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STABILITY AND RESILIENCE IN RAWLS'S POLITICAL LIBERALISM

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STABILITY AND RESILIENCE

IN RAWLS'S POLITICAL LIBERALISM

A Dissertation Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

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He taught me to love philosophy, as he does for anyone fortunate enough to study with him. Thanks to his support, I completed my degree and will move to an Assistant Professor position. For that I will remain grateful.

It is no small irony that this topic is about stability and resilience. My graduate school experience has confirmed, in unexpected ways, how one can restore lost purpose. I will remember the astonishing ways that support appeared when most needed. These kindnesses I cannot repay but I will try to model them for my own students.

PREFACE

The recognition of resilience . . . adds an element that can reconcile the delicious paradoxes of our conservative nature vs. creative nature . . . of our sustainability vs. creative change.

—— C.S. Holling, 2001

This endeavor belongs to political philosophy as reconciliation; for seeing that the conditions of a social world at least allow for that possibility affects our view of the world itself and our attitude toward it. No longer need it seem hopelessly hostile, a world in which the will to dominate and oppressive cruelties, abetted by prejudice and folly, must inevitably prevail. None of this may ease our loss, situated as we may be in a corrupt society. But we may reflect that the world is not in itself inhospitable to political justice and its good. Our social world might have been different and there is hope for those at another time and place.

—— John Rawls, 2001

ABSTRACT

Stability and resilience are complementary attributes in John Rawls's most developed liberal system. In his early theory, stable cooperation is guaranteed by liberal society's single, shared conception of justice. Rawls's more pluralist theory introduces a possibility of cooperation without a consensus about justice, but it does not explain stable cooperation. If citizens are committed to a family of reasonable, liberal conceptions of justice, a pluralist liberal system can be stable because it is also resilient. Though pluralism increases discord in dynamic conditions, citizens can appeal to a shared family of ideals to adapt and restore allegiance. This adaptive capacity is the liberal system's form of resilience. In disrupting times, liberal resilience restores commitment to some view of justice recognized in the political culture. In a pluralist Rawlsian liberal system, resilience is the attribute—and the unnamed virtue—that secures a stable and just liberal order.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation advances a view of resilience as an unnamed attribute of Rawls's most developed liberal system.[1] I focus on the relation between the system's stability and its resilience. The aim is to show how stable cooperation is possible in conditions of justice pluralism—which some Rawlsian scholars consider a threat to stability. I argue that an expanded pluralism in a liberal system adds new forms of resilience that help stabilize cooperation in the face of disruptive change.

Resilience is an attribute of a physical or socio-cultural system that allows recovery from disruptions.[2] The concept is related, though not equivalent, to stability. Stability is a system's capacity to resist outside forces; resilience is its capacity to respond adaptively to disruptive effects.[3]

To date, the concept of resilience appears in an ever-increasing number of applications across many fields.[4] The term first appeared in systems theory in the 1950s and was originally identified with engineering and materials science.[5] C.S. Holling's (1973) work on resilient ecologies and natural systems prompted its broader adoption in the sciences.[6] Recent applications in the social sciences have led to its positive

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[1] I use 'Rawls's' instead of 'Rawls'' to denote the possessive; however, the secondary literature contains both usages.

[2] See B.H. Walker and David Salt, *Resilience Thinking: Sustaining Ecosystems and People in a Changing World*, (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2012), 1-5.

[3] See Ben Anderson, "What Kind of Thing is Resilience?" *Politics* 35, no.1 (2015): 60-66.

[4] Notable examples are disaster response and sustainable economic and socio-ecological models that emphasize designing systems to be "resilient to" threats.

[5] See Darrell Arnold, *Traditions of Systems Theory: Major Figures and Contemporary Developments.* (New York: Routledge 2014).

[6] See C. S. Holling, "Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4, no. 1 (1973) 1-23.

associations with safety and security, along with new ideas about safeguarding stability in dynamic social systems.

This project applies resilience theory to help explain how this system attribute can enhance stability in a 21ˢᵗ century liberal order. Resilience in political theory is comparatively under-theorized, but its relation to stability makes it undeniably relevant to understanding how a cooperative governing system could endure.[7] Insofar as political orders, like ecosystems, are dynamic systems of cooperation, they will encounter destabilizing events, and their ability to endure is likely due to some form of resilience. But if resilience is a mark of regimes that regain equilibrium after shock or societal disruptions, it is not always a positive or desirable system attribute. The term has no normative status outside a context. This point is important, because if the concept is rare in political theory, the phenomenon is not. And it may be that illiberal societies are as likely as any to have adaptive capacity.

But the question of how resilience could serve more worthy political aims deserves exploration. This project considers a role for resilience in ideal theorizing. Rawls's liberal thought conceives a political system that conforms to the requirements of social justice. If system resilience enhances liberalism's prospects for success and longevity, it is an important and morally salient attribute.

A Role for Resilience in a Rawlsian Liberal System

Two considerations have led me to focus on Rawls: the close relation between the

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[7] Political theorizing has, for centuries, addressed how regimes manage to withstand internal conflicts and war. For an example see Thomas Hobbes's *The Leviathan,* 1651. For commentary, see David Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Cultural Transformation*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

concepts of resilience and stability, and the unsettled question of how Rawls's latest

liberal system can be stable.[8]

Rawlsian liberalism is famous for prioritizing stable cooperation. For Rawls, stability

is a constituent of liberal justice. Over his career, he reconsiders his view of what

stabilizes liberal cooperation. In his early work, stable cooperation is conditioned on the

stability of *justice as fairness*, the shared conception of liberal justice he develops in *A

Theory of Justice* [hereafter TJ] (1971). The third section of TJ presents justice as fairness

as a self-stabilizing conception that inspires the allegiance and assures the cooperation of

reasonable liberal citizens. *Political Liberalism* [hereafter PL] (1993) marks a new and

significant development.[9] Rawls recasts his earlier "utopian" account of stability to

accommodate the fact of reasonable liberal pluralism.[10] In PL, liberal citizens cooperate

based on a stable "freestanding" consensus about justice that is strictly political but

compatible with their diverse private doctrines.[11] Importantly, both the original and the

revised accounts attribute stability to a single conception of justice citizens hold in

common.

Eventually, statements in Rawls's most developed work suggests that cooperation can

be based on plural conceptions of justice. In the expanded edition of PL he implies that

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[8] For convenience, I adopt the term 'liberal resilience.'

[9] The first edition of *Political Liberalism* (1993) was revised (1996, Paperback Edition) to include a new Introduction and a reprint of the essay "Reply to Habermas" (1995). The Expanded Edition (2005) contains prefaces to both the1993 and 1996 editions, the entire 1996 text, and a reprint of "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited" (1997). PL page references are to the Expanded edition (2005): J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* Expanded. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) unless otherwise noted.

[10] Rawls comments on the idea of a well-ordered society in PL as follows: "These conditions do not impose the unrealistic—indeed, the utopian—requirement that all citizens affirm the same comprehensive doctrine, but only, as in political liberalism, the same public conception of justice (*Rawls, PL,* 39).

[11] J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* Expanded Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) 10.

allegiance to a "family" of reasonable conceptions of justice can serve as a basis for cooperation.[12] Rawls never fully explains why such pluralism does not threaten stable cooperation; nor is it clear whether his repeated references to this family of conceptions means that stable cooperation no longer requires consensus on a single conception.

This issue is the starting point of my dissertation. I treat Rawls's comments about the family of liberal conceptions as describing a just liberal society that does not share a single conception of justice. This circumstance introduces a puzzle: how a stable liberal unity can be sustained amidst plural views about basic matters of justice. Disruption occurs even under ideal conditions in the form of dissent and culture change. Dynamic background conditions—technological innovation, cultural shifts, generational tensions— can cause discord and undermine political commitments. Rawls conceives stability as preserving the liberal order through the pressures of ordinary disruptions and over successive generations. It would seem too difficult for a society to stay unified while reckoning with its own pluralism about justice.

My view is that the family of liberal conceptions of justice enables continuously stable cooperation if ideas about liberal justice that unify citizens are adaptable to new conditions—which is to say, if they are resilient. Just as stable nutrient cycles support resilient species interactions in a healthy ecosystem, a stable family of views affords multiple bases for social unity in dynamic conditions. No ecosystem is static. A healthy one will be generally stable but resilient at specific levels. Ecosystem resilience is thus a helpful metaphor for the resilience of a stable liberal system because it exemplifies a

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[12] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 10.

complementary relation between resilience and stability. The pluralist liberal order can be a stable equilibrium if there is enough resilience at important levels in the system. If my argument is plausible, resilience is an unnamed virtue that enhances stable cooperation in Rawls's most pluralist liberal society.

Remarks on Method

Before proceeding, several research challenges deserve mention. The first is the scarcity of source material. At this writing, no sources address my topic, and very few are close to it. Constructing my view has required synthesizing two specialized and unrelated literatures—resilience theory and Rawlsian scholarship. Second, primary sources on resilience are found in disciplines outside philosophy, so I take some interpretive liberties in transposing a model of resilience in natural systems onto a liberal political system.[13]

The scope of ideal theory poses a further constraint: Rawls's ideal theory discusses responses to societal change at a high level of abstraction. He does not attend to non-ideal conditions. To work within his theory, I conceive disruptions the way Rawls would: as prompted by ordinary changes that could appear in ideal conditions of distributive justice. This idealization sets my analysis apart from the focus on adversity and episodic disasters in source material on social resilience. Likewise, by casting resilience in a positive light, my work goes against the grain of current discussions in International Relations scholarship, which interprets the concept of resilience as a tool of neoliberalism.[14] For my purposes, resilience is a system virtue, but I survey these more critical perspectives.

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[13] Such difficulties are reviewed in an in-depth study by Simin Davoudi, et al. in "Resilience: A Bridging Concept or a Dead End?" *Planning Theory and Practice* 13, no. 2 (2012): 299-333.

[14] See David Chandler, "Resilience Ethics: Responsibility and the Globally Embedded Subject," *Ethics & Global Politics* 6, no. 3 (2013): 1-20.

A final issue is that Rawls never used the term 'resilience,' so this project appears to import a new concept into the distinguished tradition of Rawlsian scholarship. I propose extensions of, but not corrections, to Rawls's work. My aim is to present a case that resilience is an unnamed virtue in his liberal system. If this conclusion is plausible, my project as reinforces the value of Rawls's developed views.[15]

Progression of Chapters I-V

Chapter I sets the stage for the project. I survey the growing attention to the concept of resilience and examples of its positive and negative valence. I review policy level applications and consider how several scholars criticize the concept as a tool of neoliberalism. Though the concept is sometimes appropriated for illiberal purposes, it has a valuable role in liberal theory. I then explain why Rawls's method and his emphasis on stability make his work a suitable focus for this project.

Chapter II is a conceptual analysis of resilience. I consider possible meanings, and then specify my working account. I compare the concepts stability and equilibrium as they are understood in resilience theory and in Rawls's idea of a *well-ordered society* and I propose an account of a family of liberal conceptions of justice as a stable equilibrium.[16]

Chapter III reviews Rawls's evolving arguments for stability from TJ to PL. I discuss how Rawls understands the role of a single, shared conception of justice, the stability of which stabilizes cooperation, to set up the opening for resilience in a system that

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[15] To demonstrate plausibility is a modest but reasonable ambition for this project. I hope it accords with what Rawls says about the specific (though important) aims of political philosophy. See his discussion in the Introductory section of John Rawls and Erin Kelly, ed., *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge: Belknap, Harvard Univ Press, 2001) 2-12.

[16] J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971) 396.

cooperates based on plural conceptions.

Chapter IV presents the latest view of liberal society marked by Rawls's shift toward *justice pluralism* as represented by a "family of reasonable liberal conceptions" (2005, 438). I consider arguments that justice pluralism is unstable, after which I make the case that Rawls's move to a more pluralist account is a strength of his view.

Finally, Chapter V presents my Resilience View. I argue that if stability is complemented by resilience, stable cooperation is possible in the latest, most pluralist account of liberal society. My argument defends the view that a Rawlsian liberal society can be stable and well-ordered around a liberal family of views. Over time, constructive adaptation. It thus becomes part of—and has a role in shaping—the political culture and ideals of liberal citizenship. I conclude that if Rawls's system exhibits resilience in this way, we can say that liberal resilience is a virtue and serves the aim of justice.

CHAPTER I. PROSPECTS FOR RESILIENT LIBERALISM

This chapter lays the groundwork for the philosophical perspective on resilience in later sections. It begins with an empirically informed survey of how resilience is conceived in various specialized applications. I review scholarly critics who point to its illiberal usage in international affairs. Though plausible, such objections do not diminish the prospects for a more positive, philosophical role for resilience in ideal theory. The following sections identify three distinctive features of Rawls's method: *constructivism, reflective equilibrium,* and *ideal theory* to show why a Rawlsian model is already suggestive of resilient system behavior. The chapter ends with a preliminary discussion of Rawlsian stability and anticipates a role for resilience as a liberal political ideal.

Emerging Interest in Resilience

The concept of system resilience has been gaining traction since the 1970's.[17] It originated in systems theory and has since been adopted in many specialized fields. In recent decades, an academic industry has arisen around the study of system resilience as adaptive response to change.[18] This literature shows considerable variation in the term's definitions and applications. Apart from field-specific meanings, several features make up a general picture of system resilience. For all accounts, resilience is a system-preserving capacity. Resilient systems weather disruptions by undergoing changes without losing key functions. This capacity involves more than a basic ability to change. Resilience is observable as responses to non-trivial disruptive events in a system's

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[17] See B.H. Walker and David Salt, *Resilience Thinking,* Chaps 1-2.

[18] See Mary E. Power, "Resilience Practice: Building Capacity to Absorb Disturbance and Maintain Function." *BioScience* 63.7, 2013, 596-97.

environment; it appears as specific capacity to withstand them by changing adaptively. The result is not a new system, but an altered one that is better suited to existing conditions.

How resilience shows up in specific system behaviors will vary by context. Like stability, it is a degreed concept, so the context also determines how to measure it, as well as how much a given resilient system can change. A common view is that resilience is marked by a system's "bounce-back" to a previous state after a disturbance. Some accounts expect resilient systems to undergo radical shifts resulting in a "new state."[19] Others describe a progression of permanent adaptive changes that allow systems to cope with ever-greater magnitudes of disturbance.[20] On this latter interpretation, resilient adaptations help stabilize a system by making it stronger, or better resourced, against future disruption.

Conceptions of resilience also differ in how they treat the relative importance of response time over magnitude of disturbance. Some usages ignore such details and identify resilience as whatever responses preserve the system at a given time. These variations, along with increasing field-specific applications, mean that no single definition captures all its meanings or effects.

A Variety of Applications

Resilience is "a capacity possessed by systems as diverse as ecosystems, social systems,

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[19] Walker and Salt, "Resilience Thinking," 1, 30.
[20] Holling, "Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems," 3-4.

or economic systems."[21] 'Resilient system' can refer to a system of any size in a variety of circumstances—be it a system of neurotransmitters in the brain, a national economy or a planetary biosphere.[22] It can apply to contexts as small as the individual personality or household, or contained ecosystems such as a pond or lake.[23] Extended instances can involve socio-ecological entities such as cities and economies.[24] 'Planetary resilience' denotes the earth's ability to absorb internal and external disturbances and remain within a "safe operating space".[25]

For ecosystems, resilience assures continuities over time and is understood as "an ecosystem's ability to keep from being irrevocably degraded."[26] To illustrate, organisms acting as interrelating parts of the ecosystem exist in dynamic flux, so redundant species and functions are resilience indicators. Redundant species fill gaps when needed and could take the form of multiple fish species that support riparian birds. If one species declines after some disturbance (such as a drought), others fill the food source niche. Engineering applications typically identify resilience as structural flexibility—a bridge or a building that "can return to a baseline state after being disturbed," whereas emergency response planners emphasize the speed of restoring critical infrastructure after an

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[21] Madison Powers, "Sustainability and Resilience," in *The Encyclopedia of the Anthropocene,"* eds. Dominick A. DellaSala, and Michael I. Goldstein 4 (Oxford: Elsevier, 2018): 29-37.

[22] Powers, "Sustainability and Resilience,"29-37.

[23] Resilience as an attribute of the individual person has important implications in healthcare contexts. Mental health experts identify psychological (or emotional) resilience as a primary index of an individual's ability to cope with illness, trauma, or loss.

[24] See Powers, "Sustainability and Resilience," 6-7.

[25] The "Resilient Earth System" describes threshold necessary for the survival of human life and forms of living essential to human well-being. (See Powers, "Sustainability and Resilience, 6-7).

[26] Powers, 6-7.

earthquake or a flood.[27] In a business context, resilience often refers to security measures (such as backups of resources or data) that ensure continuous operation in emergencies. The above uses highlight two key elements: continuity and system recovery in the face of disruptive change.

Perspectives on Change

The concept's widening reach shows why resilience is a timely research subject. What began as a technical term in the physical sciences is now common parlance in many areas of social research. The striking part about this contagion is that it reveals growing acceptance of regularized, significant change. As an example, consider that for decades, *sustainability* has been a guiding principle of conservation efforts, with occasional references to ecosystem resilience. Recently, the focus has shifted to *ecosystem resilience* with interesting implications.[28] Sustainability approaches aim to limit anthropogenic impacts and ensure renewability of resources. 'Sustainability' denotes the capacity of certain system features to endure and is thus a stability notion, while 'resilience' specifies continuous functioning against a moving baseline. Sustainability strategies balance resource depletion and replenishment to achieve a relative stasis; resilience strategies treat disruption as given and systems as fluid and evolving, and thus emphasize system adaptation to protect vital ecosystem functions.[29] The shift toward resilience also reflects a realization that sustainability efforts fall short. Grim statistics about progressively

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[27] A. Zolli, and A.M. Healy. *Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back*, Free Press (2012) 6.

[28] Sibyl Hanna Brunner and Adrienne Grêt-Regamey, "Policy Strategies to Foster the Resilience of Mountain Social-Ecological Systems under Uncertain Global Change." *Environmental Science & Policy* 66 (2016): 129.

[29] See Powers, "Sustainability and Resilience," 6-7.

degrading systems are well-documented.[30]

Meanwhile, new research is altering the picture of ecological change.[31] The behavior of natural systems is non-linear and less predictable than was thought only a decade ago. Experts increasingly regard drastic and episodic events—disease, sudden species disappearance, weather-related crop failures—as normal, and thus focus on dealing with ecological change as opposed to preventing it.[32] Even as sustainability advocates resist "giving up" the fight to eliminate threats, *building ecosystem resilience* is gaining support as a more promising approach that is reconciled to human-caused change and dynamic ecological complexity. [33]

Such efforts are having positive effects.[34] Research in international aid and

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[30] Bill McKibben wrote one of the earlier non-scientific books to name overconfidence in predictive climate models as a primary reason for inaction regarding dangerous anthropogenic climate effects or "global warming." (See Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (New York: Random House, 1989)).

[31] Irrespective of human impacts, ecosystems do not remain as static, as some sustainability models presuppose. Focusing exclusively on curtailing human activity shows a misunderstanding of system behavior. Efforts to "sustain" a time-sliced picture are also misguided because human lifestyles are also evolving. (See Guillaume Deffuant, "Preface," In *Viability and Resilience of Complex Systems: Concepts, Methods and Case Studies from Ecology and Society*, ed. Guillaume Deffuant and Nigel G. Gilbert (Berlin, Heidelberg: SpringerLink, 2011) v-viii.

[32] Shorter-term management is moving away from trying to conserve systems *in situ* to preserving key functions and ensuring their recovery and rebounding. Longer-term efforts to prevent degradation by engineering (or legislating) sustainability are giving way to pursuing resilient adaptation as a management objective. (See Guillaume Deffuant, *Viability and Resilience,* v-viii.)

[33] Deffuant, v-viii.

[34] The environmental case is one of many showing why interest in resilient systems has carried over into socio-cultural contexts. Contemporary human systems mirror the volatility of natural systems. Resilience has crucial importance when mass-scale interdependent networks of human cooperation keep social systems in state of flux. Rapid technological and cultural changes can generate innovation, but also increase vulnerability to episodic disruptions (natural disasters, financial downturns, political upheavals, war, and public health crises). The costs and frequency of adverse events has accelerated the pursuit of social adaptation models. In many security-related agencies and NGOs, "building resilience" is supplanting older approaches to risk management in favor of adaptive capacity as a lens for understanding and preparing for upheavals. Studies on adaptation inform system design and take stock of system strengths against disruptions of whatever kind. The resultant literature affords new ways to identify, measure, and enhance resilience in a variety of social systems. (See Marjolein Spaans and Bas Waterhout, "Building up Resilience in Cities Worldwide – Rotterdam as Participant in the 100 Resilient Cities Programme," *Cities* 61 (2017): 109-16.

development has adopted metrics that include "community resilience indicators" to guide program design. Likewise, the concept of resilience has prompted new insights in clinical psychology, especially in relation to the recovery of military veterans from trauma.[35]

The foregoing are indicators of how proponents of resilience regard change. Disruptions are not seen as anomalies but ordinary background conditions for human systems. A resilience-orientation recognizes the value of planning for novel adaptations. The main driver, of course, is safeguarding valued human systems. Enhancing institutional ability to cope with uncertainty and complexity improves peoples' lives. And its association with triumph over adversity gives resilience special appeal in the present cultural moment.[36] Every generation regards its own era as volatile and uncertain, but few have seen the scope or velocity of changes now occurring in the span of just a few years.[37] In such highly dynamic conditions, pursuing resilience seems a practically rational aim for decision-makers and citizens alike.

Positive and Negative Valence

'Resilience' is often presented favorably, giving the impression that it has normative force or is somehow intrinsically positive. But the concept has no positive or negative valence outside of some context. Its normative status (if it has any) will be linked to whatever other aims it serves. Some dangerous states of affairs come to mind when we consider familiar resilient systems—epidemics, famines, wars, and systems of

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[35] See Mary Joy Garcia-Dia, et al., "Concept Analysis: Resilience," *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing* 27, no. 6 (2013): 264-70.

[36] See Robin James, *Resilience & Melancholy: Pop Music, Feminism, Neoliberalism*, (Washington: Zero Books, 2016) 1-172.

[37] Commentators have described the 21st century as an age of shocks. See Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine and the Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2017).

domination and exploitation. Historically, slave-holding societies have exhibited resilience. Political history is a long tale of corrupt systems that have been highly resilient (such as *Apartheid* in South Africa, which lasted for most of the twentieth century). Such regimes have shown remarkable endurance through dramatic global changes.

Even so, resilience in vital systems frequently makes people better off, and in essential systems (global food networks) it is a crucial metric of security. Henrik Thorén (2014) touts its epistemic benefits, citing the potential for resilience to bridge, integrate, and unify specialties for trans-disciplinary problem-solving.[38] Targeting resilience can align related research: resilient clean water provision systems draw from multiple specialties to "quantify the boundary conditions of nutrient loads that define safety parameters."[39] Likewise, "Resilient Earth" research seeks to define thresholds for sustaining life within hydrological, biodiversity, and climate indexes. Here resilience is taken to be an instrumental good that helps ensure the planet will not "veer away from the Holocene-like condition."[40] In such contexts, 'resilience' is a success term, but its status as normatively good can only be understood instrumentally.[41]

Politics and Resilience

Notwithstanding its downsides, a concept like resilience is relevant to and acutely needed in the political domain. Models of government, the norms of public agencies—can be more or less resilient. Political, social, and ecological systems operate interdependently.

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[38] See Henrik Thorén, "Resilience as a Unifying Concept," *International Studies in The Philosophy of Science* 28, no. 3 (2014): 303-24.

[39] See Powers, "Sustainability and Resilience," 7.

[40] Powers, 7.

[41] See Avery Kolers, "Resilience as a Political Ideal," *Ethics, Policy & Environment: A Journal of Philosophy and Geography* 19, no.1 (2017): 91-7.

Instability can damage trust and shake public confidence in a system's basic institutions. Insofar as government is the usual addressee of responsibility for buffering harms from shocks, community resilience is tied to the adaptive capacity of public agencies on which they depend. A focus on adaptive capacity brings to light needed information about nested systems and their interactions. Protecting stressed biophysical systems requires specialized knowledge but will ultimately be enacted politically. Disruptions to food systems—by disease or crop failure, can destabilize local governance. Effective wildfire control or timely responses to declining pollinator species will test decision systems, potentially adding political consequences to the list of challenges.

If disruptions in human systems are matters of political concern, how institutions handle them will bear upon their perceived legitimacy. Insofar as public agencies are called to act during events like floods or regional power outages, their reputation and credibility suffer if they mishandle a crisis. When a concrete disturbance, such as a hurricane, alters forms of living on a large scale, it can exacerbate social injustices and threaten public order.[42] Global examples abound in which unexpected resource scarcities reduce human well-being and undermine basic rights.

