

---

**DEMOCRACY AND DELIBERATION:  
TWO MODELS OF PUBLIC JUSTIFICATION**

**Mariano Garreta Leclercq**

## **DEMOCRACY AND DELIBERATION: TWO MODELS OF PUBLIC JUSTIFICATION<sup>1</sup>**

**MARIANO GARRETA LECLERCQ**

*National Research Council of Argentina*

*Buenos Aires University*

*Political Philosophy Group*

### **RESUMEN**

El compromiso con la necesidad de ofrecer una “justificación adecuada” de las decisiones políticas vinculantes que sea aceptada o resulte aceptable para todos los ciudadanos afectados, constituye uno de los rasgos distintivos de la idea de deliberación política tal como es concebida por muchas teorías deliberativas de la democracia. Dicho esto, sin embargo, no sólo no resulta claro qué podría calificarse como una “justificación adecuada”, sino tampoco algo mucho más básico: ¿cómo debemos interpretar el término “justificación” en contextos políticos? En este ensayo presentaré dos modelos de justificación pública. El primero está asociado con una concepción tradicional en epistemología de la noción de justificación de creencias e involucra algunas ideas de sentido común acerca de la cuestión. El segundo modelo, particularmente influyente en la filosofía política liberal reciente, estipula que ofrecer buenas razones (evidencia relevante, argumentos libres de defectos formales, intuiciones o juicios morales considerados, etc.) no resulta suficiente para justificar una creencia o un conjunto de creencias frente a otros sujetos. Es necesaria, además, la apelación a razones que ya son aceptadas —o

1. I presented an earlier version of this essay at a workshop on “Human Rights and Democracy in a Globalized World”, organized by Torcuato Di Tella University and The Center for Philosophical Investigations (CIF) in Buenos Aires in November 2012.

pueden serlo como resultado del proceso deliberativos mismo— por parte tanto del agente que ofrece la justificación como de aquellos a quienes va dirigida. La meta de este ensayo es desarrollar un argumento en apoyo de este último modelo de justificación pública.

**Palabras clave:** deliberación, justificación pública, liberalismo, creencia, aceptación.

#### ABSTRACT

The commitment to provide an “adequate justification” of binding political decisions that is accepted or proves acceptable by all citizens concerned, appears to be one of the distinctive features of the idea of deliberation in the public arena as it is conceived by many deliberative conceptions of democracy. Having said that, however, not only is it not at all clear what exactly would qualify as “adequate justification” but also something even more basic: how are we to interpret the term “justification” in political contexts? In this essay I shall present two models of public justification. The first one, is associated with a traditional epistemological idea of justification of beliefs and involve some common sense notions about the subject. The second model, particularly influential in recent liberal political philosophy, stipulates that providing good reasons (relevant evidence, arguments with no formal flaws, intuitions or duly considered moral convictions, etc.) does not suffice to justify a belief or set of beliefs before others. There must be an appeal to reasons that are accepted —or may come to be accepted as a result of the deliberative process itself— by the subject providing the justification as well as by those he addresses. The aim of this essay is to develop an argument in support of this second model of public justification.

**Key words:** Deliberation, Public justification, liberalism, belief, acceptance.

#### I

Several philosophers have held the view that, when feasible, regular decision-making procedures in contemporary constitutional democracies must be complemented by proces-

ses of effective public deliberation. A group of individuals deliberates about how they should act when involved in a debate where they evaluate the worth of different proposals —often opposed and irreconcilable. In the course of the debate and in order to ground his point of view or criticize alternative ones, each subject expounds considerations in whose weight and relevance he sincerely believes and deems accessible by and persuasive for his fellow debaters. Thus, by committing themselves to provide an adequate justification of their actions, subjects fulfill their basic moral duty to treat fellow debaters as agents who deserve equal consideration and respect. A further central feature of the idea of deliberation is that it excludes any appeal to coercion —either open or surreptitious— as legitimate means to encourage acceptance of a given proposal. Defenders of the value of deliberation often maintain the assumption that it is potentially able to foster reflexive revision and, in some cases, the will to change individuals’ initial stances —preferences, beliefs, convictions, etc. — thus contributing to improve the epistemic quality of the tenets that will finally be supported. It is worth noting that this is a general description and it does not include features that define the more specific concept of deliberation that will be under consideration in this paper. This more specific concept may be termed “institutional democratic political deliberation” (hereafter, simply political deliberation). Besides the features mentioned above, political deliberation<sup>2</sup> 1) takes place in formal

