over-idealize when they put it out of the genuine reach of actual relevant people to reject relevant views authoritatively that they cannot coherently accept. Accordingly, ARA sets a baseline of minimum discursive purchase in relation to rejection rights.

Some remarks are in place. First, let me situate ARA. Call *strong alethicism* the view that, in calibrating the standard of moral or political justification, “the *only* relevant considerations are epistemic or truth-related.”<sup>46</sup> Call *moderate alethicism* the view that, in calibrating that standard, alethic considerations may trump other considerations, e.g., pro-purchase considerations. Next, *strong cognitivism* is view that, in calibrating that standard, the *only* relevant considerations are cognitive in the above sense—a sense that interprets proper respect or recognition as requiring the allocation of discursive standing of high discursive purchase. Not least, call *moderate cognitivism* the view that in calibrating the relevant standard, cognitive considerations may trump other considerations, such as pro-idealization considerations. ARA seems unavailable only for strong alethicism—e.g., Wall’s “pure” public justification—and it sits most comfortably with moderate cognitivism. I will not advance a case against strong alethicism, though. My aim is not to prove any variant of the above views wrong, but to make a suggestion that, *if* it is adopted, asks us to give relevant weight to pro-purchase considerations at least in relation to rejection rights.

Next, ARA does not simply apply *Ought Implies Can* (OIC) to justification practices. It does not claim that people cannot intelligibly be required to meet a bar for authoritativeness that they cannot meet. ARA raises a substantive claim as to the permissibility of idealization values. Why not simply apply OIC? One reason is this. Applications of OIC to relevant requirements, or “oughts,” suppose that we have a lock on demand-waivers—i.e., limitations, widely conceived, that count as significant enough for us to waive “oughts,” or to warrant our

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<sup>46</sup> Wall, “The Pure Theory of Public Justification,” p. 218; my emphasis.

inferences from “cannot” to “not ought.”<sup>47</sup> A “cannot” of logical impossibility always waives “oughts,” a “cannot” of empirical impossibility nearly always does. Yet when the “cannot” is of a softer kind—e.g., consider motivational or intellectual limits—it is often contested whether OIC licenses an inference from “cannot” to “not ought.” At any rate, if (i) Betty cannot meet a bar for authoritativeness,  $\psi$ , we may not infer that (ii) it is not the case that she ought to meet  $\psi$ , if it is open whether her inability should count as a demand-waiver. Of course, we might insist that her inability should count as a demand-waiver when it is not a genuinely available option for her to meet  $\psi$ , and infer on this basis, *via* OIC, that JP cannot require Betty to meet  $\psi$ . But this distorts things: for what we really would be saying is that JP fails ARA vis-à-vis Betty, and hence JP should not require Betty to meet  $\psi$ .

Third, to meet ARA, justification practices must set their bar for authoritativeness in a manner sensitive to the actual deliberative resources of actual people. Alas, we do not always know what their resources are. People’s resources may rarely fall below a baseline that comes with intelligent agency. But evidently there are great differences between people’s resources that can significantly affect how available, if at all, it is for them to meet a given bar for authoritativeness. Thus: unless we set that bar at suitably *low* levels of idealization to begin with—say, somewhere in proximity of a baseline of the sort just referred to—we may not know whether the bar is set *low enough* to ensure that all relevant others can meet it. And this calls into question whether we may rely on that bar in assessing validity. Specifically, suppose JP adopts threshold  $\psi$ ; then we may infer from (i), below, claim (ii) only if (iii) holds:

- (i) No relevant person can reject  $\phi$   $\psi$ -authoritatively.
- (ii)  $\phi$  is valid.
- (iii) It is a genuinely available option for all relevant people to reject  $\phi$   $\psi$ -authoritatively.

The inference from (i) to (ii) supposes that JP may adopt  $\psi$  to assess validity. But if (iii) is false, or if we do not know whether (iii) is true, it is open whether JP may adopt  $\psi$ . This undercuts the inference—or so ARA suggests. Thus: ARA may not rule out that justification practices set their bar for authoritativeness at high levels of idealization, but it can add much uncertainty to practices that do so.