The above suggests a resilience mindset should apply not only to policy but also to political structures and how agencies generally function. Resilience in institutions can be a specified political value. Policymaking can explicitly aim for and cultivate resilience by prioritizing the right research, investing in new technologies and showing a readiness to amend as needed.

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[42] This situation is evidenced by lingering effects of Hurricane Katrina.

Resilience-thinking in Policy and Practice

Despite its sparse treatment in political theory, resilience is becoming an ordinary term in public policy, and *resilience-thinking* is re-shaping planning agendas.[43] As a stated aim in planning, resilience-thinking sees changes, both slow and abrupt, as inevitable. At the policy level, agencies dedicated to public safety and disaster mitigation are notable examples trending this way. Resilience appears frequently on the lists of harm mitigation objectives—especially in government, financial and technology sectors, where it is prized as a form of insurance in vital systems.[44] Such planning treats the dynamics of complex social and physical systems as interdependent and looks for opportunities that follow disruptions. Crises often prompt a release of resources to preserve normalcy; resilience-oriented planning seeks to use these resources for improvements. Walker and Salt note the optimistic tone of this thinking: "it is following periods of crisis that institutions and the connections between them are most open to dramatic transformation."[45]

A variation on resilience-thinking is to conceive it as an activity—as in *resilience practice*, an idea first expressed in ecological sciences. Understood as a practice, prioritizing resilience commits public agencies to routinely monitor the unique features of systems and their own distinctive coping capacities. Walker (2013) identifies two central themes that underpin resilience practice: *thresholds* and *adaptive cycles*. The first considers what shifts in a system are possible, and where the thresholds are between

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[43] Melinda Benson and Ahjond Garmestani, "Can We Manage for Resilience? Integration of Resilience Thinking into Natural Resource Management in the United States," *Environmental Management* 48, no. 3 (2011): 392.

[44] Powers, "Sustainability and Resilience," 8-9.

[45] Walker and Salt, "Resilience Thinking," 1-2.

different "stability domains."[46] Thresholds are tipping points beyond which the system must alter future practices and enter a new adaptive cycle. Likewise, *feedback changes* help conform *adaptive cycles* to thresholds. These and other resilience-related concepts help planners create inventories of information about system behavior. Resilience practices assume regular shocks will bring irreversible change, making it imperative to plan beyond customary emergency measures. Agencies in coastal communities, for example, monitor resilience to "regularly occurring extreme weather events and sea level rise associated with climate change."[47] Practices involve engineering changes to the built environment (e.g., levies and sea walls) or restricting building in low-lying areas. The practice attends to details such as emergency preparedness plans and creation of well-coordinated evacuation routes."[48] Where such strategies are already routine, they are being reconceived as *resilience building*—monitoring time to recovery and benchmarking adaptations that work well.

If resilience-thinking is a favored management approach for public agencies, the trend reflects the general attitude that for valued systems, preparing for and adapting to change makes more sense than trying to resist it. Walker and Salt (2012) offer a simple explanation: "at the heart of resilience-thinking is a very simple notion: things change and to ignore or resist this change is to increase our vulnerability and forego emerging opportunities."[49]

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[46] Walker and Salt, "Resilience Thinking," 1-2.

[47] Powers, "Sustainability and Resilience,) 7.

[48] See Powers,7-8.

[49] B.H. Walker and David E. Salt. *Resilience Practice Building Capacity to Absorb Disturbance and Maintain Function* (Washington, DC: Island Press/Center for Resource Economics, 2012) n. pag.

Beyond Optimizing

A primary presupposition of resilience-thinking is that conventional approaches to managing systems amidst change often fail over the long term. Walker and Salt (2012) see this problem as stemming from the way recent humans tend to model the world.[50] They point to an "optimizing paradigm" which seeks to optimize components of a system in isolation of the rest of the system. Optimization aims to move a system into an optimal state, and then hold it there to maximize benefits. This approach is proving inadequate to deal with dynamic system complexity: there is no sustainable "optimal" state for an ecosystem or a social system, and pursuing it reduces overall value for societies. For example, optimizing for just a few variables reflects an outdated belief that ecological systems fluctuate around a single equilibrium. The ensuing approach involves isolating a component of the system (a species) and then seeking to control it in a way that maximizes some chosen output or performance —in this case, species population stability. Periodic adjustments (conservation measures) aim at preserving this maximum. But optimizing cannot be sustained for extended time periods because it misunderstands how complex systems ecologies adapt. When only part of a system is locked into a constant holding pattern, this state causes other variables in the system (invasive species) to adapt around the changes. These additional variables thus begin operating beyond our control. Once we lose this control, the system is more vulnerable to unanticipated effects.

Consider the example of consumer culture and environmental degradation. Historically, environmental problems were blamed on overpopulation. A history-making

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[50] Walker and Salt, "Resilience Practice," n. pag.

report from the first transnational conference on sustainability, *Our Common Future*

(1983), named overpopulation as the major culprit in rampant deforestation, the decline

of fisheries, species loss, soil depletion and other globally significant impacts. Birthrate

reduction programs rapidly followed.[51] But in subsequent decades, emerging economies

have proven the axiom that prosperity reduces population and increases consumption.

Now a new variable—overconsumption, has replaced overpopulation as the single most

environmentally damaging human activity.[52] For this reason, sustainability researchers

have begun to argue that adopting a resilience approach is overdue and happening too

slowly.

But why is optimizing still widely practiced? If a shift to resilience-thinking seems

critical, it is no easy task. Often the barriers are attitudinal. Affluent societies have a

comparatively high social discount rate. They tend to devalue what happens in the longer

term and expect the future to bring technological solutions. This bias works against an

ability to shift thinking until a major stress event brings painful costs. Even then, the

immediate future is prioritized. Thus, resilience-thinking—where it is taking hold,

represents a major departure from existing reactive approaches.[53] Though it is becoming

more mainstream, Walker and Salt maintain that a dismantling of optimizing responses to

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[51] See World Commission on Environment and Development. *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[52] Another example is a "command and control" approach to environmental policy that uses mechanisms of control to optimize some expected return. Brian Walker (2012) and other resilience theorists deny that it is possible to keep a system going in this sustainable optimal state. The approach regulates a system to continually maximize a return but in isolation from system-wide variables.

[53] Some have compared the adoption of resilience thinking to the paradigm shifts identified by Thomas Kuhn. (See T. S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

change will likely require more severe crises.[54]

Illiberal and Neoliberal Resilience

The background above gives a general sense of the terrain of resilience-thinking that we can take as motivated by public welfare. The discussion now turns to what some theorists consider to be a misappropriation of the concept and the resulting costs.

In the field of International Relations, resilience has been explicitly embraced as a priority at the state level. It has also inspired a sizable scholarly literature critiquing its illiberal purposes.[55] Much of this scholarship focuses on the popularity of resilience in international development, humanitarian aid and disaster reduction. In the last decade, the United Nations has adopted resilience as an organizing principle to guide programs in communities burdened by war and systemic violence.[56] Phillipe Bourbeau (2018) is critical of what he calls an "a priori normative bias" that casts resilience as a positive adaptation to a negative threat. He rejects the premise that resilience is unqualifiedly desirable in these contexts, claiming it should instead "remain normatively open and [avoid] any such analytical closure."[57] In particular, he denounces simplistic understandings of resilience that distort problem assessments. As an example, terrorism response places heavy emphasis on bouncing back to normalcy. Attacks in recent decades

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[54] Walker and Salt, "Resilience Practice," n. pag.

[55] Phillipe Bourbeau (2018) notes the scholarship has not heightened attention enough to motivate a full theory of political resilience. See P. Borbeau, "Resilience and International Politics: Premises, Debates, Agenda," *International Studies Review* 17, no. 3. (2015): 374-395.

[56] Bourbeau points to several initiatives including the UN Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015); the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report (2012); the United Nations Development Programme on Human Resilience (2011); and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Platform for Drought Disaster Resilience (2013).

[57] Bourbeau, "Resilience and International Politics," 5.

have launched an entire industry of research on resilience, understood as rapidity of response to minimize harms.[58] Counter-terrorism efforts treat resilience as a binary notion or an all-or nothing state of affairs: a community either is or is not resilient to terrorist attacks, where resilience is assessed from the standpoint of military and intelligence sectors. What this perspective ignores are variable degrees of resilience in sub-systems (transportation systems, utilities, communication networks, and emergency medical response teams) that might matter in a terrorist attack. As Bourbeau explains, this dichotomous interpretation only heightens risk by creating a disconnect between "the complexity of the contemporary social world" and the narrow aim of military preparedness.[59]

Bourbeau's objection amounts to little more than a plea for a more developed understanding of what resilience requires. But other theorists see more troubling trends in normative theorizing. *Resilience ethics* has recently come into usage in international and global studies. The idea conceives resilience as a morally normative aim for policy and governance, with the implication that individuals, too, should cultivate personal resilience to threats and disappointments. Julian Reid (2013) thinks this narrative disempowers individuals as citizens. He reminds that the idea of security has historically been used to justify illiberal governance and suspects that a shift in emphasis from security to resilience is not merely semantic: prioritizing resilience promotes "a fundamental change

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[58] Bourbeau contends that policy statements, white papers, or security statements about counter terrorism are almost guaranteed to mention, if not foreground, resilience. (See Bourbeau, "Resilience and International Politics," 6).

[59] Borbeau, 6.

in conceptions of the relationship of human beings to danger."[60] Avery Kolers (2017) agrees that resilience discourses help create a general sense of precariousness and make erosions of freedom appear more legitimate.[61] Along these lines, Brad Evans and Julian Reid (2014) point to a "resilience-neoliberalism nexus."[62] The emphasis on risk to and care for the self is a line of reasoning that favors neoliberal economic policies and tolerance for inequality: "beneath resilience lurks a dehumanizing political agenda…because resilience separates those with independent means of security from those who are asked to live up to their responsibilities by accepting the conditions of their own vulnerability."[63]

Pierre Filion (2013) sees no coincidence in the growing interest in resilience alongside a what he describes as neoliberal transformation of the state and society. For Filion, the neoliberal environment is portrayed as risk-intensive—which heightens the urgency of security and promotes the idea that governments must prioritize imminent dangers. Thus, "cloaked as a society-wide approach to risk mitigation and readiness," resilience policies appear justified because they are "depicted as transcending social divisions" in protecting society from perils.[64] As Filion explains, the core problem is that resilience policies deliver far less than what people really need. "If political resilience is focused on prevention of and response to cataclysms, the range of risks addressed by

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[60] Bourbeau, "Resilience and International Politics," 6.

[61] Kolers, "Resilience as a Political Ideal," 91-7.

[62] B. Evans, and J. Reid, "Dangerously Exposed: The Life and Death of the Resilient Subject," Resilience: International Policies, Practices and Discourses 1, no. 2 (2013): 1-16.

[63] B. Evans, and J. Reid, "Dangerously Exposed,"14.

[64] Pierre Filion, "Fading Resilience? Creative Destruction, Neoliberalism and Mounting Risks," *Sapiens* 6, no.1 (2013): 23.

resilience is narrower than those covered by welfare state programs."[65] In this sense,

resilience supports a "lean-state neoliberal ideal" and a "minimalist state that pares down

its efforts to focus on core functions."[66] Even as ordinary vulnerabilities (personal

economic collapse, job loss, healthcare privations, and personal crises) become chronic,

they are increasingly regarded as outside the state's primary purview. Filion is convinced

that an emphasis on resilience substitutes disaster remediation for "broader risk-abating

redistributive programs of the welfare state."[67] All the while, the discourses of resilience

are good state publicity, as they foster a perception that the state is effectively responding

to threats. Kolers echoes the objection to the "disciplining focus on the resilience of

persons and communities to enhanced disasters brought on by the corporatist state"[68] and

he casts the interest in resilience as a "neoliberal response to risk."[69]

<p align="center">*Resilience Ethics*</p>

Perhaps the most damning criticism is David Chandler's (2014) analysis of the

implications of resilience ethics for global justice. Chandler sees resilience ethics as a

reaction to globalization. He forecasts "a post-liberal world in the making" in which

danger prevention eclipses key liberal ideas such as the "rights of autonomy and

sovereign agency."[70] Presented as a normative requirement for societies within global

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[65] Filion, "Fading Resilience?" 23.

[66] Filion, 23.

[67] Filion, 24.

[68] Kolers, "Resilience as a Political Ideal," 91.

[69] Filion, "Fading Resilience?" 24.

[70] Chandler's conclusions can sound hyperbolic, as in his claim that "resilience should not be seen merely as a transformation of liberalism, but as a rejection of it." (Chandler "Resilience Ethics: Responsibility and the Globally Embedded Subject," 216.)

systems, resilience distracts from pressing economic needs in favor of risk mitigation, while promoting the idea that citizens are helplessly dependent on the state. Meanwhile, the valorization of personal resilience dilutes any sense of agency in responding to suffering at a distance. Resilience ethics frames the global subject as embedded in a complex global system that is impervious to individual choices.[71] The result, according to Chandler, is a re-shaping of the self-concepts of otherwise independent-minded liberal citizens. Reid (2012) also sees a genuine threat to liberal autonomy in "discourses of finitude" according to which political agency is no longer an ideal, but resilience and connectivity are prized. [72] Reid argues that neoliberalism "pathologizes" security, by which he means it is presented as if it is medically necessary. Citizens are wholly dependent on the state for security against threats defined by the state. Chandler adds that "hierarchical liberal internationalist constructions of the 1990s" are moving toward "more inclusive understandings of ethical responsibility for global problems."[73] But this new inclusivity amounts to assigning responsibility to everyone and agency to no one. The idea of limited global responsibility undermines liberal ideas of international and global justice. Resilience ethics emphasizes "relational embeddedness," which allows states— and especially powerful Western countries—to locate blame for human problems on entire systems. Societies move away from meaningful transnational cooperation, and citizenship responsibilities are viewed as indirect or non-existent. Affluent states can dismiss harms to foreign others as side effects of a global market and as "caused by our

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[71] Chandler, "Resilience Ethics," 216.

[72] B. Evans, and J. Reid, "Dangerously Exposed,"14.

[73] Chandler, "Resilience Ethics," 216.

associational connectivity in a complex and globalized world."[74] If "relational embeddedness" is the ground for global obligations, then individual citizens have responsibilities to the extent that they have agency in creating and impacting large systems that cause harm—which is to say, they have very few.[75] Chandler decries the ease with which states write off inequalities as unintended but unavoidable consequences of system dynamics. [76] By supporting these narratives, resilience discourses help concentrate power and conceal uneven contributions to suffering, a stance that neutralizes the rhetorical force of "modernist rationalities" that once spurred liberal reforms.[77] The complex global network encourages off-loading moral responsibility from the individual to the state, thereby discouraging individual efforts reform domestic political structures and institutions.

Interestingly, Reid blames the life sciences for "the importance of resilience and connectivity as requisite capacities for the development of neoliberal subjectivity."[78] He decries the "debasing" effect of transferring ecological discourses about the finitude of life to the social world.[79] The neoliberal subject is denied "the capacity to demand of the regime that governs it freedom from the dangers which it perceives as threatening"—meaning, ordinary economic and social problems.[80] On this point, Jonathon Josephs (2013) invokes Foucault to argue that resilience is "rolling-out neoliberal

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[74] Chandler, "Resilience Ethics," 216.

[75] Chandler, 216.

[76] Chandler, 216.

[77] Chandler, 216.

[78] Evans and Reid, "Dangerously Exposed,"14.

[79] Evans and Reid, 14.

[80] Evans and Reid, 14.

governmentality."[81] The hope, on his view, is that communities will begin to lose interest in resilience, and "better still, they might even show an interest in a much more inspiring French word – *resistance*."[82]

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Resilience as a Pop-Culture Neoliberal Narrative

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Not surprisingly, resilience has also found a foothold in popular culture and prompted similar worries. Robin James (2016) advances a feminist criticism of the concept's support for the dominant narratives of neoliberalism.[83] In a cultural context, resilience implies bouncing back after a perturbation—which means that it calls for coping, withstanding, or accommodating the kind of disruptions often associated with grievous social injustices. James finds evidence in popular song lyrics that are often a display of surviving damaging circumstances. The lyrics, she argues, are attractive in societies that long for and have come to rely on a picture of the prevailing conditions as survivable. They promote *neoliberal resilience,* a mandate to cope with trauma and loss and to visibly overcome damage. James contends that groups those most likely to be subjected to this requirement are disempowered and coping at the margins. On James's account, marginalized communities in the current "late capitalist" system are encouraged to demonstrate resilience and rewarded with adulation because doing so is thought to boost society's resilience.[84] Stories of triumph are praised and serve to distract from real problems. Commenting on this idea, Winters (2016) adds "the commitment to and

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[81] Jonathan Joseph, "Resilience as Embedded Neoliberalism: A Governmentality Approach," Resilience 1, no. 1 (2013): 11.

[82] Joseph, "Resilience as Embedded Neoliberalism," 11.

[83] See Robin James, *Resilience & Melancholy: Pop Music, Feminism, Neoliberalism*, (Washington: Zero Books, 2016) 1-172.

[84] James, "*Resilience & Melancholy,"* 141.

performance of [resiliency] is the main way in which the boundary between life and death, livable and unlivable lives, and recognition and abjection gets redrawn in the era of late capitalism."[85] The costs come as the "resilient subject defines itself over and against those bodies, selves and communities that are associated with death, loss and damage."[86]

James sees *neoliberal resilience* as promulgating a fantasy of empowerment where it does not exist. She proposes an alternate view of resistance as a type of melancholy— which is also, she notes, a mode of resilience—though not a kind that supports neoliberal aims. There are "many ways to deal with damage and trauma, and people frequently recover, survive, cope and flourish in ways that don't adequately support hegemony."[87] James calls for a more emancipatory kind of resilience that would not deny the real pain and trauma of oppressive conditions but would instead frame these as threats requiring reform.

Responding to Worries About Neoliberalism

The critics of resilience make a strong case showing how resilience in a neoliberal global system could be a harm presented in the guise of a benefit. The warnings provide compelling cautionary insights about non-ideal conditions—what can go wrong if resilience is embraced by states with illiberal agendas. Especially salient is the observation that a resilience narrative can plausibly shape citizens' relationship to the state in ways that amount to reduced security and individual agency. Yet as Bourbeau

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[85] Joseph Winters, "Resilience and Melancholy: Pop Music, Feminism, Neoliberalism," *Feminist Review* (2016): 24.

[86] Winters, "Resilience and Melancholy," 24.

[87] James, "*Resilience & Melancholy,*" 127.

notes, the vast literature on resilience deserves to be more than a "subheading within the broader spectrum of political studies on (neo)liberalism and governmentality."[88] He points to a kind of performative contradiction in the critics' methods. "By contending that resilience is in essence a product of neoliberal doctrine at the service of states these approaches to resilience do not sufficiently distance themselves from the discourses and practices of neoliberal democracies."[89] They reinscribe the very thing they critique by accepting a single conception—the state's—of what resilience is. In so doing, they reproduce what they criticize, namely "the intention and capacity of states to dictate the terms of debate and to define how a concept should be understood and employed."[90] The criticisms ignore more attractive possibilities in which the state could support community resilience by "steering, not rowing" from state level to create more successful, collaborative alliances. If neoliberalism is the real threat, perhaps resisting it could involve *social resilience*, "the capacity of groups of people bound together in an organization, class, racial group, community, or nation to sustain and advance their well-being in the faces of challenges to it."[91] If political applications of resilience are a jumbled affair, its misapplications do not eliminate more attractive prospects for its relevance to political philosophy.

Re-thinking Political Resilience

My position is that the idea of resilient systems merits more attention at the level of

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[88] Bourbeau, "Resilience and International Politics," 7.

[89] Bourbeau, 7.

[90] Bourbeau, 7.

[91] P. A. Hall and M. Lamont, *Social Resilience in the Neo-liberal Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 2.

theory. Resilience can help illuminate what it might mean for systems to flourish in dynamically complex conditions. But political philosophers are latecomers to the conversation. The uncertainties of globalization are the impetus for the present interest in international affairs. Resilience in public policy is not strictly about politics—it is issue-specific, concerned with capacity-building and only indirectly about models of governance. Some re-thinking is in order about how the concept of resilience and political theory should mix.

What it would mean for a political system to have resilience built into the structure itself—is open to consideration. A political system includes "the formal and informal political processes by which decisions are made concerning the use, production and distribution of resources in any given society."[92] These processes include institutions that determine how leaders are appointed/elected and their roles and responsibilities, as well as the models for executive and legislative bodies, political representation, and state accountability. A resilient political system could transform the above in response to exogenous and endogenous patterns of change. It could "adapt to, and evolve responses to, major internal and external events, such as large inflows of migration, war, financial crisis, rapid changes in demographics, environmental change."[93] Resilience reveals itself in results, but it could be a commitment of governance and adopted in advance with forethought.

Bourbeau's conceptual analysis contains several propositions I consider relevant to my project: (1) that resilience has a dark and a bright side, (2) that knowledge about

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[92] See web resource *Complexity Labs*, http://complexitylabs.io.
[93] *Complexity Labs*, http://complexitylabs.io.

resilience is contingent, and (3) that resilience is a socio-historically informed, dynamic, and varied process.[94] Societal changes that are classified as risky or adverse are, in some respects, social constructs. From the variety of usages and criticisms, I conclude that theorizing system resilience in the political domain will need to ask deeper questions about justification and the aims served. Bourbeau rightly notes that "how a society, a group, or an individual adjusts to a disturbance, or a series of internal/external shocks is deeply influenced by past trajectories and decisions."[95] I proceed with the initial idea that if resilience is indeed a socio-historically informed, dynamic process, then its role will need to be justified and fit collective memory and political culture.

Resilience and Liberal Theory

For three centuries liberal thought has guided constitutional democracies and held its appeal through dramatic social and cultural changes. Its variations share a common root—the hope in what is realizable by a commitment to liberty and equality. Freed from illegitimate political impediments, individuals can pursue lives of value while cooperating to align private ends with the shared aim of social justice. How and whether liberal societies can endure through the challenges of a new century is uncertain. It seems reasonable to wonder whether a liberal apparatus can survive shifting social and material landscapes. The question invites philosophical inquiry into how an idealized liberalism meets dynamic conditions.

This is not to say that the need for something like resilience is unknown in political

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[94] Bourbeau, "Resilience and International Politics," 7.
[95] Bourbeau, 6.

philosophy—any functional order will require the capacity for coping with change that the term 'function' implies. Canonical theories, especially in the liberal tradition, have captured the idea of system resilience in other language about reform, adaptation, security, and so forth. But, insofar as resilience scholarship is oriented toward dealing with crises, the intersection of resilience and ideal liberal political theory is new terrain. Distinctive features of resilient system behavior could go beyond basic ideas of reform and social change. My work is aimed at getting at these differences using the well-known example of Rawlsian liberalism.

Rawls states that his work is situated in the liberal tradition and traces the historical origin of liberalism to 16th and 17th centuries—the period of the Reformation and its aftermath, during which Europe was plagued by long controversies over religious toleration.[96] The central problems of liberalism were first articulated in the early modern period. For the moderns, the idea of the good was explicitly accounted for by religion. But the Reformation had already fomented so much religious strife that "with their profound divisions, the essential conditions of a viable and just society" were not indicated.[97] Intolerance had long been accepted "as a condition of social order and stability" so "the weakening of that belief help[ed] to clear the way for liberal institutions."[98] The beginnings of liberal thought brought new challenges to absolutist forms of government. British and European theorists took up the question of how it is possible to justify political authority over and coercion of citizens by entrenched

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[96] Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* xxvi.

[97] Rawls, xxvi.

[98] Rawls, xxvi.

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aristocracy, the monarchy, and the Church.[99] What is now known as *classical liberalism*

declared the equality of all people and their entitlement to basic rights and freedoms. The

primary project of liberalism thus concerned how to construct legitimate forms of

governance that would assure equality and basic liberties of autonomous subjects while

preserving peace and security. The foundations for this inquiry were established by the

social contractarian views of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau (and later Kant), who located

legitimacy in the form of a contract between sources of authority and the governed

according to which basic rights and protections could be guaranteed.

Liberalism's early philosophical roots can be found in the work of philosophers who

believed, unlike their medieval forebears, that the requirements of moral life arose out of

human nature "as reason or as feeling, and from the conditions of our life in society."[100]

Such views presuppose the guiding authority of reason and take it that humans possess

the capacity to conceive of and comprehend moral value. The key preoccupations of

liberal politics follow from these ideas. Autonomous and equal citizens are entitled to

independence from external sources of authority in forming and their values and

commitments. Accordingly, liberalism's many iterations have sought to order politics so

reasoning agents can think and live freely while finding enough common ground to

cooperate under shared forms of governance. To be legitimate, political power and

coercion will require the type of justification that would satisfy free and equal liberal

subjects.