2. There certainly are other types of political deliberation. Citizens, their representatives and State officials also deliberate about the best reply to a political problem in forums that lack the authority or capacity to bring forth binding decisions. It seems plausible to hold that this kind of debates in the public sphere —as defined by Habermas, for example— are crucially important for an appropriate development and survival of public culture in a democratic society. Our focus on political deliberation in decision-making forums with binding power does not mean that we question the above mentioned idea.

political decision-making forums; 2) produces decisions with binding force that concern participants in the deliberations or those whom they represent –in other words, it results in the implementation of policies by the state; 3) it is merely part of the decision-making process, which normally implies voting.

As just stated, the commitment to provide an “adequate justification” of binding decisions that is accepted or proves acceptable by all concerned, appears to be one of the distinctive features of the idea of political deliberation. Having said that, however, not only is it not at all clear what exactly would qualify as “adequate justification” but also something even more basic: how are we to interpret the term “justification” in this context?

Let us briefly reflect in simple and schematic terms on what normally happens in political deliberations. Let us imagine a deliberation between two individuals or parties that back opposite solutions for the same problem: allow or prohibit conduct X, imposing sanctions to those who display such behavior. Leaving aside the interference of selfish interests that none of the parties would dare bring to the debate as a genuine reason to back its stance, disagreements normally derive from: 1) Conflicting factual judgments about the consequences to ensue from the enactment of the proposed policies, 2) incompatible evaluative judgments (where religious, philosophic or moral considerations come into play) on the justice, correctness or desirability of those policies, or 3) a combination of both types of conflicting judgments.

Although there are exceptions, in most cases public deliberation implies reference to both factual and evaluative judgments. This fact has significant implications: whenever citizens introduce evaluative judgments in deliberations, particularly moral judgments, they commit themselves –at least *prima facie*– to the notion that it is feasible to provide an adequate justification of such judgments from a cognitive perspective. It would be senseless to attempt to deliberate about moral issues –related to justice as well as human flourishing–

if we did not believe that our judgments in this field may be backed by reasons or considerations that will prove acceptable to our interlocutors and constructively subjected to criticism by those subjects. In view of these features or tenets of actual deliberation, it seems natural to refer to a notion of the idea of justification that highlights some structural similarity between factual and evaluative judgments. Let us presume that an agent states, firstly, that the death penalty, when applied to certain grave crimes, does not bring about a decrease in the frequency of those crimes, as opposed to the opinion of many defenders of such penalty. Secondly, the agent asserts that the state may never have the right –for moral reasons– to implement this type of sanction among its citizens.

In an elementary sense, we might hold that justifying these judgments –regardless of differences due to their dissimilar status– implies offering an explanation of the reasons why they are deemed to be true. Laurence Bonjour summarizes this traditional stance in epistemology, and firmly rooted in common sense:

The basic role of justification is that of a *means* to truth, a more directly attainable mediating link between our subjective starting point and our objective goal. [...] If epistemic justification were not conducive to truth in this way, if finding epistemically justified beliefs did not substantially increase the likelihood of finding true ones, then epistemic justification would be irrelevant to our main cognitive goal and of dubious worth. It is only if we have some reason for thinking that epistemic justification constitutes a path to truth that we as cognitive beings have any motive for preferring epistemically justified beliefs to epistemically unjustified ones (Bonjour 1985, pp. 7-8).