Fourth, ARA by itself rules out only extreme levels of idealization. E.g., it rules out indexing authoritativeness to the powers of Wall-type ideal, epistemically exemplary agents—assuming real people cannot attain them.<sup>48</sup> But depending on what it requires for a bar for authoritativeness to be within an agent’s genuine reach—and, evidently, there can be more than one view on the matter, some less demanding on agents than others—ARA might rule out much more. E.g., it would rule out indexing authoritativeness to substantive commitments that relevant people cannot actually accept coherently—say, by counting rejections as authoritative only if they are “reasonable” in a sense that is tied to the endorsement of core liberal values—if the fact that they cannot do so is counted as showing that accepting these

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<sup>47</sup> This and below follows: Thomas M. Besch, “Factualism, Normativism, and the Bounds of Normativity,” in *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review*, Vol. 50/2 (2011), p. 347-365.

<sup>48</sup> Throughout, I read Wall’s view of “pure” public justification in high-idealization terms, as he intends. But we can also read it in *low*-idealization terms, as a two-stage view of public reasoning. Stage 1 is the stage of “pure” public justification: it provides the highest available level of justification between people who exemplify the highest available level of aptitude; stage 2, the stage of “impure” public justification, is a stage of reasoning with less apt agents—it does not add to stage-1 justifications but aims to persuade less apt agents to accept stage-1 principles. This is compatible with recognitivism. It also recalls Macedo’s two-stage view of public justification in political liberalism: at stage 1, public justification addresses “reasonable” people; at stage 2, the reasonable “re-engage” the unreasonable to persuade them to accept stage-1 principles—where stage-2 results do not count toward stage-1 justification. See Macedo, *Liberal Virtues*, p. 61.

things is not within their reach. The point: the more readily available meeting the bar for authoritativeness must be for relevant people in order for this to count as an option that is genuinely available to them, the lower is the level of idealization that ARA permits. By itself, then, ARA is a minimalist view. But ARA does not rule out that we set the mark for over-idealization at higher, more meaningful levels of discursive purchase.

Finally, ARA is relevant also for alethicists like Wall—but not as an objection. “Pure” public justification sets aside the constraints of actual, engaged public reasoning. From the perspective of such reasoning, it usually is elusive what reasons, if any, are “valid” in Wall’s robust sense (say, valid\*) and what reasons our ideal, epistemically exemplary twins would identify as good, public reasons. But then consider actual discursive life. Say, Paul and Betty disagree about a political proposal,  $\phi$ : Paul supports  $\phi$  on the basis of a presumptive good reason R, which Betty rejects. If it is elusive for Paul to begin with whether R is valid\*, (i) he will not know whether his ideal twin Better Paul agrees that R is a reason that he, real Paul, should treat as a public reason to  $\phi$ , and (ii) he will not know whether actual Betty’s rejection of R is supported by reasons which Better Paul (or Better Betty) recognizes as reasons that he, real Paul, should count as a good reason to not accept R. But then “pure” public justification is not available for Paul. And this just is the situation of real people. Thus: either there is no permissible form of public justification, or at least one permissible form of public justification is “impure.” What bar for authoritativeness may permissible impure public justification adopt? Plainly, it is improper for Paul in such justification to discount Betty’s rejection of R as non-authoritative for the reason that it mismatches Better Paul’s (or Better Betty’s) judgments—for these are elusive. According to ARA, then, permissible impure public justification should set its bar for authoritativeness low enough so that it is a genuine option for real Betty to reject views she is committed to reject in a way that permissible impure public justification counts as authoritative.

## 6. ARA’s appeal

ARA knocks on open doors from the perspective of recognitive conceptions of justification: the forms of respect or recognition that they call for go beyond ARA. Yet I bypass their ideas of respect or recognition as a ground to base ARA on. E.g., consider the notion of respect. Contrary to what recognitivists sometimes suggest, respect does not commit us to accord to people high-purchase discursive standing. It is one thing to accept that respect commits us to act toward others on grounds they can, or could, accept. But it is another matter to construe this in light of a particular view of the authoritativeness of acceptability or its relationship to the validity of reasons, principles, and so on. Recognitivists tend to construe respect in light the view that authoritative acceptability constitutes validity, or justifies, and they calibrate authoritativeness so as to allocate people high-purchase discursive standing. Thus, they in effect construe respect as *discursive respect*, and often a high-purchase variant of it at that. But we can interpret respect in different terms, including terms that cohere with strong alethicism.<sup>49</sup> Thus, to base ARA on respect merely shifts the issue: why should we exercise respect as high-purchase discursive respect in relation to other peoples’ exercise of rejection rights?