The confidence in secular progress that was emblematic of the Enlightenment outlook

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[99] Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* xxvi.

[100] Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* xxvi.

is often associated with liberal thought. Yet invariably, in establishing rules to live by, a polity of free agents will reckon with the problem of reasonable disagreement about justice. Well-known versions of liberalism, insofar as they reflect the traditions of the Enlightenment appeal to secular moral ideas as solutions to such differences.[101] Implicit in such thinking is a general optimism about the prospects for engineering just societies over time by means of reasoned exchange.

Rawls's work reflects this optimism in many respects. He notes that the success of liberal constitutionalism supports a faith in the possibility of a "reasonably harmonious and stable pluralist society."[102] His liberal thought extends the social contractarian tradition insofar as it conceives liberal cooperation as guided by a set of regulative principles chosen under conditions of freedom. As a form of ideal theory, his model stipulates favorable background conditions, and thus allows him to envision what a just liberal order looks like if it works well.[103] This point is crucial. Stability is a constituent of liberal justice, and Rawls considers a kind of reasonable hope to be central to political philosophy.[104] Since we still do not know whether a conception of justice can be stable enough to endure, stability considerations, and potentially resilience, have important significance for this hope.

My goal is to show how resilience manifests in his latest view, and why the concept can clarify how such a system succeeds in the ways he envisioned. And, as Kolers (2017)

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[101] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* 263.

[102] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, xxvi.

[103] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* 8.

[104] See discussions in J. Rawls, *The Law of Peoples: With, the Idea of Public Reason Revisited,* Cambridge (Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999) 126-7.

rightly notes, the idea must be evaluated in terms of "whether its pursuit constrains and shapes the pursuit of justice."[105]

The Suitability of a Rawlsian Focus

The idea of liberal resilience stands in need of an illustrative case. John Rawls (1921-2002) belongs on a short list of the most significant philosophers of the 20th century. Of the many liberal theories on offer, none is more important to contemporary political philosophy than his. Rawls is credited with resurrecting an interest in political philosophy at a cultural moment in the mid-20th century when it had become moribund. Sympathizers and critics agree that he "changed the face of analytic moral and political philosophy."[106] Liberal political theory's resurgence in philosophy must be credited in large measure to the impact of Rawlsian thought. As Voice (2011) observes: "barely a word of political philosophy is written today that is not indebted in some way to the philosophical paradigm that Rawls bequeathed."[107] The impact of his ideas extends beyond philosophy to social theory, law, economics, and political science. An inquiry into the possibilities for resilience in political theory could find no better starting point than Rawls's work.

Historians of philosophy view Rawls's achievement in writing about political philosophy *when he did* as especially remarkable because it ran against the prevailing philosophical interests of the time. By the mid-20th century when Rawls began

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[105] Kolers, "Resilience as a Political Ideal," 91.

[106] Anthony, Laden, "The House That Jack Built: Thirty Years of Reading Rawls," *Ethics* 113, no. 2 (2003): 5.

[107] See Paul Voice, *Rawls Explained: From Fairness to Utopia* (Chicago: Open Court, 2011): 109.

publishing, philosophy had become dominated by an analytic style that favored logic, precision, and clarity. Philosophical schools such as *logical positivism* questioned the status and meaning of all value statements. The appearance of Rawls's work was significant because the first part of the 20th century was a context "in which it would have seemed futile, to many, to compare the relative merits of Utilitarianism and a reworked social contract theory, given that their differences, once logical inconsistencies are removed, must amount to either disagreements of fact (and thus the preserve of science) or boo/hurrah opinion (and thus irrelevant to philosophy)."[108] Floyd (2017) credits Rawls for ushering in a new " 'thoughts-to-oughts' era" of justification for political philosophy.[109] In TJ Rawls derives formal liberal principles of justice from the basic fact that free and equal people already have nascent ideas about justice. Indeed, Rawls proceeds to generate normative conclusions about political justice just by working with extant moral intuitions and political commitments. Eventually, following his "political turn," Rawls locates agreements about justice in an exclusively political domain.

Resilience in Rawls's Method

I maintain that resilience in Rawls's liberalism does not refer to something new but instead reveals a previously unnamed virtue. While Rawls does not use the term, his method is highly suggestive of resilience. In addition to the well-known core concepts in his work, Rawls is known for several distinctive aspects of his method and approach to theorizing. I have identified three aspects—*constructivism, reflective equilibrium,* and

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[108] Jonathan Floyd, "Rawls' Methodological Blueprint" *European Journal of Political Theory* 16, no. 3 (2017): 367-81.

[109] Floyd, "Rawls' Methodological Blueprint," 367-81.

ideal theory—that are at least suggestive of the kind of flexibility required by resilient systems.

Constructivism

Rawls's constructivist approach means that the "principles of political justice are the result of a procedure of construction in which rational persons (or their representatives), subject to reasonable conditions, adopt the principles to regulate the basic structure of society."[110] They do so by appealing to ideas that already exist in the culture—rather than to a set of ideals grounded in a moral theory. For this reason, his early work in TJ has been described as showing his intent to revise Kantian theory but without the metaphysics.[111] Later, the principles of political justice in PL are "freestanding."[112]

Constructivism is considered by some to be empirical, because, according to Floyd, "the justification of principles stems from facts about the world, and in this case the thoughts within our heads (our considered judgments), and in contrast to rationalism, according to which principles are justified as entailments of rationality."[113] The key is that in this picture there is no concern for anything like a Platonic truth about justice. Instead, Rawls emphasizes the principles on which we already agree. Rather than seeking to determine the correctness of the idea of the good, Rawls is, in addition to setting out conditions for liberal justice, concerned with solving a practical problem: how to ensure

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[110] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, xxvi.

[111] See Charles Taylor, "Leading a Life," in *Incommensurability, Incomparability and Practical Reason*, edited by R. Chang, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997) 174, as quoted in Floyd, 367-81.

[112] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, xxvi.

[113] Floyd, 371. Also see Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 14, no. 3 (1985): 223-251.

social cooperation amongst free and equal citizens. The unity that is aimed for is to be found in our underlying convictions. Put another way, Rawls does not seek to advance new norms, but instead to clarify what is already there. Judgments can be revised if they do not harmonize with most of our shared convictions.[114] Floyd refers to David A. Reidy's (2014) explanation that there is no aim of assessing the principles beyond the "'allegiance,' post- reflection, of the people for whom they are intended," from which idea Floyd concludes the process cannot be understood as a strictly epistemological inquiry. Constructivism relies on public justification but does not ask for any demonstration beyond that.[115] A constructed theory appeals to people because it resonates with what they already think. If they are mistaken, there is no way to identify the error because all assessment (and justification) references ideas they already hold.[116] Again, "political" conceptions of justice and legitimacy do not depend on the truth status of any moral position. They are independent ideals of political morality. Even citizens who affirm incompatible moral viewpoints can accept them.[117]

Rawls's constructivism also reflects his liberal orientation toward political philosophy in general: it is not a source of values needed for a complete life plan. Its aim is to show how free and equal citizens can co-create their own workable scheme of social cooperation.[118] This emphasis on self-legislation suggests a form of resilience expressed

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[114] Floyd, "Rawls' Methodological Blueprint," 367-81.

[115] David A. Reidy, "From Philosophical Theology to Democratic Theory," ed. Mandle J & Reidy, D.A, *A Companion to Rawls (*Wiley Blackwell, 2014. 21-27) quoted in Floyd, 367-81.

[116] Floyd, 367-81.

[117] See Talbot Brewer, "A Review Essay on John Rawls' Justice as Fairness: A Restatement," *The Hedgehog Review* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 100-15. Also see Rawls, *TJ,* 40-1, 153-7.

[118] See discussion in the Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, 1-4.

through citizens' ongoing exercise of free agency. Constructing principles in this way

confirms that Rawls is attempting to deal with a practical problem as it is recognized by

citizens in the here and now.

<div align="center">Reflective Equilibrium</div>

Among Rawls's philosophical contributions is his signature method of justification:

reflective equilibrium, which he first advances in TJ.[119] As noted above, Rawlsian

liberalism departs from conventional contractarian views in that the principles do not

derive normative force from prior metaphysical claims. Instead, they are justified by way

of a constructive process of reflective equilibrium, which tests proposed principles

against existing values in the political culture.[120] This constructivist method treats the

pursuit of liberal justice as a dynamic and evolving activity that is located in and must

harmonize with lived experience. Rawlsian scholars have written extensively on the

crucial importance of the idea. Indeed, some claim that when we refer to 'Rawls's

method', we should see that it is this continuous idea on which everything else

depends.[121] Reidy explains that at the root of RE is the view, accepted by Rawls as early

as 1950, that "reason answers only to itself."[122] RE is at the core of Rawls's project from

the very beginning of his career. Accordingly, the reliance on justification via reflective

equilibrium throughout all of his writings is one of the reasons given for viewing Rawls's

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[119] See N. Daniels, "Reflective Equilibrium," *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon,* Jon Mandle & D. A. Reidy, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 711-716. Rawls introduced the term "reflective equilibrium" in *Theory of Justice* (TJ,18), but he attributes the original concept to Nelson Goodman's (1955) work on justifying inductive logic. (See Goodman, 1955, 65–68.)

[120] Rawls, *Theory of Justice,* 20.

[121] Floyd, "Rawls' Methodological Blueprint," 367-81.

[122] See David A. Reidy, "From Philosophical Theology to Democratic Theory," *A Companion to Rawls,* eds. Jon Mandle and D.A Reidy, 7–30 (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014): 21-27.

work as a continuous whole.

RE is a deliberative process of reflection. Any deliberative question can be approached this way; Norman Daniels (2015) describes its outcome as "the end point of a deliberative process in which we reflect on and revise our beliefs about an area of inquiry, moral or non-moral."[123] For Rawls, it is the means by which a society can determine the content of a conception of justice. More specifically, RE refers to the method by which such ideas are arrived at and revised. The process involves transforming the thoughts we have about a subject into principles. It is "reflective" in the sense that it involves moving back and forth between considered judgments and principles. This process allows them both to be revised until they harmonize with each other in a way that is recognized as coherent and justifiable. For this reason, some scholars have described Rawls as a *coherentist,* which is to say that our existing thoughts are crucially important to justification of our views. A principle is "more or less justified (than another principle) according to the extent to which it coheres with our current normative convictions."[124] I interpret this responsiveness as a form of resilience in his latest work.

A question arises as to how people can engage in this process. Rawls thinks (in agreement with Hume and others) that ideas about justice are in our basic nature as human beings. He is confident that RE is a process we often use already in our own lives. People can form views about right and wrong, and when they are able, people desire to live up to their own values. Indeed, the capacity to do so is the basis on which it is

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[123] N. Daniels, "Reflexive Equilibrium," 711-716.
[124] Floyd, 2017, 367-81.

possible for one to adopt a theory of justice in the first place.

One of the benefits of RE is that it offers a framework through which we can come to understand more deeply the ideas in our political culture. The process allows citizens to examine their principles and the justifications given for them. It serves as an "explication of our convictions that would be both stable over time and capable of solving disputes in the real world."[125] It also affords the chance to organize in a consistent way one's views about certain issues and to trace a particular stance back to views that are supported by principles.

RE will be necessary if a conception of justice depends, as Rawls thinks, on the mutual support of many considerations. It serves in a context in which there can be no self-evident premises because to claim so would be to rely on fallible intuitions. As an alternative to starting from some set of "givens," RE involves a careful and deliberate process.[126] It begins by considering moral convictions as provisional fixed points. These must then fit with principles that we identify and agree with and ones that have theoretical support.[127] When principles conflict they can be reconciled through a process that is public and political. If competing principles such as, for example, personal liberty and equality, rule of law and civil disobedience, are valued by the same society at the same time, often in equal measure, the conflict will not cause the political cooperation to collapse under the weight of apparent contradictions. Parties can employ their reflective equilibrium to arrive at a just principle to follow, while at the same time still retaining

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[125] N. Daniels, "Reflexive Equilibrium," 711-716.

[126] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* 19.

[127] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* 18.

confidence in the moral justifiability of their private views.

Theorists have wondered whether it is somehow normatively required to rely on RE as a justificatory device. If there is some other principle, a moral one perhaps, undergirding it—or confirming that it is morally obligatory, then RE would not be functioning as an element of a constructivist method. Arthur Ripstein (2010) considers Rawls's statement in TJ that 'the correct regulative principle for anything depends on the nature of that thing.'[128] If RE could be seen as a "necessary response to facts about the kind of subject matter a given set of political principles is supposed to 'regulate'" (TJ) we could derive a principle, namely, "only pursue principles that are appropriate for the thing they are intended to regulate."[129] But even then such a methodological principle would still be a political and not moral one.

Alternatively, Floyd considers justification via reflective equilibrium to be an empirical project, "the moral credentials of which vary according to the reasons animating whoever pursues it (with such 'reasons' including both the reasons for pursuing wide reflective equilibrium, and the reasons for moving on to full)."[130] Floyd claims that this empirical orientation in no way constitutes a problem for Rawls. Consider the key features of the type of society Rawls's principles are aimed at regulating: scarcity, limited altruism (the circumstances of justice), burdens of judgment, free and equal persons, and pluralism with respect to reasonable comprehensive doctrines. Under conditions that are truly liberal and democratic, it would seem there cannot be any context-free values and

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[128] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* 29.

[129] See A. Ripstein, Critical Notice. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 40(4): 2010, 684.

[130] Floyd, "Methodological Blueprint," 367-81.

principles —which would mean that RE is the only justificatory method that can be applied impartially. Along this line, a non-moral motive for pursuing outcomes via RE is the desire to have consistency in one's practical reasoning.[131] In such a case one might discover that one is committed to principles that are justifiable to others. Alternatively, one might already know that one has such commitments—in which case one already has the practical incentive work productively with others toward reflective equilibrium. No moral norm is needed here. In light of doctrinal diversity, Floyd proposes that the motivation for achieving wide reflective equilibrium might "only be moral for some of us, even if the later move towards full equilibrium does require some such thing."132

This line of inquiry can be clarified with some finer-grained distinctions regarding how RE is operationalized. There are different types of reflective equilibrium, and it is important to distinguish between them. In RE functions as both as an endpoint and a process. It describes the process by which we engage in the reflection; and, at the end, achieving "a reflective equilibrium" is the endpoint of our deliberation. This dual functioning is illustrated in the way that RE unfolds in distinctive stages. Concerning justice, it begins with an inventory of considered judgments about justice/injustice with emphasis on the most compelling ones. This step is then followed by an attempt to identify broad, abstract principles that would be likely to generate most of these ideas. The process then moves to comparing the principles with the judgments and rejecting the ideas that are incompatible with the principles. As Thomas Pogge (2007) reminds,

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[131] Floyd, "Methodological Blueprint," 367-81.
[132] Floyd, 367-81.

sometimes at this stage we will find "irregularities and distortions."[133] But in the main, such a situation ought to feel very familiar—Rawls thinks we routinely make judgments like this in our everyday decision-making. Rejecting incompatible beliefs then allows us to systematize a set of judgments which can be integrated into a theory of justice. The equilibrium achieved at this stage is "narrow." But the process continues with further comparisons between the theory under consideration and theories held by others, to identify possible areas of improvement—a stage called wide reflective equilibrium.[134] Finally, as a last stage agreement on the set of principles confirms the achievement of "full" reflective equilibrium. At this point citizens agree and for the right reasons "in virtue of our wide reflective equilibriums."[135] Once full reflective equilibrium has been reached there is no need to test further because, as Reidy has noted, there is "no further test available."[136]

There are other reasonable challenges to RE, but most appear to be readily answerable. Floyd raises the worry of conservatism. Perhaps the process could go wrong in two ways: first, even while working towards full reflective equilibrium we might have adopted discriminatory practices in the past that we now accept as unproblematic. In addition, the over-emphasis on judgments made in the present would seem to work against or even preclude the possibility of progress.[137] To the first worry, Freeman (2007)

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[133] T. Pogge, *John Rawls: His Life and Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 163. Also see Rawls *A Theory of Justice,* 48.

[134] Pogge, *John Rawls,* 167.

[135] Floyd, "Methodological Blueprint," 367-81.

[136] David A. Reidy, "From Philosophical Theology to Democratic Theory," in *A Companion to Rawls,* ed. Jon Mandle and David Reidy (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014) 23.

[137] Floyd, 367-81.

points out that Rawls is pursuing reflective equilibrium in a "secular, democratic, and scientific age."[138] It is doubtful that arbitrary or exclusionary ideas could survive because the conditions already lend themselves to "considered judgments and optimally wide reflective equilibria."[139] Moreover, democratic citizens can be treated as 'experts', relative to concerns about domination or such subjects as empire or monarchy.[140] A more compelling reply to the conservatism objection comes from Reidy, who contends that Rawls could also respond by granting that data reached under the wrong conditions ought not be trusted, and meanwhile he can supply an account of what the right conditions are.[141] This idea confirms a kind of methodological priority of political philosophy over moral philosophy, thus ruling out doctrines that reinscribe inequality.[142]

Floyd points out that Reidy's defense can be used to counter a worry of relativism as well. There can be progress because we already have an "'error theory' – an account of why we should grant the judgments of democratic citizens a superior initial credibility."[143] Moreover, we can have confidence that under reflective equilibrium we are explicitly addressing and overcoming conflicts.

Nor does the method of reflective equilibrium seem especially vulnerable to several other objections identified by Floyd: the claim that each individual judgment has its own progressive potential—which could conceivably lead to different equilibria for each individual, or the claim that either no society is just enough to make the right judgments,

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[138] Samuel Freeman, *Rawls* (The Routledge Philosophers) (London: New York: Routledge, 2007), 35.

[139] Freeman, *Rawls,* x.

[140] Catherine Audard, *John Rawls* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2007), 7-11.

[141] Reidy, "From Philosophical Theology," 20.

[142] Reidy, "From Philosophical Theology," 21,

[143] Floyd, "Methodological Blueprint," 367-81.

or that only a society that is already just can make just judgments. Pogge thinks we can dismiss such concerns by shifting the burden and asking what better way there is of doing political philosophy.[144] To this Freeman also adds that we may not owe an answer to such a worry if we have no reason to view our stances as collectively untrustworthy.[145] Accordingly, Floyd concludes that for want of an alternative we are best served by the process of reflective equilibrium in political philosophy.

Ideal Theory

Rawls refers to his work as a form of ideal theory. He says, in Part II of TJ, that he has "tried to develop an ideal conception, only occasionally commenting on the various cases of non-ideal theory."[146] Here it is useful to consider the ideal/non-ideal distinction as it pertains to political philosophy generally. Ideal theory approaches the questions of political philosophy by assuming ideal conditions. Non-ideal or unjust circumstances (such as unequal starting points, corruption and skewed power relations) are left out of the analysis. Rawls explains that ideal theory is "the only basis for the systematic grasp of the more pressing problems of non-ideal theory," which involves how to respond to injustice.[147]

The primary starting question for ideal theory is: what would the ideal political structure look like, absent the flaws that characterize imperfect real-world conditions? One may wonder why it is useful to proceed in this manner. Paul Weithman (2011)

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[144] Thomas Pogge, *John Rawls: His Life and Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 176.

[145] Samuel Freeman, "The Burdens of Public Justification: Constructivism, Contractualism, and Publicity," *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 6, no. 1 (2007): 35.

[146] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* 391.

[147] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 8.

explains that ideal theory is a matter of ordering our analysis in a helpful way; it provides a way of getting to the unchanging problems of politics first, before contending with the messy vicissitudes of non-compliant human behavior and unjust institutions.[148] Simply put, to improve the prospects for achieving justice, we need to free the analysis from contingent complexities that would make each situation different, and instead focus on finding a blueprint of the conditions under which any liberal society could plausibly achieve justice. The ambition of envisaging liberal justice is under ideal conditions is, according to Weithman, daunting enough without trying to take up specific non-ideal situations. There is much to recommend this approach. The presupposition is that if we are burdened by having to address everything that is presently wrong, before envisioning the contours of what is right, then the task becomes overwhelming. So, methodologically speaking, engaging in ideal theory is a way of simplifying the discourse with the hope of finding basic principles that ought to be aimed for—whether they are presently actualized in the real world.

The distinction between ideal and non-ideal theory in political philosophy happens to be the subject of an extensive methodological debate about the proper nature of political philosophy and about the ability of ideal theory to guide action in real-world circumstances.[149] One line of inquiry is concerned with whether ideal theory, divorced as it is from concrete non-ideal realities, is even intelligible. Can we really make sense of conditions that are so unburdened by problems that none has ever even seen such?

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[148] Paul Weithman, *Why Political Liberalism? On John Rawls's Political Turn*, Oxford Political Philosophy: Oxford Univ Press, 2011. §III.

[149] Laura Valentini, "Ideal Vs. Non-Ideal Theory: A Conceptual Map," *Philosophy Compass* 7, no. 9 (2012): 654-664.

Though the question is reasonable, it seems not to present an especially damning critique. Part of the activity of theorizing is entertaining ideas to see where they lead—and these can certainly include the ones that are strictly aspirational. It also seems reasonable to suppose that approaching normative political theorizing in this order can be promising if we think that knowing what counts as the desired and proper state of affairs can move people a long way—if not the whole way—to attaining it.

A more pressing objection is that ideal theorizing is not a fruitful endeavor because, by ignoring non-ideal conditions, it cannot ultimately guide action on the urgent and problematic political issues we can expect to confront. Perhaps there are some grounds for skepticism about the possibility of identifying a master-principle that can reliably guide when it comes to unjust circumstances. But, as Laura Valentini (2012) has argued, this worry need not rule out the idea that "in situations of partial compliance, individuals ought to do what is reasonably within their power to respond to existing injustice."[150]

And more importantly, the objection suggests a fundamental confusion about the project of ideal theory. There is no reason to conclude that thinking about the ideal would somehow rule out planning for or action in non-ideal conditions. Ideal theorizing is not the only undertaking of political philosophy. Quite simply, the task of idea theorizing about the politically ideal is a contained one; it is exclusively aimed at laying out a structure to give political participants a model at which to aim.

A more compelling worry has to do with determining what ideal theorizing should include. For instance, it is not immediately clear how much of what is known empirically

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[150] Valentini, "Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory," 654-664.

can be included as a part of the analysis of Rawls's idea of the *original position*.

Valentini has identified several distinct meanings given to the adjectives 'ideal' and 'non-ideal', "each corresponding to a different cluster of questions."[151] First, it could mean 'full-compliance theory', while non- ideal theory is 'partial compliance theory.' On this interpretation of the ideal/non-ideal distinction, the debate about political philosophy's purpose would have to include "the question of what duties and obligations apply to us in situations of partial compliance as opposed to situations of full compliance."[152] Rawls's work stipulates full compliance and spends little time addressing concrete problems of injustice, so his work should be read accordingly.

Alternatively, 'ideal theory' could instead mean 'utopian or idealistic theory.' On such a reading, Valentini notes, the debate focuses on whether feasibility considerations ought to serve as constraints on normative theorizing. In *The Law of Peoples* [hereafter LoP] (1999) Rawls uses the phrase 'realistic utopia.'[153] But Rawls's work is not so idealistic as to be implausible, provided we accept Rawls account of certain capacities humans possess.[154]

Rawlsian thought includes an account of human moral psychology that assumes people have the capacity for public reason and the ability to exemplify certain political

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[151] Valentini, "Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory," 654-664.

[152] Valentini, 654-664.

[153] J. Rawls, *The Law of Peoples: With, the Idea of Public Reason Revisited* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[154] Because Rawls explicitly places such a premium on reasonableness, Valentini (2012) argues that "a crucial task for participants in the debate on ideal/non-ideal theory in this sense is to flesh out more concretely what the reasonableness constraint amounts to, especially in complex cases involving the injustice of entire societies and their institutions" (Valentini 654.) Rawls's treatment of the meaning of 'reasonable' is vital to his theorizing and the subject of much scholarly discussion. (See for example, J. W. Boettcher, "What Is Reasonableness?" *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 30, no. 5-6 (2004): 597-62.

virtues such as civic friendship. He also identifies the two moral powers that allow us to conceive of both justice and the good. In addition, the natural inclination toward reciprocity is central to his view of public reason. Rawls's thought is utopian if we deny these are real capacities. Such would lead us to the question: What good are principles that are unlikely to be reliably adhered to? I am inclined to bracket this objection because it misses the point of ideal theorizing. The key here is the fact that compliance with principles of justice is among the capacities we do have, and can reasonably stipulate for ideal theorizing, whether they are always actualized.