If the justification of moral judgments enjoys cognitive status it seems reasonable to affirm that the same considerations should be relevant. So we may hold, with Joseph Raz that in this field, “justification” consists in “explaining the truth of a

value judgment” (Raz 1990, p. 32). The concept of “truth” may be conceived in different ways. It is important to note, however, that no matter how it is described it seems impossible to be removed from the process of moral deliberation. Basically, because it seems impossible to do away with it in any type of process that involves reasoning, assertion, belief or meaning. As pointed by Joshua Cohen when summarizing several theses that enjoy significant agreement in epistemology and philosophy of language

Truth is intimately linked to the notions of belief and meaning, both fundamental in an account of thought. Thus, beliefs are said to “aim at” the truth, in that truth is their standard of correctness; correspondingly, coming to believe that p is not true is typically “fatal” to the belief that p. Moreover, because truth is the standard of correctness for beliefs, while we may come to believe that p without deliberating about whether p (is true), when we deliberate about whether to believe that p, we try to determine whether p (is true) (Cohen 2009, pp. 13-14).

The final goal of deliberation in formal political forums is the justification of binding norms that aim to regulate the actions of individuals and institutions. Such norms are usually expressed through prescriptive statements to which it is senseless to classify as “true” or “false”. Within the context of public deliberation, however, offer a moral justification of those prescriptions requires to appeal to *beliefs* that subjects may justify, namely, *beliefs* whose truth claim they may be able to defend on appropriate considerations. If anyone states “social and economic inequalities must be linked to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity”, upon justifying that principle he would be expected to explain why he believes –that is, why he believes it is true– that features such as social background, skin color, religion or gender are irrelevant when it comes to justifying an unequal access to such functions and positions.

We may term the ideas we have just sketched, “standard epistemic conception of the notion of belief justification” (SEC). As noted, SEC is general and abstract: regardless of potential differences between factual and evaluative judgments, it applies equally to both types of judgment. Although many thinkers conceive of the idea of justification in these terms when they reflect on the kind of public deliberation we described above, there is an influential alternative, particularly in recent liberal political philosophy. According to this approach, providing good reasons (relevant evidence, arguments with no formal flaws, intuitions or duly considered moral convictions, etc.) does not suffice to justify a belief or set of beliefs before others. There must be an appeal to reasons that are accepted – or may come to be accepted as a result of the deliberative process itself– by the subject providing the justification as well as by those he addresses. John Rawls has explicitly maintained this conception. He states:

[...] Justification is argument addressed to those who disagree with us, or to ourselves when we are of two minds. It presumes a clash of views between persons or within one person, and *seeks to convince* others, or ourselves, of the *reasonableness* of the principles upon which our claims and judgments are founded. Being designed to reconcile by reason, *justification proceeds from what all parties to the discussion hold in common*. Ideally, to justify a conception of justice to someone is to give him a proof of its principles that we both accept, these principles having in turn consequences that match our considered judgments. Thus mere proof is not justification. A proof simply displays logical relations between propositions. *But proofs become justifications once the starting points are mutually recognized*, or the conclusions as comprehensive and compelling as to persuade us of the soundness of the conception expressed by their premises (Rawls 1971, pp. 580-1).

We shall call it the “common ground conception” (hereafter CGC) since one of its defining features is agreement, effective consensus on a set of premises, taken as the point of depar-

ture of the argument. Despite their significant discrepancy with Rawlsian political liberalism, Bohman and Richardson have supported in a recent article a deliberative conception of justification of political proposals that upholds the central idea of CGC. After criticizing the plausibility and operational problems posed by the demand that citizens should offer “reasons all can accept” in political deliberations, they hold that political ideals of justification, legitimacy and civility should be articulated “in the modality of actual acceptance.” In their opinion:

