# Political Disagreement: Epistemic or Civic Peers?

Elizabeth Edenberg (Baruch College, CUNY)

*Abstract*: This chapter brings together debates in political philosophy and epistemology over what we should do when we disagree. While it might be tempting to think that we can apply one debate to the other, there are significant differences that may threaten this project. The specification of who qualifies as a civic or epistemic peer are not coextensive, utilizing different idealizations in denoting peerhood. In addition, the scope of disagreements that are relevant vary according to whether the methodology chosen falls within ideal theory or nonideal theory. Finally, the two literatures focus on different units of analysis that diverge according to the philosophical purpose behind their investigation of disagreement. Epistemologists analyze the rationality of individuals' belief states whereas political philosophers focus on the just governance of a diverse society. Despite these differences, political epistemologists can learn valuable lessons by considering these debates side by side in order to provide insights that address a host of different challenges posed by political disagreement. The core lesson to draw from the disanalogies outlined in this paper is that to make progress, careful attention should be paid to specifying the goal of any particular project within political epistemology.

## Intro

Disagreement is a persistent problem in our shared political lives. Many political disagreements strike at the heart of our most cherished values and impact the shape of our society. Political epistemology brings epistemology and political philosophy together to shed light on such issues as the deep disagreements that characterize contemporary political discourse. Alongside, and predating, epistemic discussions of disagreement is the vast literature growing out of Rawls's *Political Liberalism*, which seeks to find fair terms of cooperation in the face of deep and persistent reasonable disagreement about the good.[1]

Political philosophers focus on intractable disagreements about our deeper worldviews, religious beliefs, morality, and the good life. Rawls explains that the wide diversity of views in society is a predictable and welcome outcome of institutions that protect citizens' freedom. He asks, "how is it possible for there to exist over time a just and stable society of free and equal citizens, who remain profoundly divided by reasonable religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines?" (Rawls 2005, 4). Rawls' question has been at the center of a wide set of debates about moral and political disagreement. Furthermore, contemporary investigations of the epistemology of democracy, many of which focus on

[1] Rawls's turn towards political liberalism began in his 1980 Dewey lectures at Columbia University, culminating in the publication of *Political Liberalism* in 1993. He continued to revise and expand political liberalism in response to critiques of the work. I have included the citation to the expanded edition (2005).

disagreement, grow out of Rawlsian influences (e.g., Cohen 1986, Bohman and Rehg 1997, Gutmann and Thompson 1998).

More recently, social epistemologists have begun to ask questions about the epistemic significance of disagreement (e.g., Feldman and Warfield 2010, Christensen and Lackey 2013). Debates center on questions about responsible epistemic agency when encountering an epistemic peer who disagrees and whether a given body of evidence justifies one or more rational epistemic states.[2]

This chapter brings together debates in political philosophy and epistemology over what we should do when we disagree. While it might be tempting to think we can readily apply one debate to the other, significant differences between the two threaten this project. After outlining different factors that might cause disagreement among citizens, I will examine how peerhood is specified in each literature and which idealizations are relevant when defining who qualifies as a peer. Next, I show how the two literatures focus on different units of analysis that diverge according to the philosophical purpose behind their respective investigations of disagreement. Epistemologists analyze the rationality of individuals' belief states whereas political philosophers focus on the just governance of a diverse society. Despite these many differences, political epistemologists can learn valuable lessons by considering these debates side by side in order to provide insights that address a host of different challenges posed by political disagreement. The core lesson to draw from the disanalogies outlined in this paper is that to make progress, careful attention should be paid to specifying the goal of any particular project within political epistemology.

## What causes disagreement?

When considering why people disagree about politics, a variety of factors may explain this disagreement. According to Rawls, disagreement is inevitable among well-motivated citizens who respect one another as free and equal, and who seek terms of cooperation that protect basic democratic rights and are fair to all.[3] Rawls refers to the many "sources of disagreement" between reasonable individuals as the burdens of judgment (Rawls 2005: 55). The burdens of judgment explain how well motivated individuals who are reasoning responsibly could nevertheless come to incompatible (but equally reasonable) positions (Rawls 2005: 54-58).[4] While the burdens of judgment is a convenient way to reference the many influences on people's political views, one need not be a Rawlsian to recognize similarly complex influences on individuals that explain why disagreement

[2] The latter issue concerns the "uniqueness thesis" and is the subject to of a separate chapter in this handbook. As such, I largely set it aside herein.