And non-compliance can be handled in ideal theory by establishing what constitutes legitimate coercion. Rawls's account of liberal legitimacy justifies the necessary regulative and coercive power of government institutions and specifies the terms under which unlawful behavior is to be regulated and sanctioned. Leif Wenar (2017) explains that "the use of political power in a liberal society will be legitimate if it is employed in accordance with the principles of any liberal conception of justice—justice as fairness, or some other."[155] Nor is there any need to lament that ideal theory ignores actual non-ideal power relations. If the starting point, as in Rawlsian thought, is that people are free and equal, then ideal theory already gives us a basis on which to object to arbitrary privilege and asymmetrical power relations. Again, the point of ideal theory, ultimately, is to lay the groundwork first. We can then use the model to evaluate the non-ideal problems.

On another view, ideal theory' might refer to an 'end-state' theory, "where 'non-ideal

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[155] Leif Wenar, "John Rawls", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, last modified Spring 2017, ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/rawls/.

theory' corresponds to some kind of 'transitional theory.'"[156] Here we can simply note

again the boundaries around Rawls's project: he describes his political theorizing as

starting with the end state. In TJ, Rawls tells us that ideal theory simply asks what a

perfectly just society would be like and which principles would regulate a well-ordered

society.[157] On his view it is taken for granted that people act justly and fulfill their role in

supporting just institutions. In such a picture, 'ideal theory' identifies the ultimately

desired state, and follows from an assumption that "all relevant agents comply with the

demands of justice applying to them, and natural and historical conditions are favorable –

i.e., society is sufficiently economically and socially developed to realize justice."[158]

Valentini notes the objection by some that we owe an answer to the question of

"whether a normative political theory should aim at identifying an ideal of societal

perfection, or whether it should focus on transitional improvements without necessarily

determining what the 'optimum' is."[159] It seems, though, that the question is a false

dichotomy — since political theorizing can do both.

In any event, Rawls seems to answer this question unambiguously in *Justice as

Fairness: A Restatement* (2001) [JAF], in which he outlines what he takes to be the four

main roles of political philosophy, all of which can be fulfilled by ideal theory.[160] The

first is a practical role of settling ongoing problems that threaten social order, as in the

problem of disagreement about conflicts between equality and liberty. The second role is

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[156] Valentini, "Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory," 654-664.

[157] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 8.

[158] Valentini, 2. Cf., Rawls 1999a: 8, 215; Rawls 1999b: 4-6.

[159] Valentini, "Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory," 654-664.

[160] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, 1-8.

to shape how people think of their political institutions as a whole, as distinct from how they see their individual interests. Thirdly, it has a role of reconciliation (per Hegel) in that it tempers any resentment we may feel because "we understand properly how our institutions came to attain their present rational forms."[161] Rawls reminds that one result of reasonable pluralism is that a democratic society is not a community bound together by a shared comprehensive doctrine. Political philosophy helps us reconcile to this fact, which can be difficult to accept. Lastly, political philosophy has the role of helping us see the inevitability of this reasonable pluralism and understand how it limits what is possible in politics; but, because it is also the role of political philosophy to hope for what is possible, it allows us to remain realistically utopian.

The Importance of Stability

Finally, two additional features make Rawls's thought a suitable choice for this project: the importance he assigns to stabilizing social cooperation, and the potential for resilience to secure this stability in what some commentators consider his most "fragile" account of a liberal order.[162]

The strength of Rawls's emphasis on stability from the early work forward suggests the related feature of resilience. Rawls conceives stability as an essential requirement of liberalism. In the opening pages of TJ he explains that justice, as the first virtue of social institutions, is tied to the "stability, coordination, and efficiency of a scheme of social

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[161] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, 1-8.

[162] John Thrasher and Kevin Vallier, "The Fragility of Consensus: Public Reason, Diversity and Stability," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 23, no. 4 (2015): 933-54.

cooperation."[163] He then devotes the third section of this first book to showing how stability inheres in shared principles of justice that win citizens' enduring allegiance. The publication of PL (1993) is a significant turning point. References to stability are central and appear throughout the book. Rawls's new insight is that for liberal democracy, reasonable pluralism is an unavoidable fact, and a "normal result of its culture of free institutions."[164] Choosing shared political values can never privilege any comprehensive doctrine. Instead, deliberation about justice must rely on public reason exercised in the political domain to yield a "freestanding" political consensus.[165] Only such a distinctively political type of unity can stabilize liberal cooperation in an otherwise doctrinally diverse society.

The suitability of Rawls's thought also corresponds to the heightened challenges of stabilizing cooperation as his views evolve. In PL, Rawls clearly states that the aim of stability motivates his "political turn."[166] But he is less explicit about further developments that appear more gradually: a reduced emphasis on consensus as *justice as fairness*, an account of cooperation as drawn from ideas in a family of liberal views, and a widening of public reason to include a greater diversity of ideas. These latest shifts are not radical revisions, but they loosen boundaries in the political domain to allow more pluralism. Recent scholarship interprets this expanded pluralism as greatly reducing prospects for liberal stability. Accordingly, I chose my research focus with the aim of

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[163] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 5.

[164] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 441.

[165] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 133-168.

[166] This description is used frequently in Rawlsian scholarship. The "turn "is the explicit focus in Weithman (2011), who also calls it "The Great Unraveling" (See Paul J. Weithman, *Why Political Liberalism?: On John Rawls's Political Turn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

discovering whether the concept of resilience could supply a response to this skepticism.

My claim is that it can help clarify how stability can be secured in this most recent

account.

CHAPTER II. A CONCEPTION OF RESILIENCE

This chapter is a more detailed treatment of resilience. I delineate a working conception

that could plausibly fit a system of political cooperation.[167] I explain it in terms of the

related ideas of stability and equilibrium and then discuss its analogs in a Rawlsian liberal

system.

A Detailed Account

Resilience is a property of dynamic systems. The term derives from the Latin *resilio,*

which means "to rebound" or "spring back."[168] Other meanings have included: adapting,

overcoming, and maintaining integrity.[169] On the most basic definition, resilience is the

capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and still retain its basic function and

structure.[170] When periodic disruptions occur, resilience allows a system to recover and

endure. It is thus a form of strength in any kind of system—physical biological or social.

Theoretical ecologist C.S. Holling's "Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems"

(1973) is often cited as the first use of the term on its current meaning.[171] As discussed in

Chapter I, over the last two decades the idea of resilience has gained prominence in a

variety of sectors. Commentators have noted the correlation between interest in

resilience, the acceptance of the normalcy of change, and the awareness of the

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[167] Constructing a simple and tractable working definition is appropriate for investigating interactions within a liberal system.

[168] N. Urruty, D. Tailliez-Lefebvre and C. Huyghe, "Stability, Robustness, Vulnerability & Resilience of Agricultural Systems: A Review," *Agronomy for Sustainable Development* 36, no. 1 (2016): 1.

[169] D. E. Alexander, "Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction: An Etymological Journey," *Natural Hazards Earth Systems Science* 13, no.11 (2013): 2707-2716.

[170] Brian Walker and David Salt, *Resilience Thinking: Sustaining Ecosystems and People in a Changing World* (Washington: Island Press, 2012), 4-7.

[171] See C.S. Holling, "Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4, no. 1 (1973): 1-23.

complexity in many sorts of problems and policymaking.[172]

Systems Theory

The concept of resilience emerged as an outgrowth of *systems theory*.[173] An ordinary

understanding of a *system* is some set of things that interact collectively to create

behavior at the level of the whole.[174] If a system is an organized entity in which parts are

joined together in a web of relationships, systems theory seeks to uncover its constraints

and animating principles. It emphasizes the organization of system components and how

they interact in dynamic processes. The approach is associated most often with sociology,

physics, and engineering, but it is appearing in other fields with growing frequency. Also

called *systems thinking,* systems theory involves studying the component parts as well as

how individual parts relate and produce certain behaviors.[175] It treats a system as more

than the sum of its parts and instead as the combination of its parts and its internal

relations and interactions.[176]

Variable Interpretations

Resilience is not linked to the optimal performance of some single aspect of the system,

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[172] See David Chandler, "Resilience Ethics: Responsibility and the Globally Embedded Subject," *Ethics & Global Politics* 6, no. 3 (2013): 1-7, also Aronson, Daniel. "Overview of Systems Thinking," Communications, Last modified January 1, 2017. http://www.stefanibardin.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Overview-of-Systems-Thinking.pdf.

[173] For a few disciplines, systems theory has antecedents as early as the 19th century, but it has gained prominence in the last 50 years. Aronson, "Systems Thinking," 1-3.

[174] See Darrell Arnold, *Traditions of Systems Theory: Major Figures and Contemporary Developments* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

[175] Aronson, "Systems Thinking," 2.

[176] Systems analysis uses its own terminology to express dynamic complexity. Often it includes diagrams and models (such as the mathematical models found in engineering and physics) to depict interrelated elements.

but instead to its flexibility, redundancy, and variety.[177] In an ecological system, the variety and redundancy of various biotic components enable continuities in the food web following disease, drought or some similar shock. For instance, having several species in grassland that perform nitrogen fixation, each of which reacts differently to climate fluctuations, increases ecosystem resilience.

Resilience is also a degreed concept. As a dynamic capacity, a system's resilience can grow or decline. And, because it manifests after a disturbance has already occurred, resilience is difficult to gauge in advance or measure. In simple terms, a system has more or less resilience to the extent that its responses adapt to the nature of the shocks presented. Flexibility, redundancy, and variety can fortify a system both in relation to the kinds of disruptions involved and to the level of unpredictability. The more unpredictable the disruptions, the more resilience required to withstand them. Systems can also possess varying degrees of resilience corresponding to types of perturbations. It helps to clarify if we describe a system's *resilience to* some specific set of conditions, such as, for example, a city's resilience to hazardous snowfall.

There is ongoing debate about defining resilience. S. Davoudi (2012) calls it a "slippery concept."[178] The concept is so widely used there are diverging views about what counts as evidence of its existence. As noted in Chapter I, a common idea is that it is reflected in the amount of time it takes for a system to "bounce" back to some baseline state. Resilience conceived in terms of bounce-back is sometimes described in the

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[177] Walker and Salt, *Resilience Thinking*, 20.

[178] Simin Davoudi, et al., "Resilience: A Bridging Concept or a Dead End?" *Planning Theory and Practice* 13, No. 2 (2012): 299-333.

literature as an index of the system's "adaptive capacity" to continue to perform its functions.[179] Walker and Salt (2012) insist that the length of time for a return to occur is less central than the ability to bounce.[180] Others place a premium on "rapidity."[181] Because adaptation can occur in multiple time frames—which complicates the process of confirming it when it occurs—some insist that a truly resilient response must be direct and observable.

Two mainstream interpretations evolve out of Holling's work distinguishing engineering and ecological forms.[182] Engineering resilience stresses the ability of a system to return to an equilibrium or steady state after a disturbance. The speed by which the system returns to equilibrium is the measure of resilience. The faster the system bounces back, the more resilient it is.[183] Ecological resilience places emphasis on "the magnitude of the disturbance that can be absorbed before the system changes its structure."[184] There is less emphasis on timing of bounce-back after a shock, but instead a focus on how much disturbance it can take within critical thresholds. As Davoudi notes, "what underpins both perspectives is a belief in the existence of equilibrium in systems, be it a pre-existing one to which a resilient system bounces back (engineering), or a new one to which it bounces forth (ecological)."[185] More recent uses appear to combine these

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[179] C. S. Holling, "Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems." *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4, no. 1 (1973): 1-23.

[180] Walker and Salt, *Resilience Thinking*, 22.

[181] Michel Bruneau, "A Framework to Quantitatively Assess and Enhance the Seismic Resilience of Communities," *Earthquake Spectra* 19, no. 4 (2003): 733-52.

[182] Holling, "Resilience and Stability," 1-23.

[183] This emphasis on return time is prioritized in "fail-safe" engineering designs. (See Bruneau, 2003.)

[184] Davoudi, "Resilience: A Bridging Concept," 299-333.

[185] Davoudi, "Resilience: A Bridging Concept," 299-333.

two meanings by measuring either or both indicators.

Central Concepts

To see more about how resilience works, and later to show how it functions in the political domain, requires closer look at associated concepts. A review of these concepts can be clarifying but often reveals a terminological morass. As noted, researchers and commentators hail from many fields, and the field is comparatively new and characterized by imprecision.

Systems and States

I adopt a functionalist view, according to which a system is understood in terms of its functions rather than in terms of its constituent parts.[186] A system is a discrete entity consisting of a collection of interacting parts that is identifiable by its set of basic functions. This latter point is important because some functions are existence conditions for the system. A system can evolve and change, but it ceases to exist when essential functions disappear. Such can be said of any living organism that depends on multiple functions for survival. The same can be true for a political system—as in, for example, the essential functions of a liberal constitutional democratic system. These are the means by which it ensures popular sovereignty, basic liberties and rights, and due process of law—and their disappearance would indicate the system's collapse or end.

   If a system is a discreet entity, the system's *state* refers to its baseline conditions, relationships, and essential behaviors. A bounded system's contents can be likened to

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[186] A similar treatment of entities or objects in a functionalist (or teleological) way has roots in ancient Greek philosophical traditions, as for example, in Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics,* in which entities are identified by their *ergon* or purpose (1097b22–1098a20).

particles trapped in a box. Inside, the combined variables involved in its behaviors represent its state: functions of internal forces, sensitivity to outside forces, whether the system is static or dynamic, and whether it is an *equilibrium* (discussed below).[187] In general, the state of a system offers enough information about the system to determine its future behavior in the absence of any outside forces.

The system state is also the starting point for identifying system resilience. Walker (2012) notes that, "the response of any system to shocks and disturbances depends on its particular context, its connections across scales, and its current state."[188] It seems trivially true that assessing resilience involves specifying what system is under consideration. But identifying a system can be complicated and will always be a matter of framing. Systems do not exist in isolation but are components of larger systems. They also contain nested systems. Ecosystems illustrate this point—a grassy plain ecosystem can contain pond or wetland ecosystems. The human physiological system interacts with cognition such that an individual person's resilience is determined by sub-system interactions.

Similarly complicated are attempts to categorize system types (physical, biological, and social). While categorizing makes studying systems more tractable, systems intersect to form combined types of systems, as in *biophysical* or *socio-ecological, or socio-political* systems. This is not a minor point—among the benefits of systems analysis is the fuller understanding of the totality of variables. Consider that in any system, if components are interconnected, there is ongoing multi-directional influence. So, systems identified as discreet entities are also sub-systems. For instance, a social system is always

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[187] Walker and Salt, *Resilience Thinking*, 4-7.
[188] Walker and Salt, *Resilience Thinking*, 4.

embedded in an ecology (e.g., a rural landscape, a coastal area or a city). Ecological

systems set the conditions for human actions, which in turn shape the ecological system.

The term 'socio-ecological' system thus encompasses bi-lateral influences between two

sub-systems. Increasingly, researchers insist it is not possible to understand the dynamics

of either the social or the biophysical in isolation.[189]

Resilience applies to systems that are in motion, so my account refers to bounded

systems in dynamic external environments. The system's boundary separates activity that

is internal or external to the system. On either side of this boundary conditions are non-

static. Internal and external activities are forces that move and interact within or outside

the boundary. Thus, on my view, a disruption occurs when one or more forces

successfully cross the boundary and prompt a significant internal change to the system. In

some cases, external disruptions produce chain reactions such that one disruptive external

event will trigger ongoing internal disruptions.

Stability and Equilibrium

Systems in dynamic conditions can exhibit reactivity to external forces, and here the

concepts of *equilibrium* and *stability* come into play. In an equilibrium state, the system's

internal forces, even if in motion, are balanced and will stay that way if no external force

disrupts them.[190] As Walker and Salt (2012) explain, dynamic systems tend toward

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[189] Walker explains that the ecological and the social domains can be conceived as a set of linked cycles operating over different scales of time and space. These interacting cycles exhibit analogous internal cycles of growth, crisis, and reorganization. See Walker and Salt, *Resilience Thinking*, 4-7.

[190] Changes in equilibrium can translate into a larger state change. How the equilibrium state is conceived can change when viewed over a longer time frame, as in the case of a pond transforming over time into a grassy wetland, or a plains ecosystem turning in to a forest. Thus, what counts as a given system's equilibrium is subject to interpretation.

equilibrium: "push the system one way and the system compensates and moves toward a natural equilibrium. Leave the system alone and it will eventually gravitate to some equilibrium condition."[191] In physics, equilibrium denotes the condition of a system when neither its state of motion nor its internal energy state tends to change with time. To illustrate, a body in equilibrium will not accelerate or decelerate without a disturbance by an outside force. An example is a pendulum, which eventually yields to gravitational forces to come to a resting point.[192]

Stability is a degreed concept referring to a system's resistance to external disruptions.[193] Any system that is stable exists in an equilibrium state. Stability can be gauged by the magnitude of a disturbance required to move a system out of an equilibrium state. Systems with a high degree of stability typically do not react to external forces, or if they do, internal forces manage to counter them quickly and effectively. A highly stable system will tend to maintain its equilibrium state in a dynamic environment.[194]

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[191] Walker and Salt, *Resilience Thinking*, 6.

[192] Modern economics treats equilibrium in markets as a fundamental assumption. A "steady-state economy" reflects market equilibrium because the demand for goods at a certain price is matched by supply. But, as this example shows, in some contexts, equilibrium is more conceptual than actual. The role of equilibrium is highly contested among rival economic camps, who disagree on how to identify it and whether it is ever reached in actual markets. (See discussion by N. Kaldor, in "The Irrelevance of Equilibrium Economics," *The Economic Journal* 82, no. 328 (1972): 1237-1255.

[193] In contrast with the redundancy and variety characteristic of resilient systems, stable systems tend to have varying degrees of *homeostasis*—the tendency to maintain status quo. A eutrophic pond containing drastically reduced biodiversity is homeostatic. Alternatively, a dynamically stable system and complex ecological system can exist in perpetual motion, never resting at some fixed point but still operating in a state of equilibrium. A commonly used example of a dynamically stable system is the prey/predator relation in which populations will balance one another when levels of either rise or fall too much.

[194] A perplexing feature is the tendency of complex adaptive systems to achieve stability in more than one way. Increasingly, the resilience literature recognizes the possibility that systems can have multiple versions of stability, as indicated by terms such as "alternate stable states" and "stability domains" (See Walker and Salt, *Resilience Thinking*, 1-7.)

Resilient Responses

Stable systems can exhibit resilience—another degreed concept. When a resilient response occurs in a stable system, what exactly happens? Two scenarios are possible. In the first, a specific equilibrium is temporarily disrupted, triggering a minor adaptation that allows a "bounce" back to the original equilibrium state. In the second, a more significant disruption prompts an adaptation that shifts it to a different equilibrium. A helpful concept here is *threshold.* A disruption can move the system past some threshold beyond which the original equilibrium is no longer possible. In this case, resilience is evidenced by the shift to a new equilibrium state that preserves the system's functions. The key is that a stable system's essential functions define it. A system is more resilient to the extent that it can respond in whichever of the above ways is adaptive—by either bouncing, or by replacing an equilibrium.[195] In either case, resilience restores equilibrium. Importantly, the new equilibrium state does not indicate a new system. It means that the system has altered itself to keep functioning as before.

This effect also means that in some circumstances, a system's resilient responses help assure its more general stability.[196] However, there is potential for confusion about the concepts of stability and resilience. There is no clear consensus across specializations about how they relate and how to distinguish them. Some sources consider resilience to

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[195] Martin and Sunley expand the above analysis by distinguishing four scenarios: (a) going back to the initial state after some shock, or (b) absorbing the disturbance and remaining in the same state, or (c) successfully adapting to the adversity and achieving a different state, or (d) turning shocks into opportunity and transforming to a better state. Martin, P. Sunley, B. Gardiner and P. Tyler, "How Regions React to Recessions: Resilience and the Role of Economic Structure," *Regional Studies* 50, no. 4 (2016): 561-585.

[196] Though this account captures resilient responses in the abstract, concrete instances of resilience can be hard to pinpoint. Systems behave uniquely and in ways that often defy prediction and measurement. Nor can system adaptations be expected to occur in a linear fashion.

be part of stability. My view regards resilience as a separate and contingent system property that complements system stability. I accept that a generally stable system can remain so in highly volatile conditions if it also has resilience. With respect to dynamic social systems—I take it that if they are both stable and resilient, they are sensitive to external conditions and can change with the times. If not all stable systems have resilience, those that do have better prospects for survival in dynamic conditions.

Complexity

Complexity is an unavoidable background condition determining system resilience. In dynamic, complex systems resilience is confirmed by the response of key variables to stressors. Knowing what the variables are is critical, but such information will only partially determine resilience capacity. As important is knowing the complex interactions among components internal to the system once the shock occurs. These interactions help delineate thresholds. Walker (2012) supplies a useful visual metaphor of a ball rolling inside a basin. Here the outer rim of the basin represents the threshold. If the basin is disturbed beyond a certain point, the ball will cross over the rim (threshold). The proximity of the ball to the rim is an indicator of the system's stability relative to the perturbations. A wildly oscillating ball skirting the edge has entered a state in which its behavior is hard to gauge. Resilience corresponds to what happens near the edge of the basin, not what happens near the equilibrium point at the bottom. If the ball crosses a threshold, it will have undergone an equilibrium shift.[197]

My account takes it that resilience protects a system's general stability when a

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[197] Walker and Salt, *Resilience Thinking*, 1-7.

disruption is significant enough. We can therefore extend Walker's metaphor as follows: the stable system can contain multiple basins. The ball at rest in one basin represents a specific equilibrium. If a disruption puts the ball in motion (temporary disequilibrium) in a generally stable system that is also resilient, the ball either returns to the bottom of the same basin, or it crosses the rim (threshold) and re-settles in a different basin (a new equilibrium). The important detail is that the system is resourced enough (stability) to ensure the ball is contained and reliably winds down.

Cutting through complexity will involve asking the right kinds of questions about the system's interactions. The operative questions are likely to be: how much disturbance and change can a system take before a ball starts oscillating? Is it approaching a threshold? What forces are driving the system toward this threshold? Such questions illustrate how accounting for complexity in the behavior of systems is part of identifying, promoting, and measuring resilience.

Resilience Indicators

As noted above, measuring resilience ex ante resists precision, though researchers have persisted in trying to identify specific indexes—*resilience indicators*— by which a social system's resilience can be predicted. A model used in earthquake recovery analyzes total resilience as "dispositional capacities" and specifies several benchmarks as follows:

> 1. Robustness: the ability to withstand stress without suffering degradation;
> 2. Redundancy: the extent to which elements are substitutable in the event of destruction or degradation;
> 3. Resourcefulness: the capacity to identify problems and mobilize resources when conditions threaten the system;

4. Rapidity: the capacity to achieve goals in a timely manner.[198]

Here it makes sense to ask whether efforts at prediction and measurement give reason to expect Rawls's liberal system to exhibit resilience. Existing metrics, including the dispositional capacities above, are of limited use because they pertain to non-ideal conditions. Even so, certain aspects of Rawls's liberal theory I discuss in the next chapter are at least suggestive of each. For example, we might locate *robustness* in Rawls's commitment to reciprocity—a liberal political virtue corresponding to mutual citizenship obligations. Likewise, the plurality of a liberal conceptions of justice might plausibly be conceived as *redundancy,* and the practice of public reason as *resourcefulness.* The disposition to *rapidity* is less clear since Rawls describes the temporal aspect of stability in terms of successive generations. Again, using a metric for non-ideal conditions in the context of ideal theory will not do much work in this discussion. Even so, the dispositions of liberal citizens play an important role in assuring stability in Rawls's system. So, the above indicators offer additional reasons to see promise in a Resilience View of Rawlsian liberalism.

Resilience in the Liberal System

 My project relies on a specific possibility: that resilience can be a property *of some part* of a larger, stable system.[199] Importantly, the phrase 'resilient system' can be misleading. Resilience specifically corresponds to a state of equilibrium, which can refer to the whole system or some component within. Some systems contain multiple equilibria that

[198] Martin, P. Sunley, B. Gardiner and P. Tyler, "How Regions React to Recessions: Resilience and the Role of Economic Structure," *Regional Studies* 50, no. 4 (2016): 561-585.

[199] Likewise, a stable equilibrium can also be a component of a larger, more general system.

together comprise a broader equilibrium that remains generally stable. In this scenario, a lower-level resilience can help stabilize the system at a general level.

My view conceives a liberal system as having both properties—stability and resilience—in the ways described. It frames the liberal system as a set of equilibria exhibiting resilience at a lower level, and stability at a higher one. I elaborate this idea in Chapter V. But for the purposes of this chapter, resilience at a specific level refers to prevailing conceptions of liberal justice. These conceptions can be disrupted by societal change, but can adapt by changing to fit new conditions, thereby shifting to a new equilibrium (also a Rawlsian concept). In this context, equilibrium is marked by society's acceptance of the updated conceptions of justice after the adaptation. This process occurs within and shapes the political culture. The implication, as I later explain, is that Rawls's "family of reasonable, liberal conceptions of justice" becomes the new object of stability in the liberal system.