Using the modality of actuality does not imply that one must conclude, with Hegel, that the real is rational and the rational is real. To the contrary, one is simply insisting that, say, actual agreement is what needs to be achieved. The hope is that citizens will civilly engage with one another on the basis of reasons that each actually accepts, that legitimate democratic processes will institutionally encourage this mode of engagement, and that full justification will be reached in which political decisions –which perhaps represent deep compromises in relation to people’s starting positions– will end up being found actually acceptable by all (all citizens, all reasonable citizens, or all affected) (Bohman and Richardson, 2009, pp. 21-22).<sup>3</sup>

The aim of the argument I shall develop in the following sections is to defend that thesis that CGC is an adequate conception of public justification to guide political deliberation in democratic forums that have the capacity to bring forth binding decisions that concern issues of basic justice or constitutional essences.

3. It is worth noting that Bohman and Richardson hold that, as is the case with their own stance, the conception of public justification and political legitimacy proposed by Rawls is committed “with claims about what people ‘do in fact accept’”.

## II

My intention in this section is to put forward an argument in support of the thesis that deliberations focused on decision-making on crucial state policies should be guided by CGC.

The following example will serve as a starting point:

Two scientists, A and B, are working on different technological applications of the same theory, ST1. It is a novel theory, with a significant and growing number of supporters within the scientific community. In view of the very solid evidence in favor of the theory, A and B are firmly persuaded of the truth of ST1. Needless to say, they both acknowledge that error is unavoidable in factual sciences and can never be deemed a trivial matter, regardless of how firmly convinced a scientist may be on the truth of a theory. Having said that, there is a major difference between the research project carried out by each scientist. Whereas A’s research would prove innocuous in case of error, B’s case is different. Given the special kind of tests and experiments that he must carry out, should ST1 prove wrong it would cause huge damage: thousands of people –including B himself– might die or endure irreversible injury. On the other hand, as the people that may be potentially damaged have learnt of the risk involved by B’s research, they staunchly oppose any further steps in his work.

From an epistemic perspective, one may plausibly hold that A and B are equally justified in *believing* that ST1 is true. This is so because both have the same evidence in support of the theory. Are they both equally justified to *act* based on that belief? A’s situation appears to be a case in which the fact of being epistemically justified to hold that *p* –namely, “ST1 is true”– is sufficient justification of the decision to act on the basis of that belief. Obviously, belief that ST1 is true cannot by itself explain A’s decision to proceed with his research project. We must presume the agent has a set of aims or motivations as, for example, the desire to promote the development of his field, to become a renowned scien-

tist, and so forth. Having said that, if A harbors that kind of aims, and he is epistemically justified in believing that ST1 is true, that seems to imply that he will also be justified to carry out a research program that presupposes the acknowledgment and acceptance of ST1. What reasons might be brought to the fore against such conclusion? A's actions will meet no objections neither from an epistemic perspective nor from two perspectives that are unavoidable when it comes to consider whether the decision to act is justified or not: prudential and moral. This is so because should A be mistaken and ST1 were false, neither his well-being nor that of third parties would be impacted as a result of his work. Within this setting, not only is it reasonable to come to the conclusion that A is justified to develop his research project but it would also seem odd and perhaps even unreasonable that, in view of A's beliefs and ends, he should refrain from proceeding with his research.

Although A and B share the justified belief that ST1 is true as well as the motivation to carry on with their plans, the situation of the latter scientist is radically different from that of the former. In case of error, there is much more at stake for B than for A. Let us presume for a moment that B assesses the situation from a purely self-interested perspective, leaving out all concern for the consequences of his actions on other subjects who might be affected by them. Should ST1 prove false, B might lose his life or endure serious and irreversible harm. As opposed to A's case, it makes no sense to say that in view of B's beliefs and purposes it would be odd or unreasonable on his part to decide against carrying out the experiments required by his project. It is perfectly understandable that he should not be willing to run the risk of taking belief in the truth of ST1 as sufficient reason to act since there is an unavoidable and non trivial probability of error with dramatic costs. When we state that an agent is justified in his decision to act, we often mean that, though the decision is the result of an act of his will, it is not merely that; it is also supported by reasons with indepen-