[3] Rawls refers to such disagreements as 'reasonable' disagreements, using the term uses the term 'reasonable' as a technical term, with specific qualifications, to specify the range of disagreements he considers in *Political Liberalism*. Rawls contrasts reasonable pluralism with simple pluralism, which may also include unreasonable, irrational, "and even mad" comprehensive doctrines (Rawls 2005, xvi). In this paper, I bracket discussions of how we should understand Rawlsian reasonableness to keep the focus on more general lessons for the disagreement literature in political epistemology.

[4] Rawlsians will recognize many of the factors I survey in this section as examples of the types of disagreements that Rawls includes in the burdens of judgment.

arises between morally upright and responsible citizens (e.g., Mason 1993, Gutmann and Thompson 1996).

For those who seek to analyze political disagreement typical in ordinary societies, the causes of disagreement expand greatly (Gutmann and Thompson 1996: 18-26). In addition to morally upright and rational individuals disagreeing while doing their best to reason responsibly, society is filled with a more complex range of incompatible values. Many actual citizens do not embrace the liberal values that underlie Rawls's ideal conception of reasonable citizens. Not everyone view politics as a means for seeking just and fair terms of cooperation; instead, some people aim to ensure their own moral views become the law of the land. Some also view politics as tool for gaining power and influence in society. In addition, citizens' knowledge about politically relevant issues varies significantly.

Herein, I will consider four salient reasons why two people may find themselves disagreeing about politics.

> *1.Evidence.* Sometimes disagreement arises because the parties to the disagreement draw on different *sources* of evidence for their beliefs. For example, if there are conflicting reports about a particular event in different newspapers, and we form our beliefs on the basis of our trusted news source—unaware that it is contested—we might hold different views about the event in question. Our disagreement, however, can be traced to the different sources of evidence that ground our beliefs. Revealing these sources could illuminate why we disagree, however resolving the disagreement may require further questions to establish which (if either) source is accurate.
>
> 2. *Interpretation.* Disagreement may also arise because we *interpret* shared evidence differently. When faced with new information, people naturally try to assimilate it into their worldviews. Preexisting commitments and past life experiences can significantly impact how any particular proposition is interpreted by an individual. Furthermore, a host of well-documented cognitive biases can impact belief formation, from confirmation bias to the availability heuristic to framing effects—i.e. the ways and order in which information is presented can have an outsized impact on how the same piece of evidence is interpreted (see Kahneman 2011).
>
> *3. Values*. People frequently disagree about which values are relevant to particular cases that arise in political life. But even if they agree about the relevant values, they often disagree about how to properly weigh and prioritize relevant values. Many moral and political concepts are also open to a range of reasonable interpretations.[5] In politics, we are frequently faced with genuinely difficult cases that require individuals to exercise judgment. And for these variety of factors, our judgment about what is best may vary greatly.

[5] For example, what kind of equality are we trying to establish and why? How should freedom be interpreted: is this negative freedom, positive freedom, freedom from domination?

> *4. Experiences and Circumstances.* Our moral, religious, and political stances are often influenced by our life circumstances, including our upbringing, education, family, community, work, and geographic location, among many other factors. Our experiences and circumstances also impact what we know, what new experiences and information we encounter, and how we assess new information in light of all of this.

In short, "citizens' total experiences are disparate enough for their judgments to diverge, at least to some degree, on many if not most cases of significant complexity" (Rawls 2005: 57). Given the various reasons why disagreement might arise between people, the way in which we specify the types of disagreements that are of philosophical interest is important. Are we analyzing any form of political disagreement that can arise between citizens, or only disagreement amongst some subset of citizens who qualify as peers? If so, how should we specify this basic qualification?

## What makes two people 'peers'?

When investigating the epistemological significance of disagreement, epistemologists often focus on the degree of belief revision, if any, required to maintain the rationality of belief in the face of disagreement. Of course, not just any disagreement is epistemically significant. When there is a clear asymmetry of information, expertise, and/or capacities, disagreement need not threaten the epistemic bona fides of the well-justified believer. To know whether to revise beliefs when faced with disagreement, we should consider the capacities, source of information, and expertise of the person with whom we disagree. Do they have roughly equal intellectual capacities to our own? Are they victim to any distorting epistemic factors, e.g., fatigue or inebriation that could temporarily impair their cognitive function? Are they misinformed or did they overlook a significant piece of evidence? Do they have the same level of expertise in the disputed area?