Equilibrium and the Well-Ordered Society

Paul Weithman (2011) has laid some groundwork for my view by noting that Rawlsian stability rests on a "condition of general equilibrium" where "everyone knows that everyone else acts justly, and each replies to the justice of others by being just himself."[200] But, as he explains, even if society is effectively regulated, and publicly known to be effectively regulated, by a valid public conception of justice, there is no guarantee that this general equilibrium is stable unless it lasts in this condition:

A state or a scheme of cooperation is stably just when it is in a just general

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[200] Paul Weithman, *Why Political Liberalism? On John Rawls's Political Turn* (Oxford: Oxford Univ Press), Section 3.

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equilibrium that is stable, so that a valid conception of justice effectively regulates it, and is known effectively to regulate it, over time. Thus, we might say that Rawls is concerned, in the first instance, with "equilibrium" and "stability" as they are predicated of conceptions of justice. When a conception of justice is in a stable equilibrium, the institutions it regulates will be stably just.[201]

In this context, equilibrium refers to a liberal society's being "well-ordered" around a single, shared conception of justice.[202] Rawls defines the idea as follows: "(1) everyone accepts and knows that the others accept the same principles of justice, and (2) the basic social institutions generally satisfy and are generally known to satisfy these principles."[203] Garthoff (2016) notes that well-orderedness is an idealization. He likens well-orderedness to an equilibrium state in physics because "in a well-ordered society there are no pressures internal to the system of cooperation which disrupt the consensus on the prevailing conception of justice. Since everyone endorses the society's system of cooperation and lives up to the demands of this system, it will not change unless it is acted on from without."[204]

With respect to Rawls's latest view, for any given equilibrium achieved, what it means to "act justly" corresponds to prevailing ideas of justice which, as I argue, can change. If liberal citizens can accept and comply with more than one conception of justice, then when one equilibrium fails, another can potentially take its place.[205] The

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[201] Weithman, *Why Political Liberalism?,* 27.

[202] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* 453.

[203] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 5.

[204] Jonathan Garthoff, "Rawlsian Stability," *Res Publica: A Journal of Legal and Social Philosophy* 22, no. 3 (2016): 286.

[205] At this stage there is no obvious reason to rule out a scenario in which it returns to its former state—which for our purposes, would mean that after bringing pressure to existing agreements parties are somehow reassured about their former terms. Likewise, there is the possibility that the system will return to equilibrium with new features. Resilience provides a type of insurance to the system but leaves open the questions of how much change (if any) turns out to be adaptive.

discussion has implications for Rawls's account of well-orderedness. If conceptions of justice oscillate between multiple acceptable equilibria, it may be that, strictly speaking, a society cannot ever be well-ordered in the original way, even in ideal conditions. Theorizing the role of resilience offers a different understanding of a well-ordered society wherein the acceptance of, and cooperation with the family of views, can replace the acceptance of shared principles of justice.

CHAPTER III. RAWLSIAN STABILITY: EARLY AND LATER VIEWS

This chapter is an overview of stability in Rawls's liberal political theory. It begins with the centrality of justice and reviews related ideas about persons and citizenship. The sections that follow trace the evolution of Rawls's arguments for stability from *A Theory of Justice* (1971, 1999) to *Political Liberalism* (1993, 1996, 2005*)* and *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement (2001).* Within these discussions I explicate concepts crucial to Rawlsian stability that appear throughout his work.

Rawlsian Justice

An inquiry into Rawls's views of stability is best informed if it first considers the centrality of justice. Rawls conceives justice as a moral idea applied to a social and political context. In the first section of *A Theory of Justice* [TJ] (1971) he specifies that the first subject of justice is the basic structure of society—a "total institutional structure of a society as an ongoing cooperative venture carried out by a particular people."[206] As Reidy (2015) explains, this account is properly understood as a form of social justice, which concerns "the production and distribution of the goods for the sake of which a people cooperates within and through the basic structure of its society."[207]

A related idea, *conception of justice,* is another focal point in Rawls's work. Rawls describes a public conception of justice as "as constituting the fundamental charter of a well-ordered human association."[208] A '*conception'* of justice differs from the abstract

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[206] David A. Reidy, "Basic Structure of Society," in *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon*, ed. Jon Mandle and David Reidy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 55-58.

[207] Reidy, "Basic Structure," 55-58.

[208] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 5.

concept of justice. The general aim of justice (the concept) motivates some particular conception of justice that guides a society's pursuit. The contents of this conception are specific principles and their justification. Rawls's early work in TJ advances his own conception of justice, *justice as fairness,* as the basis for a well-ordered society. Also fundamental in his system is *cooperation*. TJ establishes that stable cooperation is the ultimate goal of stability and introduces the idea of the stably just *well-ordered society.* On this account, stability is realized by the sincere support of citizens. Their allegiance is motivated by justice—it is never a merely strategic decision, or a *modus vivendi*.[209] For this reason, Rawls also emphasizes the requirement of *publicity*. The sincere support of citizens necessitates that society's conception of justice is publicly justified and known.[210] Publicity confirms that shared ideals represent citizens' legislating for themselves their own regulative principles under conditions of freedom.

Free and Equal

An additional commitment in all of Rawls work is the necessity of freedom and equality. As he explains:

> . . . the basic idea is that in virtue of their two moral powers (a capacity for a sense of justice and for a conception of the good) and the powers of reason … persons are free. Their having these powers to the requisite minimum degree to be fully cooperating members of society makes persons equal.[211]

Free and equal citizens have the requisite intellectual abilities to act as fully cooperating members of society. Beyond that, there is much scholarly discussion of what Rawls

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209 Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* 126.
210 Rawls, 66.
211 Rawls, 19.

means by the requirement that people are equal. Citizens will not be equal in many kinds of capacities, including the ability to hold offices or manage responsibilities. But Rawls emphasizes that equality that requires each citizen to acknowledge the equal capacity of others to cooperate as citizens. This idea also carries the implication that every citizen adopts a comprehensive doctrine for their own reasons and these reasons are initially deserving of equal consideration.

Moral Powers

A distinctive aspect of Rawls's moral psychology represents another sense in which people are equal, namely the human ability to countenance and aim for justice. Rawls advances a view of persons as having two "moral powers" —the ability to conceive of the good and a sense of justice. We form an idea of the good as "an ordered family of final ends and aims which specifies a person's conception of what is of value in human life or, alternatively, of what is regarded as a fully worthwhile life."[212] This idea of the good is further expressed in each person's rational plan of life which, as Pete Murray (2014) explains, is the "plan which one would select under ideal deliberative conditions, including full information about the consequences of one's choices and about one's own preferences, determines one's overall system of final ends and one's conception of the good."[213]

One's chosen conception of the good is also affirmed by the adoption of some comprehensive doctrine or moral, philosophical, or religious worldview "in the light of

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[212] J. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement.* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001) 19.

[213] P. Murray, "Conception of The Good." in *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon* edited by Jon Mandle and David Reidy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014): 130-132.

which the various ends and aims are ordered and understood."[214] As Murray puts the point, "in deliberation, one's comprehensive doctrine together with facts about the world and one's own preferences and desires are taken into account, resulting in a commitment to some particular ordered system of ends."[215] In PL Rawls adds that a comprehensive doctrine specifies "what is of value in life, the ideals of personal character, as well as ideals of friendship and of familial and associational relationships, and much else that is to inform our conduct, and in the limit to our life as a whole."[216]

A second power—a sense of justice—is the impetus for the desire to identify just principles and act from them. In a well-ordered society, citizens demonstrate their sense of justice by publicly acting on it.[217] This sense is the source of motivation for behaving in support of society as a fair system of cooperation. The sense of justice underwrites reciprocity, giving others their due, and cooperating with just institutions. In this way, it also helps ensure that society will be stable and well-ordered.

Especially important is that a sense of justice is what enables citizens to take a distinctively political point of view because doing serves the collective good of society. After Rawls revises his theory in PL, a citizen's comprehensive doctrine cannot be the standpoint of political discourse about justice. In a citizenship role, persons committed to justice must take a public position on political questions. Rawls advances the political point of view as the basis for conceptions of justice that are "freestanding" —which means that reasonable comprehensive doctrines may inform a conception of justice, but

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[214] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, 19.
[215] Murray, "Conception," 130-132.
[216] Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* 13.
[217] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* 497.

conception's justification does not depend on it but can stand on its own.[218] Therefore, a

political conception will not privilege any one doctrine.[219] Ultimately, both moral powers

enable citizens to conceive political justice. Citizens can endorse explicitly political

values while also committed to their own comprehensive doctrine.

Justice as Fairness

In *A Theory of Justice* (1971) [TJ] Rawls presents his famous idea of *justice as fairness*.

As a fair system of cooperation between free and equal citizens, society must identify the

principles of justice "most appropriate to specify basic rights and liberties, and to regulate

social and economic inequalities in citizens' prospects over a complete life."[220] Rawls

offers two principles of justice, as follows:

> (1) Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all, and,
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> (2) Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.[221]

Eventually, in *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* [JAF] (2001), the same principles are

recast as a political conception of justice specifying the terms for a "fair system of

cooperation between citizens regarded as free and equal and as both reasonable and

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[218] Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* Introduction.

[219] A related idea here, is that if arguing for the "truth" of comprehensive doctrines is an activity for communities, it cannot be a political activity. (See discussion of comprehensive doctrines in Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* §3, 58.)

[220] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, 41.

[221] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 266.

rational.[222] As Thomas Hill (1994) explains, the later version is no longer a comprehensive moral doctrine, but "a political conception of justice that is no longer considered as competing for the same role in our lives as other reasonable comprehensive moral doctrines (such as Utilitarianism and various traditional religions)."[223]

Well-Orderedness

A "well-ordered society" is one that achieves stable agreement on principles of justice which means (1) everyone accepts and knows that the others accept the same principles of justice, and (2) the basic social institutions generally satisfy and are generally known to satisfy these principles. In TJ, Rawls explains the idea:

> While men may put forth excessive demands on one another, they nevertheless acknowledge a common point of view from which their claims may be adjudicated . . . Among individuals with disparate aims and purpose a shared conception of justice establishes the bonds of civic friendship; the general desire for justice limits the pursuit of other ends. One may think of a public conception of justice as constituting the fundamental charter of a well-ordered human association.[224]

Hence a society is well-ordered when it is not only designed to advance the good of its members but when it is also effectively regulated by a public conception of justice. The early idea of a well-ordered society offers a picture of the society in which everyone accepts the same conception of justice, and institutions are shaped accordingly.

Eventually, in *Political Liberalism* [PL] (1993), Rawls takes up the project of theorizing an exclusively political justice and in so doing he revises the treatment of well-

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[222] Thomas E. Hill, Jr. "The Stability Problem in Political Liberalism," Pacific Philosophical Quarterly 75, no. 3-4 (1994): 333-52.

[223] Hill, "The Stability Problem in Political Liberalism," 333-52.

[224] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 5.

orderedness. Here the picture of a well-ordered society changes to one in which common ground is identified as an "overlapping consensus." This form of agreement replaces the earlier idea of congruence between justice and the good (as set out in TJ) as the basis for publicly endorsed principles. Now the shared conception of justice is strictly political. Accordingly, the reasonable overlapping consensus stabilizes the conception of justice, without the need for a shared comprehensive doctrine.[225]

Eventually the idea of a well-ordered society in *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* [JAF] (2001) is a "companion" idea to the idea of society as a fair system of cooperation.[226] Here Rawls identifies well-orderedness as among the requirements for a society engaged in a cooperative "practicable aim" of forming of just institutions within the political culture of a democratic society. A well-ordered society regulated by a shared conception of justice is not hierarchical, nor is it ordered by a given religious or other doctrine. Instead, people are guided by accepted rules and procedures and by fair terms reasonably acceptable to all, and these terms meets each participant's rational advantage.

Duty of Civility

If political virtues encourage and enable citizens to do their parts, Rawls uses even stronger language to describe what he calls the duty of civility—which he treats as a moral requirement of citizens taking up matters of basic justice and questions about constitutional essentials. Rawls explain that we "agree that citizens share in political power as free and equal, and that as reasonable and rational they have a duty of civility to

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[225] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, xxxv–xli.
[226] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, 5.

appeal to public reason."[227] Civility requires citizens to actively supply a defense for the positions they advocate and to show others how their position is supported by public reason.[228] James Boettcher (2003) explains that the crucial point of the duty of civility is that to uphold it we have to engage with fellow citizens. It is not adequate to simply reason well and be done with it. To the extent that the duty of civility is part of public reason, citizens must share their reasons, and in so doing appeal to those reasons that others should reasonably accept. Hence the duty of civility establishes public justification as an activity undertaken with others.

The Priority of Stability

Stability, Rawls tells us, is an essential part of justice, by which he means that a just liberal order is a stable system of cooperation held together over time by the sincere endorsement of citizens. In such conditions, the liberal system's stability is evidenced by its ability to withstand ordinary disruptions and sustain its appeal across successive generations. Throughout Rawls's works, stable cooperation is the primary goal. But early on, stability is conditioned on whether the principles of justice themselves are stable. The operative idea is that of a well-ordered society, which establishes a particular kind of stability—the kind that is predicated of a society that is stably just. By this Rawls means cooperative schemes that remain, if not perfectly just, then just or approximately so, over time." As Weithman (2011) explains, "the stability with which Rawls is concerned is this kind of stability, rather than state stability. This interest is confirmed by his remark that in

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[227] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 226.
[228] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 217.

the context of TJ, part III: "'stability means that however institutions are changed, they still remain just or approximately so.'"[229]

Rawls consistently prioritizes liberal stability even as his views of liberal justice evolve. As noted, Rawlsian stability refers to the continuity of political cooperation over time and across generations. While this idea of continuity fits with intuitive understandings of stability, it is by no means the full picture. Achieving stability requires a society to be *well-ordered* around its shared conception of justice. Because this conception is widely known and communicated, a well-ordered society transmits it across generations. The stable conception of justice will then stabilize political cooperation by extension.

Rawls develops his early account of stability in the last third of TJ, where he explains the self-stabilizing mechanics of justice as fairness [hereafter Jaf].[230] TJ presents justice as fairness as the single conception of justice that all reasonable citizens can affirm as part of their good from within their differing comprehensive doctrines. Again, stability is guaranteed by these principles, since it is the liberal order's shared conception of justice that is, according to Rawls, the basis for its unity.

The transition from TJ to PL changes the account of how stability is assured with the explicit aim of improving its prospects. In the introduction to PL, Rawls acknowledges that diverse but reasonable comprehensive doctrines can be expected to differ on matters of basic justice. Stability can no longer depend on citizens affirming Jaf from the

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[229] Weithman, Paul. Why Political Liberalism? On John Rawls's Political Turn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) also (Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 401, 458).

[230] J, Rawls, *A Theory of Justice (*Cambridge: Harvard Belknap Press, 1971).

standpoint of their private doctrines. Hence, to accommodate reasonable pluralism, PL

Rawls reconceives liberal justice as an *overlapping political consensus*.

PL still centers Jaf, but citizens now treat the idea of justice as a political matter. They

co-deliberate to construct a consensus about justice that will serve as the basis for their

unity. The political consensus is stable – and by extension, it stabilizes cooperation—

because citizens are its authors and as such are committed to it "for the right reasons."[231]

Importantly, the revision in PL is not a concession to skepticism about liberal justice; it is

instead a re-thinking of how justice is to be identified under conditions of pluralism.

Stability in A Theory of Justice

In TJ three features of a well-ordered society ensure its stability: i) a concept of justice

acceptable to all agents freely and equally situated; ii) the establishment of institutions

that satisfy the principles of justice; and iii) citizens' caring enough about justice to

willingly prioritize it over their own ends.[232] The book is organized to take up the

theorizing of each of these features in turn.

Part III "Ends"—and particularly the final sections of chapter IIX—have special

relevance to the assurance of stability. Here Rawls concludes what scholars refer to as

"the congruence argument."[233] Though the argument is crucial to the idea of stability in

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[231] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 343.

[232] In the first part of his chapter "Congruence and the Idea of Justice" Samuel Freeman (2002) explains how this organization tracks Kant's conception of stability. It is important to distinguish how Kant viewed stability in comparison with the ways that earlier contractarians –Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau—saw it. The earlier theorists were more concerned with "stability," whereas Kant, and later Rawls are committed to "stability for the right reasons." See Samuel Freeman, "Congruence and the Good of Justice," *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*, ed. Samuel Freeman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 277-315.

[233] This discussion begins at in Chapter VIII, §69. Paul Weithman has noted that then argument is interwoven throughout the book's entirety, though some scholars think the argument is sometimes

TJ, Freeman (2002) and others have lamented the fact that discussions of congruence are somewhat neglected in the scholarship.[234] As Freeman insists, understanding congruence is vital to appreciating the trajectory of Rawls's works generally, but more specifically, "it is primarily Rawls's dissatisfaction with congruence that led him subsequently to recast the justification for justice as fairness, culminating in his account of political liberalism."[235]

To situate the importance of congruence it should be noted that that stability is not the first subject of political justice. A society can be stably unjust; hence what matters is stable justice – or "stability for the right reasons."[236] Rawls outlines the social conditions under which this can be, "and indeed must be, if a just social scheme is to be feasible."[237] The right kind of stability is achieved if the principles and institutions are established and set up as "expressions of the public will" and these are successful in engaging the sense of justice held by agents living under the idealized conditions of a "well-ordered society" of Jaf.[238]

The Congruence Argument

Rawls defines the sense of justice as a "normally effective desire to apply and to abide by principles of justice and their institutional requirements."[239] He then explains that "the

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neglected because it is so difficult to isolate. Paul Weithman, "Convergence and Political Autonomy," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2011): 327–348.

[234] Samuel Freeman, *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002).

[235] Freeman, *The Cambridge Companion*, 277-315.

[236] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, xxi-xxvi.

[237] Freeman, *The Cambridge Companion*, 277-315.

[238] Freeman, 277-315.

[239] Rawls, A *Theory of Justice*, 505.

question of congruence [is] whether the sense of justice coheres with the conception of our good so that both work together to uphold a just scheme."[240] In other words, in TJ, 'congruence' describes the harmonized relationship between the right and the good. Indeed, in TJ congruence is crucial because citizens in a just and well-ordered society, must be "regularly motivated to act as just institutions demand," otherwise, a just social order is "unstable and for this reason utopian."[241]

The idea of congruence is intended to rule out the possibility that peoples' idea of what is good would persistently conflict with the public view of justice and thereby undermine stability. Again, Rawls treats this congruence as fundamental; it is inextricably bound up with well-orderedness: "if congruence fails for a well-ordered society, it seems bound to fail everywhere."[242]

Congruence reinforces the "stability" of the conception of justice – which is to say, its capacity to generate its own support. It can therefore be said that the prospects for a society's achieving the right kind of stability as theorized in TJ turn to a great extent on the prospects for congruence. Recall that in a stable society the commitment to justice will be self-reinforcing. Since Rawls's approach adopts the standpoint of ideal theory, the people in question will already possess the features of a moral psychology. We can thus take as given that people support having some shared idea of what justice requires. Broadly speaking, a view of upholding justice as its own kind of good contributes to the kinds of attitudes that ensure people will also endorse the society's just institutions;

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[240] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 453.

[241] Freeman, *The Cambridge Companion*, 277-315.

[242] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 513-514.

thereafter, the successful functioning of such institutions will further strengthen peoples'

support. Hence stability—the climate of general endorsement of a just society, is enabled

by this congruence between the right and the good found in a well-ordered society.

But how exactly does congruence happen? We need to know what prompts the

condition in which "the regulative desire to adopt the standpoint of justice belongs to a

person's own good."[243] The principles of justice themselves are already justified, and

members of a well-ordered society will have the desire to act from some sense of justice.

What we want to know, then, is how exactly the inclination toward justice comes to be

consistent with their conception of the good. Understood in terms of moral psychology,

people accepting the general goodness of society's being just represents a congruence of

their two moral powers—a sense of justice and a capacity to form a conception of the

good.[244] This leads to the circumstance whereby, in the well-ordered society, despite a

multiplicity of comprehensive doctrines, conforming to the requirements of justice will

be part of every person's good.[245] But to make the case for congruence Rawls must

supply answers to two questions. First, how do people come to care about justice in the

first place, given our natural propensities? And second, why should they care enough to

prioritize it over their own ends? The first question is answered by Rawls's account of

certain features of our moral psychology, including the inclination toward reciprocity.

Earlier in the book Rawls outlines a social-psychological position: that individuals in a

well-ordered society of Jaf will "normally come to acquire a settled disposition to support

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[243] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* 547.

[244] This congruence enables what Rawls calls the "full" theory of the good (as opposed to the "thin" theory behind the veil of ignorance) in which the good is restricted by the principles of the right.

[245] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 350.

institutions that benefit them."[246] As he contends, the psychological laws of moral development, the "reciprocity principles," are what engender our sense of justice.[247] This is to say that in a well-ordered society, justice is continuous with our natural sentiments and is a normal part of human life.

Brian Barry (1995) argues that this part of the account is sufficient for stability and the rest of the congruence argument is unnecessary.[248] Indeed, the principles of reciprocity rest on the idea that a person feels obligations of reciprocity—the groundwork for a sense of justice—because they [the person] have been treated by others in such a way that advances their [the person's] own good.[249]

Christine Korsgaard (2012) agrees that Rawls has supplied an account of why justice is itself a type of good throughout the entire text, starting with his discussion of goods as parts of one's plans of life.[250] She notes that at various points, Rawls builds an account by endeavoring to show what is good for each person—which then contributes to his account of the good life, or happiness—which then leads to an idea of what constitutes a good community or society.[251] Rawls treats the relation of justice and the good as one of priority: justice is a good, but one that by its nature takes precedence in a just society.

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[246] Freeman, *The Cambridge Companion,* 277-315.

[247] These laws can be summarized as: First law: the child loves the parents because they care for [their] own good; Second law: mutual appreciation for caring for one another extends to larger group; Third law: the "person acquires the corresponding sense of justice as he recognizes that he and those for whom he cares are the beneficiaries of these arrangements." See Rawls, TJ, 490-491.

[248] Barry, Brian, "John Rawls and the Search for Stability," *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy* 105, no. 4 (1995): 874-915.

[249] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 494.

[250] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §65.

[251] Korsgaard, Christine, M. "The Unity of the Right and the Good in John Rawls's Thought." *Symposium on Rawls: American Philosophical Association*. Last modified March 13, 2019. http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~korsgaar/CMK.Rawls.Right.Good.pdf

That being the case, the recognition that candidate ideas of justice can potentially conflict with a person's conception of the good prefaces Rawls's discussion of the "grounds of congruence."[252] These grounds function as reasons to prioritize political justice over some conflicting understanding of the good.

The first ground is the basic fact that the principles of justice are public. Given the condition of publicity, those who act in ways inconsistent justice as it is generally construed will have no choice but to own up to benefitting from (taking advantage of) a public good as a free rider—an admittance that is likely to cost such persons psychologically. "Since the conception of justice is public [such persons are] debating whether to set out on a systematic course of deception and hypocrisy."[253] Such persons would be similarly obliged to recognize the impact of their outlier behavior on just institutions. As well, their close associates will be affected by non-support of the system that benefits them—which will interfere with good relationships, and thus with their life plan because:

> . . . in a well-ordered society where effective bonds are extensive both to persons and to social forms, and we cannot select who is to lose by our defections, there are strong grounds for preserving one's sense of justice. Doing this protects, in a natural and simple way, the institutions and persons we care for and leads us to welcome new and broader social ties.[254]

Such undeniable realities will prompt rational persons to reflect on their inconsistencies. It follows that secondly, as indicated by Rawls's "Aristotelian principle," contributing to the public good benefits all. The Aristotelian principle holds that, "other things equal,

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[252] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 570.
[253] Rawls, 570.
[254] Rawls, 571.

human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities (their innate or trained abilities), and that this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized, or the greater its complexity."[255] Accordingly, reflective recipients of such benefits will be unable to deny that the principles of justice regulate their activities for the sake of their own well-being. This principle rules out Utilitarianism's aggregative principle; a doctrine that gives too little consideration to individuals and their autonomy. Rawls further explains that, per Kant's view of free and equal rational agents, "a rational person, in framing his plan, would hesitate to give precedence to so stringent a principle. It is likely both to exceed his capacity for sympathy and to be hazardous to his freedom."[256] Rawls holds that behaving in accordance with a sense of justice is a kind of good for each person, but in light of how they see the good.