dent validity.<sup>4</sup> When A chooses to proceed with his investigation, the key premise in his reasoning is that the decision is an epistemically justified belief –the belief that ST1 is true– that, as such, is not the result of the will of that subject. Insofar as it is a justified belief it should prove acceptable to any subject with normal cognitive capacities and fulfill impartial and non-personal criteria of correction. On the other hand, as we have seen, the situation is different in the case of B. The key premise in his deliberation is not the justified *belief* that ST1 is true but a different thing, a *decision*, clearly reliant on the will of the subject: the decision to be willing to take the risk that ST1 may be false and suffer the consequences it may entail. We know that B has no epistemic guarantee that would allow him to circumvent the weight of such decision, error is probable, it is not trivial and its relevance is intensified by the seriousness of the consequences involved. Taking the risk to act or evade such risk by abstaining does not depend on B's beliefs but on his will. B might also present things differently: he might say that he has left out the possibility that ST1 might be false and has decided to proceed with his research. In this case, yet again, the key premise in his deliberation is not a *belief* but the *decision*, with no epistemic support, to take a probably false belief as infallible.

Deciding to act assuming there is no risk, might be described more precisely by saying that the subject decides to act on the basis of an *acceptance* of a belief. *Accepting* the belief that *p* is tantamount to adopting the “policy” of taking *p* as given. (Cohen 1992, p. 4). In other words, it means treating that belief as true, within a given context of deliberation, and this entails ignoring, for the time being and for the purposes of

4. No doubt, there are cases when the decision to act may depend entirely on the will of the subject and does not require any reason to support it. That is not the case, however, when the actions of the agent cause a significant impact on the well-being of third parties and we are judging things from a moral point of view.

deliberation and subsequent decision making, the possibility of its being false. Beliefs are not normally seen as being under the agents' voluntary control because, insofar as they "aim at the truth" –to use Bernard Williams' classical expression– and this constitutes its criterions of correction, they depend on the evidence available –be it pro or against. On the contrary, acts of acceptance do depend on the will of the agent; in Jonathan Cohen's words, they are "policies" that people subscribe to in the face of their beliefs (Cohen 1992, 9; Engel 1998, 146). Consequently, and applying this conceptual framework, if B's decision to proceed with his experiments depends on *accepting* the belief that ST1 is true, it is tantamount to saying that, ultimately, it depends on the *will* of that agent.

Although the idea that B has the right to act as he wishes provided he is the only affected party might be backed, that is not the situation in the case under consideration. In view of the fact that other subjects might endure serious damage as a result of his actions, it is fitting to assess it from a moral point of view. From this perspective, it is clear that B has neither the right nor the authority to decide to run the risk of error in the name of the parties potentially liable to suffer damages or to behave as if such risk were non-existent. As we have just seen, none of these decisions can simply be derived from the justified belief that ST1 is true –given the unavoidable and non-trivial character of the probability of error and its remarkable costs. Rather, they depend on B's will. Why should B's will prevail over the opposing will of the other subjects that would predictably be impacted by his action, especially in view of the relevance of what is at stake? Should B enjoy such authority to decide for the rest of the parties concerned, it would be tantamount to denying a fundamental moral principle: the rule of equal respect for persons, as it would imply attributing special rights to B that the rest of the subjects do not enjoy. Definitely, that result is unacceptable.