If both parties to the disagreement share the same evidence on the disputed proposition, have roughly equal intellectual capacities for assessing this evidence, and there are no other distorting factors—they are *epistemic peers*.[6] Epistemic peers are symmetrically situated with regard to the disputed proposition. So defined, it should be clear that disagreement between epistemic peers cannot be sorted out by identifying a mistake in reasoning, a piece of evidence that was overlooked.

By contrast to epistemologists, political philosophers tackle a different type of question about disagreement. Their concern is not what is rational to believe when encountering peer disagreement. Rather, they seek principles of justice that can govern a political community characterized by deep disagreements between members. For this project, the question of epistemic parity between parties is not a primary concern. Instead, *civic* peers are members of the same political community.[7] Civic peers are members of a shared

[6] This specification of who qualifies as an epistemic peer is widely shared by epistemologists on different sides of the debate about the rational response to peer disagreement. See, e.g., Kelly 2005, Christensen 2007, Elga 2007, Lackey 2010, and Goldman 2010.

[7] Many political philosophers use the term 'citizens' to describe this relationship. Citizen refers to people in their capacities as political agents in a particular community and, when used in political philosophy, is not

political community, and have certain rights and duties accordingly. Civic peers are governed by the same laws, part of a shared distributive scheme, and often share political power.

**What role do idealizing assumptions play in discussions of disagreement?**

As we've seen, the debates about disagreement in epistemology are framed differently from those in political philosophy. At first glance, it might be tempting to see the differences as differences between an *idealized* conception of disagreement between epistemic peers and the more practically grounded disagreement that characterizes politics. But that would be too quick. The divide is not simply between ideal theory and nonideal theory; rather, the difference lies in *what* is idealized. There are different idealizations at play in both literatures and more clarity around which ideals are used and why will help us avoid pitfalls that can arise by simply bringing the two debates together.

In epistemology, idealizations help focus the inquiry on the rational response to the purest case of disagreement between peers. The central idealizations stipulate symmetry between the parties. That is, epistemologists stipulate that both parties are: 1) intellectual peers—they have similar (or, more idealized, the same) capacities for assessing the evidence and arguments relevant to the question at hand, 2) have access to the same evidence bearing on the proposition about which there is disagreement, and 3) neither party has any antecedent reason to assume that they rather than their peer is more likely to be right or wrong in this domain. They have a similar track record such that they regard each other as epistemic peers for the case at hand.[8] While responses to peer disagreement differ in the literature, most sides to the debate share a similarly idealized conception of what qualifies two individuals as epistemic peers.

By contrast, the question of which idealizations are helpful to stipulate when tackling disagreement between civic peers is subject to extensive debate in political philosophy (see, e.g., Mills 2005, Simmons 2010, Anderson 2010, Estlund 2020). This question is frequently methodological. Should we first clarify an ideal of justice, to offer a *telos* that can guide our work to improve existing unjust social arrangements? Or should we turn first to the unjust and messy world to diagnose existing injustices and seek to rectify them as we progress? Ideal theorists argue that insofar as any effort to identify injustice implicitly relies on some as of yet unrealized ideal of justice, it will be practically best to make that ideal explicit from the get-go. Nonideal theorists critique ideal theorists for failing to address injustices in society or, worse, structuring their theory in a way that it is unable to recognize clear injustices. They argue that many injustices are well established and easily identifiable, so a project that seeks justice should start with the messy world and find ways of improving it.

---

intended to track immigration status. Since immigrants are often times important civic peers and members of the political community, I opt for this more inclusive term.

[8] I've stated this somewhat loosely as it might make a difference whether we are stipulating that two people are in fact epistemic peers, or whether each are believed to be a peer, or whether each party is justified in believing that they are peers (see Enoch 2010: 970-974).