Perhaps we can support ARA on different grounds. There may be many ways to do so, given how minimal ARA is. To at least gesture at one, I will draw on Rawls’s insight that people see themselves as “self-authenticating sources of valid claims.”<sup>50</sup> Says Rawls:

[Citizens] regard themselves as being entitled to make claims on their institutions so

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<sup>49</sup> As Wall observes: see his “The Pure Theory of Public Justification,” p. 222.

<sup>50</sup> For this and the following quotation: see Rawls, *Justice as Fairness. A Restatement*, p. 23.

as to advance their conceptions of the good (...). These claims citizens regard as having weight of their own apart from being derived from duties and obligations specified by a political conception of justice, for example, from duties and obligations owed to society.

This makes two points. We take our raising of claims to confer on them a positive weight such that others should take them seriously. And we take them to have this weight “on their own”—i.e., their weight does not depend on whether others agree with them from within their framework of normative conceptions. Thus, we take our raising of claims to confer on them a positive weight such that others should take them seriously even if they agree with us—say, at least where we conscientiously try to reason well.<sup>51</sup>

Rawls focuses on our political self-conception as citizens and claims on political institutions, but the underlying point generalizes: we see ourselves as self-authenticating sources of valid claims in moral or political matters more generally, at least when these matters affect us.<sup>52</sup> That is, we take ourselves to be entitled to make claims on others in relation to what they regard as good reasons in such matters, and we expect them to recognize us as having this entitlement. And it seems to be a core part of this recognition that others attach, or are prepared to attach, positive weight to our claims even when our claims express a (motivated) *non-acceptance* of what they see as good reasons—widely conceived so as to include explicit rejections, objections, or other expressions of disagreement or doubt. What specifically we thereby expect of them—e.g., what measure of openness or receptivity toward us or our claims this involves—might vary from one person, one context, or one subject matter to the next. Yet, I submit, at a minimum we expect others to regard, or be prepared to regard, our (motivated) non-acceptance of what they see as good reasons as something that can call into question, provide reasons to doubt, or put in need of justification, these reasons, or their presumptive goodness—that is, also from their point of view, and even as they disagree with us. I shall refer to this as the discursive minimum of what we expect of others as a response to our status as self-authenticating sources of valid claims.

Plainly, the discursive minimum is a good. And it can be seen to be a good even if we do not commit to the forms of respect and recognition at the heart of recognitive views of justification. For the discursive minimum falls well short of what these views call for. That Betty regards Paul’s non-acceptance of her presumptively good reason  $\phi$  as something that can put  $\phi$ , or  $\phi$ ’s goodness, in need of justification  $\phi$  does not commit her to the view that the goodness of reasons is a function of their acceptability, or that justifications must accord relevant people high-purchase discursive standing. By implication, the discursive minimum may not give people much in the way of the recognition that they need or merit—especially if we think of this in the demanding terms recognitivists sometimes attach to it. Of course, when others accord us high-purchase discursive standing, the discursive minimum is available to us. E.g., if Betty accords Paul a Forst-type, high-purchase right to justification, then by her lights his (motivated) non-acceptance of  $\phi$  will count as evidence that  $\phi$  is not reciprocally acceptable by all relevant people.

Now, the discursive minimum seems conditioned. At least normally, we are being

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<sup>51</sup> Rawls refers to self-authenticating sources of *valid* claims. This obscures things: it is not the case that we take our raising of claims to suffice for their *validity* in some standard sense—say, the sense of logic, or of justifiability. For now, I will assume that Rawls oscillates between two options. Either “valid” refers to the weight that is conferred on our claims by our conscientiously raising them, in which case it means, e.g., “positively matters in its own right.” Or it refers to validity in some standard sense, in which case Rawls tells us that we regard ourselves as self-authenticating sources of claims and as capable of sourcing claims that are valid. I am indebted to Ben Cross for a conversation on this point.