The considerations above provide the starting point to develop an argument in favor of CGC. The ultimate aim of

political deliberation between citizens in a contemporary constitutional democracy is not to justify *beliefs*. The point is to justify state policies; these are no mere sets of beliefs but rather *actions*. There is no doubt that the justification of beliefs plays a significant role within that process, but it is not the ultimate aim nor is it necessarily a determining factor. As we have seen, within some contexts the fact that a subject is justified in believing that *p* from an epistemic perspective is not sufficient for that subject to be morally justified to act on the basis of that belief. Whenever the action of the state affects the basic rights of citizens we witness a situation that is very similar to that of the scientist about to perform a risky experiment. In the first place, if the state makes a mistake –if it grounds its policies, for example, on false beliefs about the nature of the good life, albeit justified from an epistemic perspective– the harm on those concerned shall be very severe, perhaps even beyond repair. Their chances to lead a valuable life, or at least minimally satisfactory, will be jeopardized. The rationale here is that the state alone can warrant the availability of primary social goods that guarantee people will have real opportunities to pursue their life plans. Secondly, as in the case of scientist B, it would be unreasonable to refuse to take a fallibilistic stance in the moral and political field. Even if one acknowledges the possibility that religious, philosophical or moral points of view may be liable to appropriate justification from an epistemic perspective (as it is characterized by ESC), it is not sensible to posit that infallible and definite knowledge may be achieved in this field. If such assumption is implausible even in the case of factual science, it seems unreasonable to judge it acceptable in religious, philosophical or moral issues. Additionally, there are good reasons to state that formulating a comprehensive view of the good life will always entail a significant probability of error. This is due to the intervention of factors such as those termed "burdens of judgment" by Rawls: a) empirical evidence bearing on the case is usually conflicting and complex; b) agreement on the kinds of considerations that



are relevant does not entail agreement about their weight; c) key concepts we refer to –not only moral and political concepts– are vague and subject to hard cases and interpretation; d) the global experience of the subjects, which shapes the way they assess evidence and weigh values, will differ profoundly in complex modern societies; e) different kinds of normative considerations may be involved on both sides of an issue; f) because of the need to select among cherished values, we face great difficulties in setting priorities (Rawls 1993, pp. 56-57). This list of difficulties not only accounts for the impossibility to reach wide consensus about comprehensive conceptions of the good life in complex and pluralist societies, it should also lead all subjects to acknowledge that the possibility of error in devising their points of view on the matter is consistently significant.<sup>5</sup> Thirdly, as in the case of scientist B, where those who would possibly be affected by his experiments opposed his pursuing the research, numerous citizens will reject the purpose of modeling society according to a given religious, philosophical or moral view. Because of reasonable disagreement, many will believe that the conception of the good life supported by the majority group is false and that its political implementation will result in a dramatic reduction of their chances to lead a satisfactory existence. It is my hypothesis that the parallel I have drawn between the situation of scientist B and citizens in the political sphere of a contemporary democracy, imply that the conclusions that are relevant in the first case are equally valid in the second. Just as in his own situation scientist B is not justified to act on the basis of his belief in the

5. If along the process of belief-formation we had to assess conflicting and complex evidence, we probably made mistakes. If the concepts we use are vague, we probably incurred in confusion or erroneous interpretation of their scope and meaning. If our global experience impacts on the way we weight moral and political values, we have probably been partial in our judgments. Similar considerations are relevant to the other burdens of judgment mentioned above.

truth of ST1, despite having an epistemically appropriate justification of that belief, within the context of a pluralist democracy, supporters of a comprehensive view of a good life cannot be justified to promote it through the power of the state, even if they have an epistemically appropriate justification of their belief in the truth or correctness of such view –which presumably includes factual and evaluative or moral considerations. Being epistemically justified to hold the truth of a belief or set of beliefs is not sufficient justification, in either case, to act on the basis of that belief or set of beliefs.

Let us presume that a group of citizens, that eventually becomes the most numerous, manages to get the state to enact policies that affect basic rights and freedoms of citizens. Those policies can only be justified in reference to the conception of a good life supported by the group in question. Evidently, other groups of citizens subscribe to conceptions that are incompatible with those supporting the implemented policies. When the citizens in the first group promote those policies they are aware of the fact that there is a significant and inevitable probability that they may be mistaken, they know the disastrous consequences of error on those concerned and they are aware of the opposition of many of their fellow citizens to the implementation of the policies they promote. Under such conditions, members of the majority group cannot state that the premise that justifies their political action is the epistemically justified belief that the comprehensive vision of a good life they subscribe to is true –even if they are really justified in affirm his position from an epistemological point of view. The key premise, upon which they base their decision to act, is an act of the will, another *decision*: they either run the risk that their beliefs, albeit justified, may be false and cause serious damage to themselves and to third parties or they leave out such considerations and behave as if they were non-existent. As in the case of scientist B, should the state policies only affect the members of the majority group, it is perfectly plausible to conclude that, if they reached an agreement, they would have