How do ideal and nonideal theorists each think about civic peers? Nonideal theorists are more likely to look at people as they are, with complex motivations, implicit and explicit biases, and various degrees of willingness to comply with just social orders. By contrast, ideal theorists often build in idealizing assumptions about citizens and society, which vary according to the aims of their political project. For example, to establish the possibility of a just social order that remains stable despite deep and persistent disagreement between citizens (Rawls 2005), it is helpful to stipulate that all parties to the disagreement are committed to cooperating on fair terms. The challenge is then focused on how to specify principles of justice and legitimacy when people disagree. The idealizations relevant to this project have little to do with epistemic symmetry between parties. Instead, the central idealizations stipulate a shared commitment to the aim of the project, seeking a just social order that respects individuals.

Determining which (if any) idealizations are used to specify the qualification of civic peerhood makes a significant difference to the ultimate theory. An idealized conception of disagreement between civic peers who are motivated to cooperate on just and fair terms is a very different problem, and may require a different response, than disagreements between civic peers who are not so well-motivated. Should the qualification for civic peers be defined in terms of a basic moral threshold or are epistemic qualifications also important? Should the moral threshold be set low to rule out only psychopaths and tyrants? How should common forms of injustice and discrimination fit into idealizing assumptions about disagreement? Theorists vary widely on all of these questions. Nevertheless, the debate about how to cooperate on fair terms with those who disagree is unified in treating the question as a moral problem to be adjudicated between members of a political community.

The different idealizations used to specify peerhood in the epistemology and political philosophy of disagreement are ultimately tied to core differences concerning the philosophical purpose of investigating disagreement. Should we assume peers are epistemic equals (in terms of capacities, access to the evidence, justification, etc.) in order to clarify what a rational individual should believe? Or should we assume peers are moral equals (showing equal moral respect for one another and agreeing to cooperating on fair terms that secure individuals' basic rights) to clarify how to structure a just society? Or, should we reject ideal theory and tackle questions of disagreement between any members of a shared political community? Political epistemologists who seek to bridge the epistemology and political philosophy of disagreement should keep track of the different idealizing assumptions in each literature and should carefully specify how they define peerhood for specific projects within political epistemology.

**What is the basic unit of analysis?**

So far, we have looked at different factors that may cause two people to disagree and the specific requirements and idealizations used to establish whether that disagreement is between peers. This might suggest that the core differences are in how peer disagreement is specified. But there are deeper differences in the basic unit of analysis for each theory: epistemologists focus on individuals' belief states whereas political philosophers focus on the just governance of society.

While the epistemology of disagreement is a thriving area of social epistemology, the focus remains squarely on the appropriate epistemic stance individuals should take towards their own beliefs when faced with peer disagreement. The social elements come in because the individual is considering the epistemic impact of their peer's contrary belief. Yet it matters little *who* the peer is, provided symmetry between the parties has been established. In fact, the interpersonal element can drop away altogether; the same intuitions apply to differences between just one individual's views over time.[9] The conclusions drawn about the epistemic impact of peer disagreement, thus fit within a much larger literature about responsible belief, epistemic agency, and the acquisition of knowledge and understanding. In all of these cases, the core unit of analysis is the individual and her epistemic states, and the conclusions drawn primarily concern responsible individual epistemic agency.

By contrast, when political philosophers consider disagreement between citizens, the focus is not on what each person believes. Rather, it is on how to structure legitimate governance of a diverse society. The primary unit of analysis is the terms of justice, structure of legitimate government, and/or specific political policies and laws. They ask: which principles of justice can govern a society in which moral, religious, philosophical, and political views are deeply contested? How can we ensure coercive power is legitimate when citizens hold a wide variety of opposing beliefs? What can be justified to a diverse political community, and seek to evaluate policies against a wide variety of viewpoints.

This does not imply that individuals' viewpoints are irrelevant. To figure out what might be acceptable to a community, we must figure out what is acceptable to the individual members of the community. But the core focus is not individuals' justified epistemic states. Rather the focus is on which proposals survive contestation from the many members of a political community and how political processes (e.g., deliberation, debate, voting, etc.) are structured to allow disagreeing parties to debate, vote, and find fair terms of cooperation in spite of persistent disagreement between citizens. Some epistemic democrats add that certain deliberative or aggregative procedures have epistemic value either for individuals (who learn from deliberation with others) or for society (improving the epistemic quality of democratic decisions). Nevertheless, the problem of disagreement is generally framed as a collective problem for social governance.