<sup>52</sup> This is more aligned with Rawls’s earlier writings: see Rawls, “Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory,” *The Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 77/9 (1980), pp. 543ff.



accorded this minimum only where other take us to *merit* this minimum. Yet, normally, others will take us to merit this minimum only where we, or our claims, meet what they regard as basic requirements of authoritativeness—or so I shall suggest. Consider matters from the perspective of recognition providers. When do we *not* take the claims of others to cast doubt on, or put in need of justification, views that we already endorse? Discursive practice, I submit, suggests something like this: normally, we do not attach the relevant positive weight to claims that we take to be *relevantly defective*—e.g., that are, or that we see as, unreasonable, irrational, inconsistent, unintelligible, morally perverted, wrong-headed, intolerable, and so on—claims that, we take it, fail a relevant bar for authoritativeness. Larmore makes a related, much stronger point when he notes that we need reasons “to open our mind just as we need one to close it,” so that, in order to cast doubt on views we already have, “we must have good reasons to believe it is doubtful.”<sup>53</sup> He adds:

A good reason for us to doubt, and so to raise the question of justification, must be one that is good by our own light, for it must be supported by other beliefs of ours.<sup>54</sup>

We need a reason to open our mind just as we need one to make our mind up. (...) Questions of justification arise with in a context of given beliefs that do not in and of themselves need to be justified. Such then are the terms in which we should judge, not only our own thinking, but the thinking of others as well.<sup>55</sup>

For Larmore, the embedded deliberator-relativity of reasons to doubt suggests a contextualist view of rational belief.<sup>56</sup> For what matters here, we only need a weak variant of his point. He seems right to note that when we assess whether the claims of others give us reasons to doubt our own views—or to “open our minds” and “raise the question of justification”—we assess the weight of their claims in terms of other views of ours. Now, bluntly put, we usually draw a line between views that we take to be possible (albeit perhaps unlikely) candidates for getting things (partly) right (call them *Qualifieds*) and views that we regard as too defective to be such candidates (*Disqualifieds*). And we draw this line in terms of views that we already endorse. Thus, Larmore claims: we regard the claims of others as giving us reason to doubt our own views only if, by our lights, these claims are *Qualifieds* that are suitable supported by other views of ours. What I need now is more limited: normally, we regard the claims of others as giving us reasons to doubt our own views only if, by our lights, these claims are *not Disqualifieds*. Thus, at least normally we make the discursive minimum available to others only where we take them, or their claims, to not violate what we regard as basic requirements of authoritativeness.

What does this entail at the site of justification? This is not straightforward. The above suggests that the discursive minimum is available to us only where others see us as raising claims that they regard as authoritative. E.g., Betty regards Paul’s (motivated) non-acceptance of her presumptive good reason,  $\phi$ , as putting  $\phi$ , or  $\phi$ ’s goodness, in need of justification, only if she regards his non-acceptance of  $\phi$  as not unreasonable. However, while strong alethicists might agree that the discursive minimum should available to people in some contexts, they might disagree that it should be available at the site of moral or political justification. Thus, I make another, more openly cognitivist assumption—call it *Justification Cognitively Relevant*:

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<sup>53</sup> For this and the next quotation: see Larmore, *The Morals of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 59.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63. Larmore uses “belief” in a wide sense, and I follow him: that  $\phi$  is a belief does not mean that  $\phi$  is perceptual, corresponds to some ‘mind-independent’ reality, or is not prescriptive.

<sup>55</sup> Larmore, “Political Liberalism: Its Motivations and Goals,” p. 71.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*; see also Larmore, *The Autonomy of Morality*, p. 4-5, 11f, 59ff.

JRR     People who regard themselves as self-authenticating sources of valid claims in moral or political matters expect others to accord them the recognitive discursive minimum at the site of moral or political justification.

Thus, given our self-conception as self-authenticating sources of valid claims, the recognitive discursive minimum will *adequately* be available to us only if others make that minimum available to us at the site of practices of moral or political justification. The suggested upshot: the discursive minimum will adequately be available to us only when others, as participants of these practices, regard us as raising claims that meet whatever bar for authoritativeness these practices adopt, and that they as their participants uphold.