all the right in the world to make such decisions. The problem is that they have no right whatsoever to decide *for* the other citizens who oppose their plans. If they did –as if scientist B should choose to pursue his risky experiments– they would be imposing their will unilaterally, taking the fate of the other citizens in their hands and using them as mere means for the realization of their purposes. This would be tantamount to denying the equal respect due to them *qua* persons. Such result is totally unacceptable and leads to the conclusion that no citizen or association of citizens should enjoy the right to use the power of the state to decide on issues that touch on fundamental rights on the basis of the guidelines of the comprehensive view of the good life held by that person or association.

The situation changes radically when CGC is taken as a guideline for political deliberation. In that case, citizens must bracket their deepest religious, philosophical or moral disagreements and retreat to a common ground of beliefs and ways of reasoning that may permit them to provide justifications of their political proposals that, in actual practice, will prove acceptable by everyone. Taking that step is no infallible guarantee that the policies ensuing from the process of deliberation are correct, or that the seriousness of the harm endured by those concerned in case of error is not significant. The fact that there is a non-trivial probability of error and that the cost to the well-being of citizens is always very high when policies impact on fundamental rights and freedoms seem to be an unavoidable part and parcel of state actions.<sup>6</sup> Political dialogue guided by CGC will probably not warrant that a unanimous agreement on a sole political proposal will be reached. It

6. Accepting CGC and retreating to a common ground in public deliberations focused on decision making does not cancel human fallibility or the weight of the burdens of judgment; nor does it eliminate the mistakes that may be made in the practical implementation of a political program.

is perfectly plausible that citizens will develop different interpretations of the beliefs and political values that constitute the shared common ground. Compliance with CGC, however, requires decisions finally reached by the democratic process to be based on beliefs that all citizens acknowledge as epistemically justified and in ways of reasoning whose correct features are also generally acknowledged. Should this be the case, it seems senseless to state that the political proposal chosen by the majority is merely an expression of the unilateral will of a group. How could any citizen say that and, at the same time, acknowledge that the proposal is supported by epistemically justified beliefs and correct ways of reasoning? On the other hand, by voluntarily acknowledging CGC, every citizen imposes upon himself the duty to participate in a dialogue process where he will have to give up part of what he sees, in the light of his comprehensive view, as the full or global truth on the good life. After all, his aim is to devise political proposals whose justification may prove acceptable by citizens who subscribe views that are incompatible with his own. Given the significant cost of that decision, it would be senseless if it did not also imply accepting to run the risks associated with the implementation by the state of the results of public deliberation.

## REFERENCES

- Bohman, J. and Richardson D. (2009) Liberalism, deliberative Democracy, and “Reasons that All Can Accept”. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 17 (3), pp. 273-4.
- BonJour, L. (1985). *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bratman, M. (1992). Practical Reasoning and Acceptance in a Context. *Mind* 101, pp. 1-15.
- Cohen, J. (2009) Truth and Public Reason. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 37 (1), pp. 13-14.

- Cohen, L. J. (1992) *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Engel, P. (1998) Believing, Holding True, and Accepting. *Philosophical Explorations* I (2), pp. 140-151.
- Rawls, J. (1971) *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Rawls, J. (1993) *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Rawls, J. (2001) *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Raz, J. (1990) Facing Diversity: the case of Epistemic Abstinence. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 19 (1), pp. 3-47.

*Received:* October 15, 2012.

*Accepted:* March 20, 2013.