## Should disagreements be resolved or managed?

The last major difference between the epistemology and political philosophy I will survey in this paper lies in how each theory approaches solutions to the problem posed by disagreement. Should disagreements be resolved or managed?

Epistemologists seek to determine how a responsible epistemic agent should respond to the prima facie challenge peer disagreement poses to the rationality of her beliefs. They seek a rational resolution to disagreement to ensure that individuals maintain justified

[9] Thomas Kelly, for example, asks us to consider parallels between an individual's own justified belief at different points in time and the classic cases of peer disagreement (Kelly 2013, 32-33).

epistemic states. Should an individual revise her confidence in her belief, suspend judgment on the issue at stake, or is it rationally permissible to set aside the significance of the disagreement and stick to her guns? No matter which response is deemed appropriate, the assumption in the literature is that there is a rational resolution to the challenge of peer disagreement. The response hinges on whether and to what degree peer disagreement is epistemically significant for an individual.

By contrast, political philosophers do not seek rational resolution to the disagreement. Instead, they view disagreement as a persistent problem in political life and thus seek fair terms according to which we can manage our disagreements. Unlike the cases discussed in the epistemology of disagreement, political disagreement is not a problem that can be overcome. While some disagreements may be resolved over time and many political debates are aimed at trying to convince others of one's view, disagreement is a permanent feature of democratic politics. In any society that protects basic democratic rights to freedom of conscience and expression, a diversity of incompatible but nevertheless reasonable views will remain (Rawls 2005: 37). Given the "intractable sources of disagreement," theorists should not only offer ways of adjudicating political disagreements, their theory should also enable citizens to learn to live with persistent disagreements (Gutmann and Thompson 1996: 360). Thus, the project is not about resolution but of management. We must enable citizens to live with disagreements that persist, and do so in a way that still fosters just social institutions and fair modes of government. For many political philosophers, this means finding ways to structure productive political discussions in spite of disagreement and find procedures that can secure legitimate rule for a diverse society in which citizens continue to disagree with one another. Furthermore, on most democratic or political liberal theories, it is permissible for individuals to object to the outcome of any political decision and believe that it is incorrect, irresponsible, immoral, or unjust. Agreement on specific policies is unlikely and not expected for a proposal to be legitimate. The core question is what makes proposals legitimate despite individuals' objections.

## Lessons for Political Epistemologists

As we've seen, many of the differences between epistemic and political approaches to disagreement grow out of the differences between each inquiry's aim: whether the goal is evaluating individuals' epistemic states or finding just political principles to govern society. The different aims explain many subsidiary differences concerning: the specification of peerhood, which factors contribute to peer disagreement, the idealizations used in theorizing, whether the analysis focuses on individuals or society, and whether disagreement should be seen as a problem to resolve or manage. These differences may pose some difficulties for political epistemologists who seek to bring together these two literatures in order to evaluate political disagreement.[10] Nevertheless, there are lessons to

[10] I do not mean to overstate the challenges in bringing these two literatures together. Some political philosophers have drawn on the epistemology of disagreement in order to defend their political theories (see, e.g. Peter 2013). While others have used the epistemology of disagreement to critique public reason theorists (see, e.g., Enoch 2017 and van Wietmarschen 2018).

be drawn from considering these differences in order to carve out fruitful paths forward for political epistemology.

Lessons drawn from the peer disagreement literature may not directly apply to political disagreements between citizens who may or may not be epistemic peers. The variety of factors that contribute to political disagreements extend beyond the more narrow conception of epistemic peers. Epistemic parity between citizens is often difficult to determine, even more so with the splintering of information spheres and the hyper-personalization of digital access to politically relevant information. In cases of uncertainty about the epistemic status of our interlocutor, it is still important to consider how to resolve disagreement in an epistemically responsible manner.