Likewise, a well-ordered society is itself a good. The stability of well-orderedness is a state of affairs in which those whose good is not aligned with a sense of justice will be encouraged to affirm it. The question of the legitimacy of coercion becomes relevant at this point in the argument. If there are some who nonetheless do not take the sense of justice to regulate their own good and (for whatever reason) do not obey laws, it is permissible to authorize ways of safeguarding institutions from their behavior. With too many people like that, the society becomes unstable. So, some type of penal intervention is justified, though in a stable society this is not apt to become a serious problem.

These grounds still rest on a "thin" theory of the good. They leave open the question of how such grounds—the publicity, Aristotelian principle and Kantian conception of the

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[255] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 414.
[256] Rawls, 573.

person—can suffice to motivate everyone in a well-ordered society to act justly in accordance with Rawls's two principles. One problem is that in this scenario, adherence to the principles of justice is one of many possible goods that could inform an individual's life plan. This issue is pertinent to the problem of stability. Having a stable social order depends upon citizens thinking the good of justice is high enough such that they are willing to follow the law. What is needed is an explanation for why someone would reliably and willingly uphold willingly a code of justice that has been issued by members of the society with whom they may disagree to a significant extent.[257] Is it possible to move beyond the simple of fact of commitment to "the goodness of the settled desire to take up the standpoint of justice" to accepting Jaf? [258]

On Freeman's interpretation, the Kantian view of the person is enough: "it is only within a well-ordered society of Jaf that free and equal individuals can achieve their full autonomy as reasonable and rational beings."[259] Korsgaard also supplies some interesting insights. She takes special interest in the way that Rawls systematically links such individual goods to the community's welfare in a broad sense. She notes that Rawls's treatment of certain intermediate goods —development of talent, autonomy, community, and the unity of the self—allows for an explanation for congruence between goodness and acting according to Jaf.[260] We can easily move from the two principles to the notion that being just is part of what constitutes what it is to be a good person.

In light of this point, Korsgaard wonders why the good and the right need be as

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[257] See Weithman, 2011 for a long discussion in his Chapter on Congruence, §II, 3.

[258] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 568.

[259] Freeman, *The Cambridge Companion*, 277-315.

[260] Korsgaard, "The Unity of the Right and the Good," 13.

conceptually distinct as Rawls presents them to be. Korsgaard observes that Rawls's account follows Plato's idea of "justice [as] a genuine virtue: a just society will be good for those who live in it, and…being a just person is a good thing for that person."[261] Accordingly the "right" and the "good" seem to be *necessarily* harmonized in Rawls's account. It seems, according to Korsgaard, that Rawls's view does not go far enough in simply embracing the idea that citizens who are rational will think it is good to be just. Granting that "Rawls is read as indicating that the concepts of the right and the good are separate such that the right has priority over the good," from which follows that "the right limits or restricts the good, unless we can show that justice or rightness itself is a good thing," Korsgaard thinks more can be said about this relationship.[262] For one thing, Rawls's use of the word "good" is descriptive, but a normative conception of the good (which she endorses) will always mean "good for" someone. If we adopt this idea, and also recognize the "right" as one of our goods, then insofar as justice applies to the group, the good of the right will translate into more goods for more people—which makes it a better good. In other words, the broad reach of the good of the right justifies its status as a superior good—which means that a rational person will see the obligation to treat it as such. This interpretation bodes well for Jaf:

> …someone who accepts (any) theory that insists that everything good must be good for someone, can [see] a clear sense in which distributions in accordance with the difference principle are better than others. In that sense, there is a formal harmony between the right and the good.[263]

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[261] Korsgaard, "The Unity of the Right and the Good," 13.

[262] Korsgaard, 28.

[263] Korsgaard, 28.

Korsgaard concludes that, in this sense—despite the claims about the priority of the right to the good, the right is simply a higher order good. Thus, are the right and the good more harmonized that the congruence argument initially identifies.

Korsgaard reasons further that if the problems of the good and the right can be understood as the problem of what to value and the problem what to do about it then these are "interlocking problems."[264] If we are, as she says, reflective agents, we cannot consider these questions separately. Again, (Korsgaard thinks), Rawls needlessly adheres to the idea of 'good' in its descriptive sense, but Korsgaard argues that it is always normative. We will always apply the descriptor with a view toward whether the thing that is good performs a function well in light of some end. This orients us to understanding the good in terms of practical reason—which is to say, the "rationality of wanting."[265] According to Rawls, to say that something is good is to say that it has the properties that it is rational to want in that kind of thing.[266] This reasoning can be applied to the way justice works to form ties between people. The exercise of our reason then leads us to note that (as Rawls confirms) being in proper relation to one another is a good. For Rawls, "proper relation" means that ends will be shared. And "because we cannot share ends whose pursuit leaves us badly related to each other," she argues that "this kind of harmony between the right and the good is implicit in Rawls's philosophy," and particularly so in the congruence argument. She thus concludes that if "the right is prior to the good…it does not restrict it—it informs it. The good is constructed by finding the

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[264] Korsgaard, 24.
[265] Korsgaard, 17.
[266] Korsgaard, 14.

ends that we can share, but we cannot share our ends unless we stand in relations of justice."[267]

The Political Turn

In the period between TJ (1971) and PL (1993) Rawls published several times on what he described as a "political conception of justice." Justice in a political domain is neutral with respect to other moral questions. Conceptions of justice, if stable, must now be strictly political and cannot be justified with reference to comprehensive views. Michael Lewin's (2015) analysis shows Rawls's idea of a political conception as having three major features: "(1) they are freestanding from comprehensive doctrines in society; (2) they articulate a conception of distinctly political, moral values, pertaining specifically to the political domain; and (3) they are laid out with reference to certain basic, intuitive ideas implicit in a democratic society's public, political culture."[268] If the conception of justice is a political, and not a moral one, there need be no conflicts among the pluralist society's reasonable comprehensive doctrines. As long as differing comprehensive doctrines are reasonable ones, citizens will be able to find common ground on political matters, which are public. They will be able to endorse a conception of justice for the political domain without compromising their private moral, philosophical, or religious beliefs. The principles of a political conception of justice will have a political—not a moral justification.[269]

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[267] Korsgaard, 29.

[268] Micah Lewin, "Political Conception of Justice," in *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon*, eds. Jon Mandle and David Reidy, 612-615 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[269] Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* xl–xli, 143, 147–148.

Rawls's thought takes a definitive "political turn" when he recasts the stable object from a single, shared conception of justice in TJ to a political consensus in PL pertaining exclusively to the political domain. Later, in JAF, he restates his initial idea of Jaf, this time casting it as a political conception.[270]

Stability in Political Liberalism

Rawls revises the account of stability in PL after recognizing that liberalism must accommodate the fact of reasonable pluralism. Insofar as the account in TJ assumes certain common (though thin) ideas about the good, the account of stability therein does not fit PL's more pluralist context. Liberal justice under conditions of pluralism cannot privilege comprehensive doctrines or even partial ones; it will have to be a political and freestanding idea. For this reason, PL explains how a liberal society with diverse broader values can unify around a shared, but political, conception of justice.

Reasonable Pluralism

Pluralism is represented by Rawls as a fact about free societies. He uses the term to refer specifically to the variety of values and worldviews found in a free society. The liberal order evinces two forms: *simple pluralism* encompasses this variety in its broadest form, while *reasonable pluralism* denotes the subset of doctrines reasonable enough to inform political deliberation—or in Rawls's terms, to supply the content of public reason.[271]

The distinctive notion of reasonable pluralism is a hallmark of Rawlsian liberal theory. It is part of the "circumstances of justice" and a "natural outcome of the activities

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[270] *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (2001) introduces the idea in the Editor's Forward, xi-xiii.

[271] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 36-37.

of human reason under enduring free institutions."[272] Specifically, it describes "the fact of profound and irreconcilable differences in citizens' reasonable comprehensive religious and philosophical conceptions of the world, and in their views of the moral and aesthetic values to be sought in human life."[273] Moreover, it is "permanent as it persists indefinitely under free democratic institutions."[274]

As Rawls explains, reasonable pluralism confirms that in a free society,

> … among the views that develop are a diversity of reasonable comprehensive doctrines. These are the doctrines that reasonable citizens affirm and that political liberalism must address. They are not simply the upshot of self- and class interests, or of peoples' understandable tendency to view the political world from a limited standpoint. Instead, they are in part the work of free practical reason within the framework of free institutions.[275]

Liberal citizens, if they are reasonable, have no choice but to accommodate the multiplicity of reasonable comprehensive doctrines. Reasonable pluralism is also conceptually tied to several ideas that become central after the political turn: the reasonableness of citizens, *public reason*, and the *principle of reciprocity*.

Reasonableness

The term 'reasonable pluralism' calls for a closer consideration of what Rawls means by reasonable. Liberalism enables a diversity of reasonable doctrines that will be affirmed by reasonable citizens. [276] This point highlights Rawls's important distinction between the reasonable and the rational.[277] Rationality corresponds to the ability to identify and

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[272] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 36-37.
[273] Rawls, 36-37.
[274] Rawls, 36-37.
[275] Rawls, 36-37.
[276] Rawls, 36.
[277] Rawls, 48.

pursue self-interest. Reasonableness is broader. Minimally, reasonable persons can recognize that others have the same faculty. But on Rawls's view, reasonableness also includes the recognition that a society that enables the free exercise of reason of one owes the same freedom to all. In the context of political liberalism, the difference between rational and reasonable is marked by the reasonable citizen's awareness of other subjectivities when it comes to identifying what is good,, and such citizens recognizing as fair the freedom of those others to choose for themselves. Fabienne Peter (2007) puts the point as follows:

> Rational persons are able to formulate, revise, and pursue a conception of the good. Persons as reasonable citizens, although committed to a particular comprehensive doctrine of the good, recognize that others may not share their view. When it comes to fundamental political questions, they will abstain from trying to impose their conception of the good on others.[278]

Rawls gives a two-part explanation. First, because citizens possess a sense of justice (in addition to a conception of the good) reasonable citizens will endorse fair terms of cooperation over and above their own ideas of good. Second, they accept the *burdens of judgment*—meaning that they accept that full deliberation may not ever lead to agreements about the good in a pluralist society. Along with this idea, reasonable citizens also come to understand the need for a basis other than comprehensive doctrines for publicly justifying political institutions. Such burdens thus include the recognition of an obligation to submit to the constraints of public reason in the face of disagreement. Tal Brewer (2002) explains that accepting burdens of judgment is the price of this

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[278] Fabienne Peter, "Rawls'(s) Idea of Public Reason and Democratic Legitimacy," *Journal of International Political Theory* 3, no. 1 (2007): 129-143.

realization.[279]

Public Reason

Public reason is a focal point in PL.[280] It refers to the process by which citizens deliberate about and justify political values. Rawls explains, "in public reason, comprehensive doctrines of truth or right [are] replaced by an idea of the politically reasonable addressed to citizens as citizens."[281] This idea is explicitly developed in PL, wherein liberal justice is redefined as a consensus about justice worked out through deliberative processes that must remain "political not metaphysical."[282]

Accordingly, public reason specifies the kinds of reasons to which citizens can appeal in the political domain. It confirms that ideas proposed for consideration to fellow citizens are ones they could accept as reasonable. In this sense, stability depends on public reason as the path to finding principles that can win the broad allegiance of a reasonable but pluralist citizenry. Thrasher and Vallier (2015) insist that public reason is critical to stabilizing the idea of justice expressed as a *freestanding* political conception because such a conception depends on public justification—which must accord with the requirements of public reason and the liberal principles of reciprocity and legitimacy.[283]

In a similar vein, the liberal principle of *legitimacy* constrains the outcomes of political justification. Rawls indicates that this conception of legitimacy, like public

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[279] Brewer, "A Review Essay on John Rawls' Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*," 106.

[280] Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* Lecture IV, 212.

[281] Rawls, 441.

[282] Rawls, 441.

[283] John Thrasher and Kevin Vallier, "The Fragility of Consensus: Public Reason, Diversity and Stability," *European Journal of Philosophy* 23.4 (2015): 2015, 933-54.

reason, is necessary "if each citizen [is to have] an equal share in political power."[284]

For these reasons, citizens have a duty of civility to exercise public reason by restricting their discourse to a set of shared reasons to which persons acting in their roles as citizens of a free and just society appeal when deliberating matters of justice and constitutional essentials.[285] Public reason is thus the critical mechanism that generates stability.

<div align="center">Reciprocity</div>

The role of public reason in society's self-legislation is underwritten by another moral idea, the *principle of reciprocity*.[286] The principle of reciprocity, "the principle of living in unity with others," as free and equal citizens expresses the commitment to fair cooperation such that "we do not reserve to ourselves any right we are not willing to allow to all others."[287] It is the principle that explains why citizens owe one another the same freedoms and entitlements they claim for themselves. Reciprocity corresponds to the idea that citizens ought never propose that others accept conditions they would not also be willing to accept. Thus, reciprocity accounts for the restriction of political debate to ideas that can be considered reasonable, even by those who reject them. Citizens may consult their own reasonable comprehensive values when assessing ideas about political justice, they do not appeal to them directly in public deliberation because they owe to others the sorts of arguments all could recognize as reasonable within the political

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[284] In PL the idea appears in Lecture I, § 3: *Fair System of Cooperation*, 14

[285] See Mandle and Reidy, *Companion to Rawls*, 3.

[286] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 102.

[287] See S.A. Lloyd, "Learning from the History of Political Philosophy," *A Companion to Rawls*, edited eds. Jon Mandle and David Reidy, 535-544 (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014).

domain.

Practicing reciprocity in this way enables a relationship of *civic friendship* between citizens in a constitutional democratic regime.[288] Civic friendship reinforces cooperation over time by strengthening the desire to be regulated by principles that others also find acceptable. Thus, reciprocity is crucial to stable cooperation. Insofar as constructing a just political order is a collective enterprise, reciprocity ensures political discourse will respect others' reasonableness and will aim to unify citizens around principles they identify together and with which they can willingly cooperate over time.

<div align="center">Overlapping Consensus</div>

In PL, Rawls advances the idea of *overlapping consensus of reasonable comprehensive doctrines* as the basis of stability.[289] To avoid privileging a particular moral standpoint, PL's idea of justice is "freestanding," specific to the "domain of the political" and takes the form of a consensus among citizens otherwise free to live by their private doctrines.[290] By constraining deliberation to political reasons, citizens can ultimately identify and then give their allegiance to a consensus justified by public reason. Parties arrive at this consensus by determining whether "there is reason to believe that that the principles can either be derived from diverse comprehensive doctrines, be congruent with them, or at least not conflict "'too sharply with them.'"[291]

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[288] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 446.

[289] This consensus may or may not end up being justice as fairness, but Rawls thinks this conception is the most reasonable. In the *Expanded Edition of PL* (2005) he presents it as the result of a political consensus beginning in "Part Two, Lecture IV: The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus," 133.

[290] Rawls, *Political Liberalism* 139.

[291] Gerald Gaus, "The Turn to a Political Liberalism," *A Companion to Rawls*, eds. J. Mandle and D.A Reidy (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2014), 235, quoting Rawls*, Political Liberalism* 40.

Ultimately, their sincerely and freely given commitment means that the "reasons from which citizens act include those given by the account of justice they affirm."[292] In this way, the overlapping consensus is sincere and thus stable "for the right reasons"[293] because citizens sincerely endorse and see its principles as "justified for political purposes by an overlapping consensus of reasonable comprehensive doctrines, including their own."[294]

The overlapping consensus also changes the meaning of "well-orderedness" as originally conceived because it is tied to plural private ideas of the good; hence the equilibrium rests on endorsement for plural reasons instead of its congruence with shared ideas about the good.

Beyond Consensus

The insight of Rawls's political turn in PL is that it is unrealistic for a free society to expect that single, shared conception of justice will stabilize cooperation from within any comprehensive doctrine and without further political work. Among citizens with diverse moral views, "stability for the right reasons" is possible only when the basis for stable cooperation is neutral with respect to reasonable moral values and is a consensus that is exclusively political.[295]

Yet, in both TJ and PL, though reasoning follows different paths to arrive at agreement, what ultimately assures stability is still a single, shared conception of justice

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[292] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 389.

[293] Rawls, 389.

[294] Thomas E. Hill, jr., "Stability, A Sense of Justice, and Self-Respect," in *A Companion to Rawls*, eds. J. Mandle and D.A Reidy 200–215 (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2014).

[295] Hill, "Stability, A Sense of Justice, and Self-Respect," 200–215.

that unifies liberal citizens and motivates their cooperation. This similarity is significant, because eventually Rawls's thinking seems to take a further turn, as I discuss in the next chapter.

The picture of the citizen and citizen relations adds further support to stability. The duty of civility over time engenders a political virtue—civic friendship, which "grows out of the relations between citizens who treat one another reasonably."[296]

I take it that the changing arguments for stability before and after Rawls's political turn possibly reflect not only a re-thinking of justice but also Rawls's shifting sense of the entire liberal political culture and its background conditions. It is for this reason that I identify what I call his "latest" or "most developed" view that expands pluralism.

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[296] Richard Dagger, "John Rawls's Conception of Civic Virtue," in *A Companion to Rawls*, eds. J. Mandle and D.A Reidy 297-311 (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014) 297- 306.

CHAPTER IV: JUSTICE PLURALISM AND STABILITY PROBLEMS

This chapter focuses on Rawls's idea of the *family of reasonable, liberal conceptions of justice* and its implications for liberal stability. The first part discusses two interpretations of this family as a further development toward more pluralism. The next parts address stability problems for this developed view, including arguments skeptical about achieving stable consensus, as well as the specific puzzle about stability for a liberal system stabilized by the family. I draw from mainstream Rawlsian commentators to address skepticism, but then show why these replies do not eliminate stability problems in my more robust view of the family. The discussions set up the circumstances for Chapter V's *Resilience View*, in which I argue that resilience can contribute to stability in the more pluralist system.

A Family of Conceptions

Among the first references to a family are Rawls's remarks about the main aims of PL in the "Introduction to the Paperback Edition" (1996). Here Rawls identifies the central question as concerning a well-ordered liberal society containing multiple reasonable political conceptions of justice. "In this case there is both the fact of reasonable pluralism and a family of reasonable though differing liberal political conceptions; I ask what is the most reasonable basis of social unity given these two conditions?"[297] In the ensuing discussion, Rawls specifies that a family of conceptions supplies the content of public reason.[298] Related passages confirm that pluralism extends to how reasonable citizens

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[297] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, ii.
[298] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, 26-7.

will conceive what justice requires, and that these conceptions will inform political deliberation about justice. Similar remarks throughout emphasize the contingency of the conception represented by the overlapping consensus. Rawls does not elaborate this metaphor of a "family" beyond periodic reminders that Jaf belongs to a set of related conceptions that inform public reason and unify liberal citizens. This is the meaning of the family that most Rawlsian scholars accept.

The introduction of the idea of a "family" of conceptions of justice prompts further inquiry about what it means and its implications for the liberal system. Whether Rawls intended it, I take statements about the family as opening up a possibility of liberal stability without consensus on a single conception. On this interpretation, the object of the consensus is a family of views, as opposed to a single view shared by all. Rawls never presents the family as the object of an overlapping consensus, nor does he say explicitly that a consensus about justice is not a necessary condition for stability. Yet some statements suggest this reading, and I contend it is plausible in light of Rawls's general ideas about pluralism.

But this view calls for a closer analysis of how much the family expands pluralism. I explain below by distinguishing *pluralism about justice,* which denotes only the fact that multiple conceptions precede consensus, and *justice pluralism*, wherein a family of conceptions of justice replaces the single, shared conception as the basis of stable cooperation.[299] Rawls makes statements about the family that are suggestive of both

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[299] For convenience I use Kevin Vallier's terminology. Vallier (2018) refers to the idea of a family of reasonable conceptions as introducing "pluralism about justice." (See K. Vallier, "Constitutional Choice Renewed: A Synthesis of Public Reason and Public Choice Approaches," *Constitutional Political Economy*, 29, no. 2 (2018): 115-136.)

interpretations.

A Pluralist Turn

Rawlsian scholars generally treat Rawls's political turn (1993) as the definitive view of his ideally just liberal society.[300] In more recent writings, Rawls makes statements that extend pluralism to matters of justice. These remarks suggest a further development how he sees pluralism in the political domain. This additional turn, such as it is, takes shape by way of passages in the Paperback edition of PL (1996) and following, in which Rawls continuously refers to justice in plural terms—specifically, as a "family of reasonable, liberal conceptions of justice."[301] Rawls does not fully explain the implications of this family for liberal stability.

Pluralism about Justice

In PL Rawls consistently reaffirms pluralism about justice despite his own commitment to Jaf. As noted above, Rawls underscores the fact that society may be regulated by a different conception. Though he uses Jaf throughout as his illustrative example (and sees it as the most reasonable conception), he frequently reminds that Jaf is only contingently the content of the overlapping consensus.[302] In the discussion of the Supreme Court as the exemplar of public reasoning at the level of an institution, he says that justices justify the Constitution "in terms of the public conception of justice or a reasonable variant

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[300] As evidenced in several articles written in the period between 1971 and the publication of PL in 1993.

[301] Rawls introduces the idea at the beginning of the Introduction to the 1996 Paperback Edition to PL.

[302] Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* 441, 487. In the Introduction Rawls says any conception that meets the criterion of reciprocity and recognizes the burdens of judgement is a candidate. He also repeats that citizens will be inspired by the most reasonable conception.

thereof."[303] In several statements in PL he implies the family as one side of a disjunct:
justice as fairness *or* a family of reasonable conceptions—which appears to mean *or
some other single view in the set* (of reasonable liberal conceptions of justice that
contains Jaf). In some instances, he does so by explicitly emphasizing the neutrality of
the project in PL: "Political liberalism, then, does not try to fix public reason once and for
all in the form of one favored political conception of justice."[304] Elsewhere, he repeats
that "there are many liberalisms and related views, and therefore many forms of public
reason specified by a family of reasonable political conceptions. Of these, justice as
fairness, whatever its merits, is but one."[305] At minimum, the passages establish the
family as a bounded set of options from which a consensus is formed. Here we ask: What
makes a view eligible for membership in the family? Rawls specifies what he means by a
liberal conception:

> First, a list of certain basic rights, liberties, and opportunities (such as those
> familiar from constitutional regimes); second, an assignment of special priority
> to those rights, liberties, and opportunities, especially with respect to the claims
> of the general good and perfectionist values; and third, measures ensuring for all
> citizens adequate all-purpose means to make effective use of their freedoms.[306]

These requirements are general and leave room for variation. But Rawls introduces them
in a context in which he also assumes eventual agreement on a single conception. In IPR,
he reiterates that a liberal political consensus, in addition to being compatible with
multiple reasonable comprehensive views, is drawn from content supplied by a family of

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[303] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 235.
[304] Rawls, 450.
[305] Rawls, 450.
[306] Rawls, 339.

conceptions of justice.

Such language appears decisive: 'family of conceptions' is Rawls's way of expressing that a stable, well-ordered society can be regulated around any single view that belongs in it. Read in this light, references to the family appear to settle the idea that a further turn, to the extent there is one, is toward *pluralism about justice*, not *justice pluralism*. And, as previously noted, Rawls makes no commitment to a revised liberal society in which views about justice do not overlap at one conception. Thus, in the political domain, a plurality of suitable conceptions of liberal justice are on offer. Citizens deliberate their merits in search of what they can share—and the family simply represents a pool of eligible options.

If the upshot of the family is merely that *any single view* in a liberal family of related views can serve as the basis for cooperation, the metaphor substantiates Rawls's commitment to pluralism about justice, but does not revise the idea that citizens will ultimately agree on a conception of it. In this case, my resilience project proposes to solve problem that does not exist—acceptance of the family does not replace consensus on a single conception, so there is no need to reconsider stability in light of this role for the family.

But there is more to consider. Since we already know that whatever conception prevails will be reasonable and liberal, it seems fair to wonder why Rawls needs the metaphor of the family to remind us that candidate views of justice will share certain liberal attributes. There are more questions about how the family of views relates to the overlapping consensus.

Overlapping Consensus: Strict and Loose Views

Jonathan Garthoff (2012) has proposed two possible interpretations—*strict* or *loose*—of the overlapping consensus as it relates to the family of conceptions of justice.[307] The former is generally accepted and holds that the object of an OC is the single, shared view of liberal justice. This strict view treats the OC as the functional equivalent, now constructed by deliberation in the political domain, of TJ's single shared conception of justice that citizens incorporate into their views of the good.

