

The objective reason view defended

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General overview

- Some defence of the objective reason view (ORV)
 - Build on Fabienne Peter's paper "From objective reason to public reason"
- Show that OVR can resist her arguments, attempt to pinpoint some problems of the public reason view (PRV) (without neglecting those of the ORV)
 - Comparison between the two

Preliminaries

- The state of the debate and why I deeply appreciate Peter's paper
 - ORV: a problem of terminology
- Many similarities, one big difference

The public reason view

- Justificatory reasons are **agreement-dependent**: the set of reasons all can accept, or that cannot be reasonably rejected
- **Justification to**: political authority must be justified to others
- Disagreements **affect** justification
- the **justification** of political authority is necessarily in terms of public reasons

The objective reason view

- Justificatory reasons are **agreement-independent**: they do not depend on what people believe, think, desire, but are grounded in objective facts (realism)
- **Justification simpliciter**: since there are objective reasons, then justification is provided by those reasons
- Disagreements **does not affect** justification
- The **justification** of political authority is necessarily in terms of objective reasons

“From objective reason to public reason”

Peter's aim: to reflect on the epistemology of practical reasoning, provide an account that is compatible with both view, and then show that, given that there are disagreements that are normatively significant, between the two views, we should pick the public reason one.

Peter's target: the principle stating that the justification of political authority is necessarily in terms of objective reasons

First part of the argument

- (1) There is something to be said about our perspective on facts: this is the point of view of practical reasoning > This is not a problem for objectivist.
- (2) To be of interest, the objective reason view need to embrace the justified belief norm: you are allowed to use a reason p in practical reasoning iff you are justified to believe that p > you might be mistaken about objective reasons, but you can still permissibly state what it is correct (from your point of view)

The argument from disagreement

If OR and PR theorists agree about (1) and (2), then permissible practical reasoning may result in disagreement and OR, by definition, rejects the idea that disagreement can normatively affect justification because of its independent-whatever character

The argument from disagreement

“Practical disagreements that result from permissible reasoning affect justification in the following way. If you justifiably believe that p and I justifiably believe that not- p , an independent policy choice is either not justified to me or it is not justified to you”

So, Peter claims that there is gap between subjective and objective reasons and objective reasons must be reflected in someone's subjective reasons.

Against the argument 1

But there is a problem with Peter's characterization from ORV standpoint:

If you justifiably believe that p and I justifiably believe that not- p , one of the two options may be justified, despite of what we believe.

If we assume that p is true, and in the end we end up choosing the policy supported by p , then the policy is justified **(as you believe)**

Against the argument 2

The fact that a certain policy conforms to my set of beliefs does not say anything about its justification. Although I permissibly reason in a certain way, I may be wrong (and may be excused for reasoning so).

- For the justification, the individual perspective just does not matter
- This does not mean that it does not matter at all (precondition for action \neq the reason itself)

The argument from necessity

Objective reasons are not necessary for practical justification > ORV has a big problem: we do not know which one of the reasons on the table (if any) is indeed objective.

What shall we do in case of peer disagreement, when the person who has the objective reason is unable to explain it to the other person?

We should choose the PRV.

A first response

But this is not argument that defeats ORV. Rather, it says that when confronted with peer disagreement, PRV scores better because it has a more workable epistemology.

But the ORV defender can still claim that agreement may just be great, but does not constitute justification: it is a problem of conflation (Cohen vs. Rawls)

➤ It is an unsatisfactory answer if we stop here

Is ORV a real alternative?

What is ORV answer to peer disagreement?

It is not to find shared reasons, but go for a
(principled) compromise

1. Compromise \neq correction or rectification

2. Principled compromise \neq strategic

compromise > focus is on the reasons why the
parties settle for a compromise

Epistemic and practical circumstances

EC: Epistemic approaches to peer disagreement diverge, but they all agree that peer disagreements are epistemically significant (focus of the debate: revision of belief \neq justification)

PC: We cannot abstain from making a decision: disagreements cannot be just taken off the political agenda for political inaction necessarily turns into an action favoring the permissibility of certain behaviors some parties have reasons to forbid

Principled compromise

There are good reasons not to discard and dismiss the opinions of disagreeing peers

+

Disagreements at the political level require some settling (we do not have all the time in the world)

=

Principled compromise: recognition of epistemic parity; reasons are non-strategic

The problem of respect

Respect is the rationale of PRV: if we respect each other, we offer only public reason > justification simpliciter is dangerous because authoritarian, but is it?

Example: Bill believes the death penalty should be illegal, Jill disagrees. Bill does not say that the death penalty is wrong because he thinks so, but that death penalty is wrong because it is a draconian form of punishment, which treats barbarity with barbarity (as Bill believes)

Respect for rationality

Representing the OPR as authoritarian is a mischaracterization: requiring to provide reasons in objective terms is not letting people push others around, but asking to provide the true considerations (as they believe) to support a certain arrangement.

Each and every citizen has to claim and defend those political measures for which they have reasons, given the epistemic circumstances they find themselves in, and that are able to persuade and convince others by appealing to their rationality

Public reason view and respect

3 problems:

(1) Exclusion from the legitimation pool

(2) Exchange of reasons

(3) Link between respect and public justification

Conclusions

Attempted to

- show that ORV defenders can eschew Peter's critiques
 - to argue that ORV defenders have an alternative to PRV that is normatively interesting
- to claim that when it comes to the idea of respect, PRV may be more problematic than ORV
 - > More work needs to be done!