In addition, people's political beliefs are often adopted in a cluster of positions, such that co-partisans have many beliefs in common whereas members of different political parties may have very few overlapping commitments. This leads many people to have greater default trust in people who share their political views.[11] To establish two parties' status as epistemic peers, epistemologists look for a similar track record of performance in the domain in question. While we can establish an agreed upon track record of success in one's past performance in many fields, this is far easier when faced with issues where there is more settled consensus on shared standards for assessment. This is less available in political disagreements. The standards for assessing one's track record about political disputes are often just as controversial as a disagreement about any particular issue. It may be difficult for citizens from different political parties to see one another as epistemic peers in the relevant domain because our disagreements about political issues come in clusters such that we may not find a core area of agreement by which to judge each other epistemic peers.[12]

In this fractured context, trying to approach political debate as if we're talking about epistemic peers will be no less divisive than politics as usual. We may be apt to downgrade the epistemic standing of individuals who do not share our commitments, judging them to be insufficiently responsive to the evidence we take to justify our own beliefs. Once the parties to the disagreement have exchanged reasons, they might conclude—on the basis of the continued disagreement in light of this exchange—that they were not talking to their epistemic peer. If I explain reasons I think decisively support my position and you hear those reasons, yet draw a different conclusion or fail to see the weight of the evidence, it seems I have new evidence you are not my epistemic peer after all. So much the better for my view.

The challenges that arise when attempting to resolve political disagreements are not incidental. Political disagreements often hinge on deeper disagreements about moral or religious values, the order of priority assigned to shared values, and disagreements about

[11] If Regina Rini is right greater trust in co-partisans may even be rational (Rini 2017).
[12] For example, Adam Elga offers a helpful case of two friends who disagree about abortion and a related cluster of positions. They are unlikely to judge the other party to be their epistemic peer on any of the related cases because the full cluster of moral and political options (Elga 2007). This problem may also extend to our ability to see one another as moral peers. For a great illustration of how clusters of values can impact how citizens view one another, see Amanda Greene's chapter in this volume.

the proper role of government in promoting valuable aims. In addition, many people's views about politics relate to diverse aspects of their identity, social location, and experience. In these cases, it is difficult to clearly establish all of the information and evidence that bear on the belief in question and thus assessing parity of evidence and information bearing on the views will be difficult to parse. Resolution to the disagreement is often unlikely, even if both parties share their own reasoning behind their political views and approach the conversation with intellectual humility, seeking to learn from one another. Instead, we should figure our productive ways to live with the disagreements that are a persistent feature of politics.

Yet even if we approach political debate as a problem to be managed over time, analyzing the epistemic positions embedded in political theories is important for making progress. Uncovering the epistemological and metaphysical assumptions that undergird different political theories and defending these commitments is fruitful ground for philosophical inquiry. For example, what forms of political justification are epistemically as well as morally robust? How should an epistemically responsible agent reconcile the persistence of political disagreement with their own desire to hold well-justified beliefs about these contested questions?

The core lesson to draw from the disanalogies outlined in this paper is that to make progress, careful attention should be paid to specifying the goal of any particular project within political epistemology. Before beginning a project that simply meshes together the two literatures, political epistemologists should first establish what insights they hope to attain in a particular project. The aim of the inquiry shapes many features of the precedent literature in the epistemology and political philosophy of disagreement. So too, the aim of specific projects within political epistemology should inform the choices about who qualifies as a peer, which disagreements are relevant, which (if any) idealizations are useful, and what level of analysis is appropriate to that aim.

Overall, future directions may turn on how idealized the political epistemology of disagreement ought to be. Moving forward, political epistemologists may divide themselves into ideal and nonideal theory camps. Yet no matter where one falls on the question of idealization, clarity about the aim of the inquiry is important for framing the core concept of peerhood at stake.

For those who seek to tackle disagreements between citizens as we find them, it might be time to take a nonideal turn within the epistemology of disagreement. All of the diverse causes of disagreement between citizens would need to be taken into account if we aim to determine the epistemically appropriate response to political disagreement. Citizens whose views all have legitimate political standing in the debate may vary widely in terms of their epistemic credentials, evidence they draw on, and the grounding beliefs that undergird their political positions. Political epistemologists who seek insights that will help us navigate the types of disagreements that people face in contemporary society will need to clarify how peerhood should be defined for this project.