However, questions remain about whether the family could also serve as a stand-in for a single, shared conception. Garthoff considers an alternative "loose" view of the OC in which a family of conceptions shares a constitutional consensus. If this reading is correct, it shifts the agreement represented by the OC to a level concerning procedures for making law. But if, at this level, citizens are now unified and working together, it appears we have already met an important stability condition without identifying principles of justice. Hence, as Garthoff points out, this loose view of the OC will owe an account of what exactly has assured this stability. If the loose view of the OC decouples stability and consensus on one conception of justice, in what sense does stability depend on an OC at all?[308]

Paul Weithman's (2011) brief discussion of the family contains a similar line of questioning about the OC. It appears as part of his argument that what ultimately solidifies the OC is the principle of legitimacy. He reasons as follows: insofar as the

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[307] Jonathan, Garthoff, "The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus Revisited," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 46, no. 2 (2012): 183-96.

[308] Garthoff, 187.

principle of legitimacy applied to constituent power implies that "essentials of the constitution must be acceptable to each member of the well-ordered society in light of the principles and values of justice as fairness….," it follows immediately that "'the exercise of [legislative] power is fully proper only when it is exercised in accordance with a constitution, the essentials of which all citizens as free and equal may reasonably be expected to endorse in light of [those principles and ideals].'"[309] Here Weithman's insertions inside [ ] are meant to remind us that what makes legislative power legitimate is that it is given by the fact that the constitution is accepted "in light of" whatever the conception of justice has turned out to be.[310] But this explanation does not go far enough to vindicate the idea of a loose OC (based on a family of conceptions of justice); it merely extends what we already know—that a liberal order is not bound to Jaf as the only conception that can establish constitutional essentials as legitimate.

Yet Weithman also notices that elsewhere Rawls speaks of constitutional essentials in very loose terms, specifying that "all citizens as free and equal may reasonably be expected to endorse them in light of principles and ideals acceptable to their common human reason."[311] The requirement that constitutional essentials are "acceptable to their common reason" appears to rule out the need for the citizens to settle on fixed principles to be unified at the constitutional stage.

Weithman means to emphasize Rawls's amenability to open-ended requirements ("acceptable to common reason"). This evidence is more promising support for a loose

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[309] Weithman, *Why Political Liberalism*? §III.
[310] Weithman, §III.
[311] Weithman, §III.

OC, and perhaps even for reading the family as allowing justice pluralism. But it is not dispositive on the question of whether the family itself can be the basis of cooperation. And Rawls's own words complicate the question.

Bearing in mind the ambiguities, I see reasons to consider the family as more than a pool of candidate views—which is to say, to take a view of justice pluralism seriously and to explore the implications. I proceed by assuming that liberal citizens could unify when the basis for their cooperation is the family itself.

Justice Pluralism

The focus going forward is on the circumstance in which liberal pluralism extends to how citizens conceive liberal justice even after their society is well-ordered. I envision more robust, far-reaching form of pluralism, and one we have reason to regard as a natural stage of development in a free society adjusted to reasonable pluralism.

This new possibility is *justice pluralism*, a circumstance in which citizens can unify and cooperate so long as they endorse a conception of justice belonging to the reasonable liberal family of views contains. On this understanding, the family is a multiplicity of distinct (though related) ideals and principles which can, in some combination, inspire allegiance and motivate liberal citizens to work together.

To put the idea more formally: justice pluralism denotes the idea that reasonable liberal citizens can still endorse as legitimate, and cooperate on the basis of, some admixture of values and principles, provided these have a pedigree in the family of reasonable conceptions of justice and are "compatible with essentials of public reason

and a democratic polity."[312] If it goes too far to say this amendment was Rawls's intent, I add this qualification: the family marks a *turn toward*, as opposed to a *turn to*, justice pluralism.

There are distinctively Rawlsian reasons in favor of this kind of liberal society and asking how and whether it could stabilize. The first is Rawls's openness to updating previous ideas as demonstrated by the revision following his insight that TJ "fails to allow for the condition of pluralism to which its own principles lead."[313]

Second, pluralism, as Rawls portrays it, is dynamic and evolving, resulting, as he puts it, from "the exercise of human reason within the framework of the free institutions of a constitutional democratic regime."[314] Ever-widening possibilities for securing stable political justice is an idea that is compatible with his recognition that expanding pluralism under conditions of freedom explains diverse comprehensive doctrines. It is reasonable to suppose that the family of reasonable conceptions would eventually function the same ways as comprehensive doctrines—which is to say, multiple conceptions would help form, and find some expression in, a stable liberal unity.

Third, in times of dynamic change any alternative to justice pluralism seems unrealistic. Even under ideal conditions, it seems unlikely that diverse but reasonable citizens could winnow down their (growing) variety of reasonable views of justice and unify for the right reasons around one. I envisage a system that fits a Rawlsian framework and is responsive to 21st century societal conditions. Taken in this light, the family's

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[312] Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* 441.

[313] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, 187.

[314] Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* iii.

broader role represents more than mere acceptance of the inevitable. It affirms political liberalism as an open-ended and folding process, the limits of which have not been reached.

For these reasons, an inquiry into justice pluralism is Rawlsian in spirit.[315] It lays the groundwork for Chapter V, which is an account of what a liberal society under justice pluralism would be like and how it could be stable. Therein I explain that insofar as an idealized liberal order has, by definition, properties that enable it to withstand disruption, a society unified around a family of views has improved prospects for stability because the family adds resilience. To anticipate this argument, the following sections consider specific ways that pluralism in the political domain could create stability problems.

Problems for Stability

The sections that follow consider challenges to stable liberal unity as understood in Rawls's developed thought. These are problems that could conceivably arise in a well-ordered liberal society when reasonable citizens differ, not only about their comprehensive doctrines but also about political justice. To clarify how stability problems might present, it helps to recall what stability consists in and the role of disruptive change.

In a well-ordered liberal society, the key to stability is allegiance—the sincere endorsement by citizens of shared ideals that shape institutions. Liberal unity consists in broad allegiance to ideals that define the system's structure and purposes. Unified citizens are motivated to cooperate—and for the right reasons, in an enduring way. In the

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[315] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 441.

Rawlsian model, the force of this motivation withstands shifting background conditions. Liberal systems are dynamic systems. They change within but also exist in a background that changes, even in ideal conditions. This fact is the impetus for Rawls's attention to and prioritization of stability. He conceives the just liberal order in ideal, but realistic conditions. From TJ and forward, it is understood that the system will face internal and external disruptions in the form of ordinary social changes. These inevitable changes — technological change, cultural drift, intergenerational tension—are built into the fabric of any dynamic society, ideal or not.

But the idealized liberal system is envisioned as sufficiently resourced to prevent disagreement from destabilizing cooperation. Rawlsian political liberalism specifies a stable unity on the front end for the purpose of immunizing society against controversies that could threaten cooperation. Public reason and associated political virtues are mechanisms by which citizens manage them in public and in a manner citizens see as just. So, an account of stability problems pertains to how the system meets both external and internal disruptions.

External disruptions occur outside the political domain and impact society's background conditions. They are pressures introduced by ordinary societal changes (technological innovations, cultural shifts) as well as more serious shocks and adverse events (such as a pandemic). They are not anomalous but can be expected to arise in conditions a contemporary liberal democratic society will face.

For two reasons, my discussion does not take up specific examples. First, it is outside the scope of this project to account for disruptions beyond those that arise in ideal conditions. Second, the list of specific illustrative possibilities for ideal conditions is

general and imagining details is too speculative to advance the discussion. Nor is doing so consistent with Rawls's approach. The key idea is that Rawls does not expect them to threaten unity if society is well-ordered.

The inescapable fact of external disruptions is significant to the extent that it portends internal disunity. External perturbations alone might not impact stability. The introduction of plural conceptions of political justice means they could become significant due to their ability to cause internal discord. Here we can say, generally, that if stability is not plausible for this liberal model, this defect will be attributable to its susceptibility to destabilizing internal disruptions that follow external ones.

Internal disruptions are conflicts and tensions that divide citizens and threaten their willingness to cooperate. We can assume they generally arise as reactions to some change in the background conditions. They appear in the political domain as political disagreements. Instability results when these disagreements create enough discord and disunity to interrupt citizens' motivation to cooperate.

If PL accounts for what makes stability possible in the political domain (on a strictly political conception) not all commentators are convinced the account works. Some commentators claim that plural views of justice will unavoidably jeopardize liberal stability. Even as it is a consequence of free institutions and a tradition of liberal toleration, expanding pluralism is its own species of disruptive change, and one that risks disunity. Skeptics contend that while he increasingly references to the family of liberal conceptions, Rawls does not fully explain why more pluralism will not make it harder to maintain cooperation. Gaus (2011), Thrasher and Vallier (2015) think it will. They see plural conceptions as too permissive to serve as a stable basis for cooperation. Plural

views about justice portend serious, ongoing dissent that can lead to deep and divisive disagreements. Regularized disagreement can be expected to add too much pressure to a citizenry trying to cope with uncertainty and change. This is not a trivial worry if stability in the face of disruption is condition for liberal justice. Though the critics grant that Rawls was correct to accommodate reasonable pluralism, they see extending it to justice as introducing vulnerability to psychological and social tendencies that (even in ideal conditions) work against mutual assurance and destabilize cooperation. Together their views bring out three specific stability problems stemming from pluralism about justice: 1. *contentiousness*; 2. *justification;* and *3. assurance.* Freeman (2006), Weithman (2011) and Quong (2010) offer insights that show why the skeptical views misunderstand Rawls ideas about political forms of reason. But their corrections do not explain how stability is assured in a more developed version.[316]

Contentiousness

Rawls sees liberal societies as unavoidably pluralistic. Scholars read the trajectory of Rawls work as a response to his recognizing the fact of reasonable pluralism. Rawls has a hopeful attitude toward pluralism. He does not see pluralism as an impediment to justice. But pluralism is expected to expand, and it is inherently contentious. If this fact is less troublesome if considered under ideal conditions, the models under consideration heighten the challenges society, and individual citizens must face, to figure out how to

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[316] See Weithman, 2011 and Jonathan Quong, *Liberalism without Perfection,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

accommodate pluralism in both the non-political and the political domains.[317] Consider

that political liberalism must intentionally treat two types of reasons as distinct but doing

so exposes difficulties. Jon Mandle (1999) points to Rawls's own concern with "the fact

that when we reflect even with the most noble of intentions, both collectively and

individually, it is simply unclear how justly to balance the competing claims, for

example, of freedom and equality."[318] William Galston (1989) insists that if citizens agree

on a conception containing commitments that are, to them, all reasonable enough, they

will still rank the arrangements as more or less reasonable. Thus, he questions how a

citizen accepts a view, some parts of which are viewed as less reasonable than some

alternative.[319]

We can expect that inevitable (mostly) ordinary societal changes can at times impact

cherished commitments. That a society is well-ordered around its overlapping consensus

on a specific conception of justice does not eliminate the fact that pluralism about justice

is a permanent state of affairs. In Rawls own words, reasonable pluralism is not "a mere

historical condition that may soon pass away; it is a permanent feature of the public

culture of democracy."[320] A pluralist society that constructs its consensus about justice

may struggle with justifying the way it meets changing conditions and new kinds of

disruption. In specific cases, the difficulties in interpreting urgency, or setting priorities,

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[317] The distinction between comprehensive doctrines and political values is not the ongoing focus in *A Theory of Justice*. Rawls assumes that all members of society will share the same understanding of the principle Jaf. But even then, it is only a partial comprehensive doctrine.

[318] Jon Mandle, "The Reasonable in Justice as Fairness," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 29, no. 1, (1999): 79.

[319] See W. A. Galston, "Pluralism and Social Unity," *Ethics* 99, no. 4 (1989): 711-726 and also J. F. Bohman, "Public Reason and Cultural Pluralism: Political Liberalism and the Problem of Moral Conflict," *Political Theory: An International Journal of Political Philosophy* 23, no. 2, 253-279.

[320] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 36.

could expose new tensions between political and non-political reasons. And the right approach might call for revising fundamental commitments about justice. In these respects, pluralism about justice could potentially add problems by heightening the potential for a chain reaction from external to internal disruptions, on then onward until allegiance is undone.

Justification Problems

Problems with justification arise from tensions and conflicts between citizens' political and (reasonable) non-political reasons. In PL Rawls discusses three kinds of justification:

1. *pro tanto justification* of the political consensus (which only takes into account political values);
2. *full justification,* by which citizens embed the political conception into their reasonable comprehensive doctrines for their own reasons; and
3. *public justification in the political society* once citizens recognize that the consensus has gained the support of all reasonable comprehensive doctrines.[321]

The trouble, according to Gerald Gaus (2011, 2014), has to do with Rawls's increasing openness to citizens drawing from their comprehensive non-political reasons.[322] In IPR, Rawls widens his view of public reason by loosening the guidelines for public justification.[323] The view now permits reasons derived from (reasonable) comprehensive doctrines for certain purposes, with the qualification that they are intelligible to others. Rawlsian scholars recognize this circumstance as "wide public reason," but Gaus

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[321] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 385.

[322] Gerald, Gaus, "A Tale of Two Sets: Public Reason in Equilibrium." *Public Affairs Quarterly* 25.4, 2011, 305-25.

[323] Rawls refers to this idea in IPR as "wide political culture." (See Rawls, *Idea of Public Reason Revisited,* 783).

advances a special term: *Deep Political Liberalism* [DPL].[324] Gaus points to the

difficulties when citizens are guided, on the one hand by reasons, that they hold as a

result of comprehensive doctrines and the other by reasons that are political. Justification

problems stem from the fact that [DPL], can allow both types to be considered.[325]

Gaus thinks that such justification challenges stem from unavoidable conflicts between

"two sets" of reasons—political and non-political—when both can underwrite citizens'

endorsement. He identifies the result of such conflicts as *justificatory instability*, or

difficulties associated with harmonizing moral and political reason that will disturb or

rule out the equilibrium of agreement that stability requires.

He further argues that this instability engenders two additional sub-problems:

ineffective endorsement and *defeated endorsement*.[326] In the first instance, his complaint

is that even though Rawls is committed to allowing reasons from an unrestricted set of

non-political reasons, Rawls still maintains that these must translate to political

(restricted) reasons if they are appealed to by discussants in their political roles (e.g.

judges, politicians, and other officials). Ineffective endorsement is the result of a wide

gap between moral and political reasons.

Another problem occurs when a moral reason—which comes from what he calls the

"unrestricted set," contains a reason which defeats a citizen's political reason for

endorsing the conception of justice, thus producing what he calls "defeated

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[324] Gerald F. Gaus, "The Turn to a Political Liberalism," in *A Companion to Rawls*, eds. Jon Mandle and David Reidy, 233-50 (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014) 243.

[325] Gaus, "The Turn to a Political Liberalism," 233-50.

[326] Gaus, "A Tale of Two Sets: Public Reason in Equilibrium," 307.

endorsement."[327] If DPL requires citizens to filter their full justification through both sets of their reasons, not only may they find themselves in a position of having to settle for less than full justification, they may also find that common political ground is hard to find. Gaus reads Rawls as allowing that satisfying all three stages of justification is not a necessary condition for political justification. But Gaus thinks it must be a condition for stability. Otherwise, the two problems of ineffective and defeated endorsement are problems for Rawls's account.

Assurance Problems

Rawls maintains that willing citizens will still require assurance that if they comply with accepted terms of liberal justice others will do the same. The assurance problem can be described as the problem of *conditional compliance*. Rawls admits to this requirement as early as TJ when he claims that people will not have enough reason to allow themselves to be regulated by their sense of justice without assurance that other will do the same. John Thrasher and Kevin Vallier (2015) see assurance as failing because it can only be confirmed by speech in the political domain.[328] They, like Gaus, envision that in the latest (wide) view, public reason allows too many reasons to influence deliberation. The presence of so much variety can easily give rise to misunderstandings. When liberal toleration widens public discourse so much, the consequence can be increasing "noise" or "cheap talk" (casual, undisciplined speech) that is cost-free and overshadows sincere political discourse. Citizens will be unable to always read others' reasons correctly. The

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[327] Gaus, 308.

[328] John Thrasher and Kevin Vallier, "The Fragility of Consensus: Public Reason, Diversity and Stability," *European Journal of Philosophy* 23.4 (2015): 2015, 933-54.

problem is that even a very few cases of suspecting others' sincerity will result in a cascade of doubts about their compliance. This effect will prevent mutual assurance and cause citizens to defect and thereby destabilize cooperation.

Gaus also understands Rawls as assuming assurance take the form of speech. People engaged in deliberation state their willingness to comply and cooperate. This is what Rawls is aiming for in the publicity requirement. Weithman (2011) follows Rawls in thinking that public knowledge of the OC is sufficient to solve the assurance problem. But Gaus sees additional problems here. He claims that speech is not enough—people will need to be assured by how others actually behave. He offers a game-theoretic explanation for why people cannot trust the speech of others. He uses the device of a two-person game to illustrate a version of the prisoners' dilemma that emerges when people communicate their intentions.

The view begins with the idea of basing a consensus on a family of conceptions. The family consists of liberal views, and many citizens will have sympathy for the reasons offered in support of any one member of the family. But citizens will differ in how they regard the members. They can conceivably be favorable to some members over others and view them as more reasonable. This ranking of family members will be different for different citizens. This situation produces a game-like scenario in which citizen A's best outcome in a public deliberation is for those who rank family members differently (B) to agree to the less-than-preferred ranking. So, if A is disingenuous, and does not really intend to comply with a different ranking, A will still be incentivized to state that they will comply even if their own ranking loses out, to "assure" B and get B to reciprocate. When this happens, the disingenuous citizen is gaming the system to induce B to commit

to cooperating with a different ranking than what B wants. Whether there are really cheaters like A, the problem illustrates why speech cannot be trusted as genuine. There can be disingenuous speech because citizens have the incentive to speak strategically.

This situation leads to the alternative—assurance through the observation that people comply even if the agreement reflects less than their preferred scenario. But another problem arises due to imperfect information. People will not ever know for certain that others are complying, nor can they know that others know they are complying. And, even worse, information can go wrong. People can be mistaken about whether others are complying. Here Gaus predicts a worrisome outcome as follows: people have different thresholds for tolerating others' non-compliance. Some people will stop complying with only a few defectors, while others may be able to tolerate more observation of non-compliance without losing assurance. The difficulty arises when imperfect information and false judgments about others' compliance pushes people past their tolerance threshold, the effect of which produces increasing amounts of non-compliance, pushing more and more people past their tolerance threshold. The result is a non-compliance cascade. At this point stability is impossible.

In light of these two problems: justificatory instability and assurance, Gaus rejects Rawls's model of DPL on the grounds that it is nearly impossible to stabilize.

Replies to Critics

Gaus's view overlooks the fact that if there are two sets of reasons informing political deliberation, political and non-political, they are both subject to the requirements of public reason in the political domain. Samuel Freeman's (2004) reading of what Rawls

means by "reasonable" reveals this problem for Gaus's game-theoretic objection.[329] As Freeman, notes, "for Rawls, reasonableness stands in for the notion of truth in moral philosophy."[330] A recollection of public reason clarifies Rawls's ideas of what it means to endorse a set of ideas about justice as "reasonable." Along with other commentators, Freeman (2004) shows how critics have misunderstood the kind of reasoning Rawls conceives as appropriate for politics, and why a correct interpretation rules out the possibility that the game-theoretic forms of conflict predicted by Gaus can arise when citizens reason from the perspective Rawls intended. According to this perspective, if one holds a view that very few others can accept, we ought not want it to prevail—because what is "reasonable" means more than simply what is "reasonable for me." As Rawls asks,

> …the second question concerns how political liberalism uses the term 'reasonable': Does the term express the validity of political and moral judgments or does the term merely express a reflective attitude of enlightened tolerance? [331]

Freeman also reminds that, "to give public reasons is to give reasons that we can reasonably expect that others can reasonably accept as democratic citizens, in view of their fundamental interests in maintaining the conditions of their freedom and equality."[332]

Thrasher and Vallier also misunderstand public reason. Their argument imports into political deliberating ideas about rational maximizing choice that would not meet the

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[329] Samuel Freeman, "Public Reason and Political Justifications," *Fordham Law Review*, 72 (2004): 2021.

[330] Samuel Freeman, "Public Reason and Political Justifications," 2021.

[331] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 385.

[332] Samuel Freeman, "Public Reason and Political Justifications," 2021.

criterion of reciprocity. They have raised an objection about rational behavior outside of politics and assumed it will infect political deliberation. As Rawls explains, the idea of public reason does not apply to the background culture with its many forms of nonpublic reason nor to media of any kind."[333]

Jonathon Quong (2010) agrees that Rawls specifies that we have to share some reasons. But he reminds that in a Rawlsian system, if citizens cannot endorse the view of justice without finding shared reasons that are political only, they are unreasonable. A person is reasonable in the political domain only if they treat reasoning from the political standpoint as conclusive—which disqualifies arguments based on unrestricted reasons (from comprehensive doctrines).[334]

Rawls addresses the priority of political reasons in his discussion of political conceptions:

> Second, again with respect to those same fundamental questions, the political values expressed by its principles and ideals normally have sufficient weight to override all other values that may come in conflict with them.[335]

Paul Weithman (2017) adds a further admonition against misunderstanding Rawls's broader intent. His most recent work extends Rawls's argument for stability.[336] Weithman contends the complete stability account was never made fully explicit by Rawls. He claims that stability is assured by citizens' need for autonomy. By this he means they can only fully realize their autonomy by accepting their citizenship role as

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[333] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 443-44.

[334] See Jonathan Quong, *Liberalism without Perfection,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[335] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 138.

[336] Paul Weithman, "Autonomy and Disagreement About Justice in Political Liberalism," *Ethics* 128, no. 1 (2017): 95-122.

necessary to realizing their good. This is a form of the congruence argument, but it differs from the account in TJ because it seeks to explain why the idea of full autonomy gives citizens reasons to let political reasons override their non-political values when they conflict. Weithman's argument supplies a possible answer to Gaus's worries above if it explains how conflicting political and non-political reasons would not conflict in the end—or that, if they did, the former would take immediate precedence. While I do not treat Weithman's interpretation as the final word on what Rawls meant by stability, I accept one of the important insights in his article: that when citizens appear to compromise, they may ultimately be endorsing a position simply because it meets Rawls's three requirements for any conception of justice to be liberal. If this is the case, we can say that they are cooperating sincerely and for political reasons—and thus for the right reasons.

Centering Justice Pluralism

The problems of stability for justice pluralism are the motivation for my Resilience View. Such problems are first a function of how justice pluralism is conceived, and then a result of unique vulnerabilities that arise when cooperation is based on a family of conceptions of justice. As I have previously indicated, I proceed with a model of justice pluralism with the aim of explaining how it can be stable. I have also allowed that my account of this model may be more permissive than Rawls's considered possible. Below I offer further explanation for why I think justice pluralism is plausible as a next stage of development following a political liberalism unified around an overlapping consensus. I reason here from the centrality of pluralism in the Rawlsian framework. We can expect

that reasonable pluralism is the background constraint that will define and shape liberalism's possibilities. A closer consideration of reasonable pluralism and its significance is in order.

As Rawls reminds in JaF, "The fact of reasonable pluralism limits what is practicably possible under the conditions of our social world . . ."[337] Even so, citizens will not naturally welcome pluralist conditions. In JAF Rawls notes that political philosophy's role is to help us reconcile our expectations with the fact of reasonable pluralism. Insofar as reasonable pluralism is permanent, Rawls insists that reconciliation to it is needed to counter the "frustration and rage against our society and its history."[338] As he explains, though "this fact is not always easy to accept . . . political philosophy may try to reconcile us to it by showing us the reason and indeed the political good and benefits of it."[339] Importantly, Rawls does not see reasonable pluralism is an impediment to justice. It is a "fact," but not a problem: "To see reasonable pluralism as a disaster is to see the exercise of reason under the conditions of freedom itself as a disaster."[340] He further reminds in PL that "we are not so much adjusting that conception to brute forces of the world but to the inevitable outcome of free human reason."[341]

Its difficulties notwithstanding, reasonable pluralism is ultimately a success term, insofar as it confirms the realization of the "effective exercise of freedom of thought and

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[337] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, 3.

[338] Rawls, 3.

[339] Rawls, 3.

[340] Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* xx.

[341] Rawls, 36.

expression."[342] To recognize it is to "accept and affirm our social world positively, not merely to be resigned to it."[343] Accepting reasonable pluralism thus prescribes the commitment to liberal toleration on which the stabilizing effects of the consensus depend.

It follows that reasonable pluralism leaves liberal citizens no choice but to somehow accommodate the multiplicity of reasonable comprehensive doctrines. This idea is explicitly developed in PL, wherein liberal justice is redefined as a consensus about justice worked out through deliberative processes that must remain "political not metaphysical."[344] To avoid privileging a particular moral standpoint, PL's idea of justice is "freestanding," specific to the "domain of the political" and takes the form of an overlapping consensus among citizens otherwise free to live by their private doctrines.[345] The insight of Rawls's political turn in PL is that it is unrealistic for a free society to expect that single, shared conception of justice will stabilize cooperation from within any comprehensive doctrine and without further political work. Among citizens with diverse moral views, "stability for the right reasons" is possible only when the basis for stable cooperation is neutral with respect to reasonable moral values and is a consensus that is exclusively political.