If so, there are reasons to adopt ARA. This view requires that moral or political justification set its bar for authoritativeness low enough to make it a genuine option for actual people, or their claims, to meet that bar in relation to the exercise of rejection rights. If Betty's and Paul's justification practice JP meets ARA, then it is a genuine option for Betty to reject Paul's presumptive good reason  $\phi$  in ways that, by JP's standards, Paul is committed to regard as authoritative. This is instrumental to making the discursive minimum adequately available to her—either negatively in removing a hurdle for Paul's recognition of Betty as someone who, at the site of moral or political justification, merits that minimum, or positively if Paul takes her rejection of  $\phi$  to put  $\phi$  in need of justification.

## 7. Conclusion

I pursued two main aims. One was to suggest that moral or political justification should give weight to recognitive ends. Another was to suggest that such justification over-idealizes when its bar for authoritativeness puts authoritative rejections out of the reach of actual people. Thus, I suggested ARA at least gestured at a moderate recognitivist case for this view. ARA, needless to highlight, leaves much to fill in. It does not specify how much idealization is proper in moral or political justification. It only sets a mark for over-idealization. And it does not specify how much discursive purchase the discursive standing of relevant people must have. ARA only identifies a level of minimum purchase: moral or political justification should accord relevant people discursive standing of enough purchase so as to making it a genuinely available option for them to reject views they are committed to reject in ways that count as authoritative.

Next, ARA leaves open how readily available the “genuinely available option” just referred to must be. As we have seen, the more readily available it must be for Betty to meet a relevant bar for authoritativeness,  $\psi$ , for it to be true that meeting  $\psi$  is a genuine option for her, the lower will be the idealization value that ARA permits, and the higher will be the purchase of the discursive standing that ARA-compliant justification accords. But just how much purchase should the discursive standing have that acceptability-based justification must accord to relevant actual people? How much normative influence in such justification, or on its outcomes, should actual people have, given their actual deliberative resources? These question need answering *before* we can in good confidence claim to have set the bar for authoritativeness at a proper, right or adequate level.

Not least, ARA leaves open how suitable levels of discursive purchase are best attained. Moral or political justification can adjust purchase in various ways. Two adjustment strategies suggest themselves. Suppose formal equality of standing—e.g., all relevant people are being accorded discursive standing of the same abstract kind:

- A1.     Hold constant the deliberative resources of relevant people and treat JP's bar for authoritativeness as the adjustment variable: set  $\psi$  higher or lower relative to a reference bundle of expectable minimum deliberative resources.
- A2.     Hold constant JP's bar for authoritativeness and treat deliberative resources

as the adjustment variable: adjust the available expectable minimum bundle of relevant deliberative resources.

As to A1, rather than counting Betty's rejection of  $\phi$  as JP-authoritative only if it is compatible, e.g., with key capacities, skills, or value commitments, that many relevant people do not have, we might adjust things downward to count an Betty's rejections of  $\phi$  as JP-authoritative already if other people regard her as being justified from her perspective, or as entitled to reject  $\phi$  by her standards.<sup>57</sup> As to A2, we might argue that people, to qualify as fully JP-relevant, must undergo a relevant level of civic, moral or political education or deliberation training, or be exposed to relevant high-value information.

Of course, A1 and A2, or mixed variants, may or may not be very promising. For instance, A1 risks to *under*-idealizing its bar for authoritativeness by counting discursive input as authoritative that relevant people might reasonably regard as relevantly defective.<sup>58</sup> A2, in turn, runs the risk of making moral or political justification exclusionary, or impermissibly paternalist. But the point of these concluding remarks is not to specify how desirable levels of discursive purchase should be achieved—whatever these might be—but rather to stress the importance of questions of discursive purchase.

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<sup>57</sup> This is on Vallier's lines, see his "In Defence of Intelligible Reasons in Public Justification," p. 603.

<sup>58</sup> Consider here, too, Enoch's concerns: see his "The Masses and the Elites: Political Philosophy for the Age of Trump, Brexit, and Netanyahu."