For those who seek to use idealizations to clarify the philosophical stakes of disagreement, careful attention should be paid to which questions about disagreement the theory aims

to solve. Different idealizations may be relevant to understanding what citizens ought to believe and what theories of justice could govern a society characterized by deep disagreements. Likewise, when analyzing the epistemic underpinnings of political theories or political implications of epistemic theories, clarity about which idealizations are relevant to the joint project may shed light on how existing models might need to change to accommodate insights from political epistemology. Idealizations are likely to remain helpful for clarifying the issues at stake, but only if these are clearly articulated and defended in relation to the ultimate goal of the project.

More broadly, expert disagreement and more general disagreement amongst citizens may require different approaches no matter which methodological approach one chooses. Expert disagreement mirrors the peer disagreement debate in epistemology, but there may be new lessons to draw from shifting the debate from what experts should believe to the impact of expert disagreement on public policy. Likewise, there are questions about disagreement between citizens that impact what each person is justified in believing as well as questions about how to structure the social order to find ways to cooperate in spite of persistent disagreements. Both sets of questions are relevant for political epistemology.

Ultimately, I do not seek to come down on either the side of ideal theory or nonideal theory in political epistemology. Rather, I hope to encourage open debate about the role of ideal theory in political epistemology. No matter which method is chosen, it is essential to carefully consider the aims, purpose, and limits of specific projects within political epistemology, and the precedent literature in both the epistemology and political philosophy of disagreement.[13]

## Works Cited

Anderson, Elizabeth. 2010. *The Imperative of Integration*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bowman, James and William Rehg (eds.). 1997. *Deliberative Democracy: Essays one Reason and Politics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Christensen, David. 2007. "The Epistemology of Disagreement: The Good News." *Philosophical Review* 116(2): 187-217.

Christensen, David and Jennifer Lackey (eds.) 2013. *The Epistemology of Disagreement: New Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cohen, Joshua. 1986. "An Epistemic Conception of Democracy." *Ethics* 97(1): 26-38.

[13] Thanks to Michael Hannon, Jeroen de Ridder, and Rebecca Tuvel for their helpful comments, which improved this paper significantly.

Elga, Adam. 2007. "Reflection and Disagreement." *Nous* 41(3): 478-502.

Enoch, David. 2017. "Political Philosophy and Epistemology: A Case of Public Reason." In *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy*, vol 3. David Sobel, Peter Valentine, and Steven Wall (eds.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

_____. 2010. "Not Just a Truthometer: Taking Oneself Seriously " *Mind* 119 (476): 953-997.

Estlund, David. 2020. *Utopophobia: On the Limits (If Any) of Political Philosophy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Feldman, Richard and Ted Warfield. 2010. *Disagreement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Goldman, Alvin. 2010. "Epistemic Relativism and Reasonable Disagreement." In *Disagreement*, Richard Feldman and Ted A. Warfield (eds.), 187-215. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gutmann, Amy and Dennis Thompson. 1996. *Democracy and Disagreement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kahneman, Daniel. 2011. *Thinking Fast and Slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Kelly, Thomas. 2013. "Disagreement and the Burdens of Judgment." In *The Epistemology of Disagreement: New Essays*. David Christensen and Jennifer Lackey (eds.), 31-53. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

_____. 2005. "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement." In *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*, vol 1., John Hawthorne and Tamar Szabó Gendler (eds.), 167-196. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lackey, Jennifer. 2010. "A Justificationist View of Disagreement's Epistemic Significance." In *Social Epistemology*. Alan Haddock, Adrian Miller, and Duncan Pritchard (eds.), 298-325. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mason, Andrew. 1993. *Explaining Political Disagreement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mills, Charles. 2005. "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology." *Hypatia* 20(3): 165-184.

Peter, Fabienne. 2013. "Epistemic Foundations of Political Liberalism." *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 10(5): 598-620.

Rawls, John. 2005. *Political Liberalism: Expanded Edition*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Rini, Regina. 2017. "Fake News and Partisan Epistemology." *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*. 27(2): 43-64.

Simmons, A. John. 2010. "Ideal and Nonideal Theory." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 38(1): 5-36.

van Wietmarschen, Han. 2018. "Reasonable Citizens and Epistemic Peers: A Skeptical Problem for Political Liberalism." *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 26: 486-507.

**Biographical Note**

Elizabeth Edenberg is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at The City University of New York, Baruch College (USA). She specializes in political philosophy, political epistemology, and the ethics of emerging technology.