Some scholars note that though reasonable pluralism is portrayed as a sociological "fact," it is more accurately a judgment that turns on Rawls's distinctive account of

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[342] See, K. Johannsen. "Species of Pluralism in Political Philosophy," *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 55 (2021) 491-506.

[343] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, 3.

[344] This idea was introduced in an earlier article: J. Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 14, no. 3 (1985): 223-251.

[345] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 49.

reasonableness.[346] Indeed, the stability engendered by the exercise of public reason pertains exclusively to views that are reasonable.[347] Along these lines, participants, as reasonable persons among equals,

> …are ready to propose principles and standards as fair terms of cooperation and to abide by them willingly, given the assurance that others will do likewise. Those norms they view as reasonable for everyone to accept and therefore as justifiable to them; and they are ready to discuss the fair terms that others propose.[348]

By contrast, unreasonable persons "are unwilling to honor, or even to propose, except as a necessary public pretense, any general principles or standards for specifying fair terms of cooperation. They are ready to violate such terms as suits their interests when circumstances allow."[349] Thus, we can say that what anchors cooperation under reasonable pluralism is unity achieved through political deliberation enabled by the reasonableness of liberal citizens.

Free institutions allow diverse comprehensive doctrines to develop. This idea explains why Rawls distinguishes simple and reasonable pluralism. Reasonable pluralism triggers an obligation: political liberalism must do more than acknowledge diverse reasonable views, it must somehow address them because they are affirmed by reasonable citizens. In designating this subset of views as reasonable, the account confirms that are already purged of limited self-interested aims. They are the fruits liberal freedom expressed through free institutions.

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[346] K. Johannsen, "Species of Pluralism in Political Philosophy," 491-506. Also, Rawls discusses his account in *Political Liberalism,* 49.

[347] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 49.

[348] Rawls, 49.

[349] Rawls, 50.

Conceptual Ambiguities

Several conceptual ambiguities arise in an account of a liberal system in which citizens unify around a family of views. What determines the constituents of this family? A basic account of the family can be drawn from what Rawls says: they are reasonable and liberal. If views belong to a family, we can infer that constituent views have common commitments. Rawls does not specify any other demarcation line for a view's inclusion in the family.

The most promising possibility is a common set of features identified as the basic liberal commitments mentioned previously. Weithman thinks these requirements are the common denominator.[350] If we grant that the one intersection of all ideas in the family of conceptions is their liberal pedigree, we are left with a further question about how liberal citizens derive content they can endorse from it. Possibly, something close to a consensus could form based in the fact that enough ideas intersecting to allow one conception of justice to prevail at a given time. But in such a case we do not know, and are not told, how fully each participant is (or must be) committed to any one conception in the set that happens to prevail.

Alternatively, society might be regulated around the family with no further specification about the relative priority of ideals. Here citizens do not identify the superior reasonableness of any ideas or any single conception the citizenry can "own" as a chosen view.

Between these two options is a third in which no complete conception takes

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[350] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 50.

precedence, but some admixture of ideals drawn from the family are foregrounded, due to their being the most well-defended and their fit with the political culture. Rawls does not specify that citizens will favor a narrower subset of ideas sourced from the family of conceptions of justice. But if cooperation is based on a family of similar views, it seems this basis will be, for citizens, some subset of the total that the family contains.

Instead, it seems most plausible that citizens might find their own reasons for cooperation in a combination of elements from different views. On this interpretation, cooperation based on the family confirms that a citizen's allegiance is supported by some combination of *closer* ideas among close (liberal) family members they consider acceptable. But Rawls never fully explains how this selection might work in the minds of citizens, nor does he offer a clear picture of the result. We are not told whether, or how closely, the prevailing values will resemble a specific and complete view (such as Jaf, or some form of Restricted Utilitarianism) or whether citizens "cherry pick" parts of views within the family.

With the answer to the question about the family undecided, I take note of a suggestion Rawls offers in TJ. There he specifies that the comparative stability of a conception is a potent reason for preferring it. "One conception of justice is more stable than another if the sense of justice that it tends to generate is stronger and more likely to override disruptive inclinations and if the institutions it allows foster weaker impulses to act unjustly."[351] Rawls later says prospects for stability do not substitute for full justification. Which interpretation seems more likely to foster resilience?

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[351] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 16.

I proceed with justice pluralism without specifying that any of the family's contents take precedence. It anticipates this model as affording a novel account of stability. It also promises the most significant expansion of possibilities if it can be stable.

Stability Problems for Justice Pluralism

Understood as I have presented it, justice pluralism would seem to heighten divisions and thereby undercut stability. There is no obvious reason to expect this more pluralist liberal citizenry to overcome differences enough to unify and cooperate. Nor does Rawls fully explain how stability is possible without consensus on a single conception of justice. If any stable system has, by definition, properties that enable it to withstand disruption, and the liberal system is stabilized by uniting around a common conception of justice, the puzzle is how stability is assured when conceptions of justice remain plural. If cooperation is based on a family of reasonable conceptions of justice, as opposed to a single one, we have a considerably harder situation. Under my account of justice pluralism, ordinary pressures from outside the political domain will be reckoned with by a population of citizens who must agree on how to respond in accordance with whatever options afforded by a family of ideas about political justice are compatible with their diverse comprehensive doctrines. Even if political conceptions all meet the same criteria for membership in the family, the complexity alone seems enough to heighten conflicts, and threaten stability.

A further worry is that the family of conceptions is a dynamic equilibrium. To the extent that we can describe the family as a specific entity, it will have to become the new stable object that can stabilize cooperation. It is also a dynamic set with porous

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boundaries. In a pluralist order, it will refresh its contents in response to new thinking about liberal justice. If external disruptions regularly prompt internal ones as predicted in the form of pervasive disagreements about matters of justice, the worries about the instability of this model may be vindicated.

Reframing Expanded Pluralism

I argue that Rawls's idea of the family of liberal conceptions of justice provides conceptual space for the possibility of a liberal system that is stable but also resilient. I use resilience to reframe the expanded pluralism as a strength of the view, not merely a concession to endemic disagreements about justice.[352]

Cooperation without full consensus suggests a need for flexibility and regularized change at the level of conceptions about justice. The importance of accommodating liberal pluralism, and the prospect that resilience can temper difficulties, begin to reveal the older model of a stable overlapping consensus as problematic. Hence, while my view introduces new reasons to be optimistic about stabilizing cooperation, it abandons the stability of a conception of justice.

It seems to follow from the added pluralism that stability will be more general. A new account will aim, most generally, at stable cooperation as Rawls does. The specific object of stability will no longer be a single, shared conception of justice, which points to the family of conceptions as the new and most specific object. My view proceeds along this line and understands stability as a general, higher order ideal and interprets liberalism as allowing a dynamic system that manages pluralism through resilience at the level of the

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[352] As noted, there is too little evidence to attribute my proposed account of justice pluralism to Rawls, but enough to make it plausibly Rawlsian.

conception of justice.

Revising the object(s) of stability this way will call for a reframing of Rawls's earlier account of a society's being "well-ordered" by its ideas of justice, as was discussed previously. It also invites a reconsideration of "stability for the right reasons" and what it means for public ideas of justice to be reasonable enough to win and retain such a pluralist citizenry's allegiance such that they can be motivated to cooperate. Even if resilient conceptions of justice change in ways that are progressively more adaptive, there are questions about why citizens can tolerate the fact of regularized change enough to stay committed.[353]

It seems to follow as well that the selected views of justice on which cooperation is based at a given time can, as I argue, be resilient but need not be stable. I take it that if a family of conceptions of justice is the object of stability, it will have to exist continuously as a more or less unchanging equilibrium, and to do so it will have to contain the resources needed to deal with all manner of unpredictable changes that are part of ordinary background conditions. If it can be argued that this scenario is possible in ideal conditions, there are still questions about exactly how cooperation is stable when grounded by plural conceptions of justice.

I propose that the equilibrium to be stabilized is the family of liberal conceptions, the stability of which extends more generally to cooperation. The subset of ideas from this family that happens to be accepted in the political culture will exist in equilibrium until it

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[353] Cristina Bicchierri's recent book on norm creation, replacement, and abandonment is an account of the processes by which beliefs and norms change. Her work is largely empirical and pertains to non-ideal conditions, but it seems to lend support to my ideas about how citizens can be motivated for the right reasons amidst rapid change. (See Cristina Bicchieri, *Norms in the Wild: How to Diagnose, Measure, and Change Social Norms,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

is disrupted to the point where it no longer wins allegiance. It can then be replaced by a different configuration as needed in response to changing (disruptive) conditions. If the above is a defensible interpretation, it is also the definition of system resilience that enhances a more general stability following disruption by prompting a shift to a new equilibrium.

CHAPTER V. A RESILIENCE VIEW OF LIBERAL STABILITY

This chapter presents the central idea of this dissertation—a *Resilience View*. The aim is to show how a Rawlsian liberal system can be stable in the condition of justice pluralism. I explain how citizens could unify around a family of conceptions as opposed to a single, shared conception of justice, after which I account for how this can be so. I account for citizens' allegiance to the family of liberal conceptions of justice. I identify resilient aspects of public political culture that help preserve allegiance through disruption and change. I argue that though pluralism about justice generates disruptions, the system can be stable because pluralism also increases the liberal system's resilience. This unnamed attribute helps stabilize liberal cooperation. I propose the Resilience View as a model of liberalism that is both stable and resilient. I then explain how requirements for stability are satisfied by the family. Finally, the last section locates the Resilience View in the Rawlsian lexicon, showing why unity based on the family is sincere and not a *modus vivendi*, why it is a stable equilibrium, and why this model modifies Rawls's idea of well-orderedness but preserves its virtues. I conclude that the resilience of a pluralist liberal order unified by a stable family can assure the stable cooperation Rawls hoped for.

The Resilience View

The Resilience View [hereafter RV] is an account of stability under conditions of justice pluralism. My view is that a political culture reconciled to justice pluralism can also be expected to develop adaptive capacities or resilience. A resilient system can adapt to disruption, which means that under certain dynamic conditions, resilience helps preserve long term stability. I apply the idea of resilience to a liberal system and argue that justice

pluralism fosters capacities that increase resilience. Disruptions that divide citizens temporarily do not have to undermine stable cooperation because pluralism shapes civic culture in ways that orient citizens toward cooperation. In such a system, liberal resilience appears in various forms. Routine adaptations are seen as normal and appropriate responses in a pluralist context. Destabilizing disagreements can be offset by the flexibility of the family of related conceptions of justice. The family of views—each of which inspires cooperation in its own way—becomes the stable object that serves as the basis for liberal unity. As a plurality, a stable family (as opposed to a single conception) fosters adaptative open-minded responses to disagreement. It does so by offering options for seeing a dynamic society as reasonable and just. By expanding the pool of "right reasons" the family makes the system more resilient to defection in the face of disagreements. Because it remains constant, the family itself stabilizes cooperation. Thus, RV's main argument is that this unnamed system attribute—resilience—is a dividend of justice pluralism that allows this most pluralist liberal society to be just, stable and well-ordered. If RV is possible, it offers a fresh take on the relevance and durability of Rawlsian liberal model.

Prospects for Resilience

Proposing resilience as a possible solution to worries about stabilizing this system is not an exercise in blind faith. There is reason to expect to find it. Drawing from resilience theorists' models for predicting and assessing system resilience (as discussed in Chapter II), we can point to favorable prospects for finding resilience in justice pluralism. This analysis involves interpreting how a Rawlsian liberal system characterized as such

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exhibits four *resilience indicators* as follows: *robustness, redundancy, resourcefulness, and rapidity.*[354]

Robustness

The term 'robustness' is sometimes treated as if its meaning is equivalent to 'stability.' In the resilience literature it is not the same, though it is not always easy to see a distinction. The generic meaning is that it is a system's relative strength—the system is strong when it might easily be weaker than it is. For the present purpose, a robust system appears stabilize-able, if its stability is unconfirmed. To describe a system as robust is to say something like *it has a lot going for it, even if we cannot guarantee it will be stable if the environment changes.*

In the present discussion, robustness expresses the idea that even if there are threats to stability under justice pluralism, the system is not so fragile that collapse is immediate or inevitable once it is disrupted. A Rawlsian system could be considered robust in the sense that if there are weak spots, there are strong aspects (such as resilience) that can, in combination, potentially counteract them.

I see robustness as linked to the *gravitas* of an idea as important as justice. The liberal system's robustness stems from the fact that citizen allegiance to its ideals is not a trivial matter. The motivation to unify and cooperate in the political domain is given by basic capacities in moral psychology—in this case, the two moral powers. Rawls has made liberalism robust from the start by conceiving persons as capable of and by nature inclined to form an idea of justice (a non-trivial matter). They are thus powerfully

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[354] Martin, P. Sunley, B. Gardiner and P. Tyler, "How Regions React to Recessions: Resilience and the Role of Economic Structure," *Regional Studies* 50, no. 4 (2016): 561-585.

motivated to see justice actualized and to live in ways that conform to their conception of it. This motivation represents a type of strength for a liberal system that is rendered ineffectual in regimes based on coercive power. So understood, robustness is not stability, nor is it an assurance of stability prior to the formation of liberal unity. But I contend we can identify system robustness as the aim of justice combined with the inherent psychological orientation toward justice that characterizes human beings. The key, for this analysis, is that this construal means liberalism is robust irrespective of how citizens solidify their unity.

Redundancy

Redundancy is another resilience indicator expressed by a non-specific term. Some interpretation is called for. The word 'redundant' can have, in ordinary language, pejorative or negative meanings—as an excess that is not needed or necessary. But this is not the usage in resilience theory, according to which redundancies are fallback options in the event of a crisis and thus desirable. On this usage, 'redundancy' is understood in quantitative terms. How many substitutions are available if a crucial component of the system fails or stalls?

In a liberal political system, if survival means stable cooperation, we can understand redundancies as reasons in favor of cooperating, or ones that could dissuade citizens from defecting. Put differently, we might ask: how likely is it that citizens can find right reasons for allegiance if disruptions affect mutual assurance? To the extent that such reasons are plentiful enough to be redundancies, the details involve forms of political reasoning discussed in later sections. But the question is whether, if citizens persist in

searching for reasons, their search can find purchase.

Here I propose that reconceiving the basis of cooperation as a plurality of views—the family—fortifies the liberal system in a manner that resilience analysts would interpret as adding redundancies. Among the family's kindred viewpoints are plural reasons for sincere endorsement and alternative ways of seeing society's response to change as justified and legitimate. If public reason engages reasons acceptable (as reasonable) to all, the family increases the options. The family thus represents redundancies in the form of plural justificatory reasons that can answer doubt. Such redundancy assures citizens who appeal to the family that others, too, will find in it reasons to resist the temptation to defect.

Resourcefulness

Resourcefulness, as an indicator of resilience, corresponds to a tendency toward novel ways of adapting to threats. The indicator is linked to redundancy but the capacity it describes is attitudinal. Resourcefulness connotes creative thinking and openness to experiment. My take on the resourcefulness of liberal systems is that it follows from liberal pluralism. We already know that Rawls sees liberal pluralism as the consequence of freedom and a condition that expands. Resourcefulness is to be expected in a free liberal order that sees itself as a plurality. Liberal freedom invites new ideas and introduces new possibilities in communal life. Non-political forms of pluralism (new identities, lifestyles, cultural practices) will be expressed in widening pool of reasonable comprehensive doctrines. The content of public reason draws from this growing diversity—which will encourage resourcefulness. Insofar as public deliberation will

familiarize citizens with plural perspectives in their own society, it can be expected to cultivate their curiosity about and openness to the benefits of their society's "resources." Some commentators have argued that liberal toleration is more than being resigned to differences but should instead reflect a genuine appreciation of the conditions of freedom that make differences possible.[355]

Rapidity

As mentioned in Chapter II, rapidity is an indicator that seems inapplicable in idealized liberal political order. Rapidity here refers to *time-to-recovery*. One might wonder what time scale is relevant since Rawlsian stability is thought to persist across generations. On the usual framing, time-to recovery in the political system means how quickly the system responds in a stability-preserving way when it encounters disruptions.

This incomplete treatment is all that can be said without specific details. That said, ideal theorizing establishes one certainty. In non-ideal conditions—which is to say, in real-world cases of system resilience, it makes sense to ask how quickly the system can act and whether it will. For the idealized liberal system, responding (to whatever) in a timely way is not contingent. If it can be argued that the system can respond in the ways I will propose, it will. Its capacity to do so is a fixed trait, even if responses vary with situational details. To the question of rapidity for an idealized system, the answer will be "rapid enough" to prevent reaching some threshold beyond which allegiance is not assured. Thus, we can say that possession of capacities to respond appropriately in the service of justice, assures that the system will exercise them when called for and in a

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[355] For a thorough treatment of reasoning norms and reasonable responses see Anthony Laden, *Reasoning: A Social Picture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

timely way.

Reconceiving Stability

This section explains a defining feature of justice pluralism: the family becomes the object of stability. Jonathan Garthoff (2016) contends that the prevailing understanding of Rawls's stability is incomplete and that it has a more significant role in the entirety of Rawls's work than recent scholarship has recognized. He observes that judgments about stability play an "adjudicative role" amongst conceptions of justice even in a liberal democratic society and identifies stability as being "as significant and distinctively Rawlsian as justice as fairness itself."[356]

Justice pluralism describes the circumstance in which unity is based on a plural family of views of justice instead of a consensus on one that is shared. The central aim of stability is the assurance of liberal cooperation. In Rawls's accounts, this aim is linked to the single conception as the stable object which, by extension, stabilizes cooperation. A new interpretation will require an account of how the family can be the object of stability, and why it can stabilize cooperation. Whether the discussion settles the matter, it offers reasons to see the stable family as a plausible idea.

The Family as the Object of Stability

As I have conceived it, justice pluralism focuses on maintaining social unity on the basis of a set of conceptions of justice that diverse but liberal citizens can recognize as reasonable and liberal. This account advances the idea that the family of conceptions of justice will become the most specific object to be stabilized, with the more general effect

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[356] Garthoff, "Rawlsian Stability," 295.

of stabilizing cooperation. Again, the *object* of stability is not to be confused with the goal of stability—which is stable cooperation.

To put this role for the family in context, it helps to recall Rawls's evolving understandings of the relation between stable ideas of justice and stable cooperation (discussed in Chapter III). In Rawls's early theorizing, the object of stability is first the conception of justice. In TJ, achieving this goal represents and enables the full exercise of the two moral powers. Rawls's makes statements to this effect for Jaf. For TJ's well-ordered society, the stabilizing feature is Jaf, the single, shared conception of justice. The conception can function as the stable object because it is endorsed by all and congruent with individual conceptions of the good. A common commitment to Jaf generates an enduring motivation to cooperate and thereby assures stable cooperation.

Later, in PL, accommodating diverse comprehensive moral views requires a strictly political conception. PL treats Jaf as one political conception among others that could be identified by an overlapping political consensus [OC]. The OC is constructed through deliberation and the exercise of public reason. It becomes the stable basis of cooperation because liberal citizens are unified by their sincere endorsement of the OC for the right reasons. The OC is exclusive to the political domain, but unity is still based on a singular commitment. In this sense, the OC is the functional equivalent of the single, shared conception that assures stable cooperation in TJ.

For justice pluralism, conceptions delineated as a family of views will also be sourced from the political culture, since they represent the pool of ideas supplying candidates for the OC. For this reason, the stability of the family can be expected to provide the same assurances, in mostly the same ways, as the single political conception. Accordingly, we

can say of the family—as was said of the overlapping consensus—that it is stable "for the right reasons."

We can also say that if citizens regard the family as the basis for their unity, they are in familiar terrain. The family in its entirety, though not seamlessly aligned with everyone's values, is nevertheless recognizable as a familiar set of ideals. Its origins establish that the views within already enjoy a certain primacy in the political culture. We can further rely on the idea that citizens who endorse reasonable comprehensive doctrines will endorse, as part of their doctrine, some conception of justice that will belong. In the account of the OC, Rawls tells us that political debates about justice will appeal to these conceptions and that doing so can settle major questions:

> Public political discussion, when constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice are at stake, are always, or nearly always, reasonably decidable on the basis of reasons specified by one of a family of reasonable liberal conceptions of justice, one of which is for each citizen the most (more) reasonable.[357]

Likewise, in JAF Rawls emphasizes the family's status as reinforcing the legitimacy of the constituent and its essentials: "the family of basic political values expressed by its principles and ideals have sufficient weight to override all other values that may normally come into conflict with them."[358]

Aspects of Stability Compared

Jonathan Garthoff (2012) analyses stability as an ideal property consisting of four interdependent aspects: "societal self-perpetuation, liberal legitimacy, civic friendship,

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[357] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, xliii.

[358] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, 183.

and societal co-deliberation," all of which must be realized.[359] To show how the family can function as the stable object, I propose to treat these aspects as requirements for stability without consensus on specific principles. The aim is to show that the family can stable because it can meet them. As Garthoff explains, these aspects are interdependent constituents that are mutually reinforcing.[360] I argue the four requirements need not be realized at the level of any one view in the family. Instead, they may be understood as reinforcing one another across multiple views, such that family realizes each, if in a more general way than does a single, shared view. Below I consider each aspect to evaluate whether it is assured by a family of conceptions of justice.

Societal Co-Deliberation

Garthoff uses the term 'societal co-deliberation' to capture fundamental liberal ideas of shared governance and self-rule. For a single conception, societal co-deliberation means that the OC is the convergence of reasons following public deliberation in which all are either participants or represented. The OC is seen as justified by citizens "for the right reasons" because they are collectively its authors.

Rawls restricts the family to a set of reasonable and liberal views. To unify a liberal citizenry, a family of conceptions of justice must make no concessions in definitively reinscribing freedom and autonomy. If citizens do not endorse every idea belonging to the family, they will still be able to find, among its constituent ideas, ones they freely endorse. The OC is certified by public reason; likewise, the family's ideals can be known

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[359] Garthoff, "The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus Revisited,"184.
[360] Garthoff, 184.

and compared, and thus will also meet a publicity requirement. I contend that the ideas eligible for inclusion, if they are not always fully deliberated, will be regarded as reasonable enough by all. Because Rawls has defined the family as representing candidate views for the OC, they will be political. Insofar as these views are informed by diverse comprehensive doctrines, such affinities will be visible. Whether the ideas are tested in the same way as ones representing a consensus, they are always subject to scrutiny and to justification standards for public reason. In this sense, the family is the product of societal co-deliberation and its stability is "sustained by fully autonomous activity and by attitudes that are voluntarily affirmed."[361] Here we can also invoke Rawls's comments on the OC:

> The idea of an overlapping consensus is easily misunderstood given the idea of consensus used in everyday politics. Its meaning for us arises thus: we suppose a constitutional democratic regime to be reasonably just and workable, and worth defending.[362]

Even as a plurality, the family's views will be worth defending and thus recognized as ones that, if not given the same priority by everyone, will satisfy the most important conditions—public, reasonable, liberal, and justifiable by reasons admissible in political domain.

Societal Self-Perpetuation

A stable liberal order will endure on its own strength across successive generations. Societal self-perpetuation means that a society's ideals appeal to citizens and inspire their sustained commitment. They endure across generations and must have relevance for

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[361] Weithman, *Why Political Liberalism?* §III.

[362] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 39.

citizens whose expectations for their future shift with changing times. This aspect of stability also requires that present generations are motivated to educate younger citizens values of the political culture.

I argue that a family's self-perpetuation is assured by at least the same strength of allegiance as enables a shared conception to endure. And it is potentially more sustainable. Here it we may note the importance of representation. The family is as likely as a single view to resonate over time because it speaks to more generations at once. If it lacks the normative force of fixed principles agreed to by all, it has broader appeal from the start. The fact of its inclusivity can be expected to strengthen allegiance to the family of views across living generations. As a plurality rooted in political culture, it is non-static; its dynamic evolution affords citizens more options and more chances to locate their own commitments among its views. In this way, the family's reach continuously mediates against irrelevance. Allegiance to a family of views is more likely to be stable over time because it is rejuvenated by successive generations and makes visible ideas with which more living generations can identify.

Civic Friendship

> When men are secure in the enjoyment of the exercise of their own powers, they are disposed to enjoy the perfections of others, especially when their several excellences have an agreed place in a form of life the aims of which all accept.[363]

When cooperation is based on a stable family, the exercise of public reason depends more than before on the citizenship relation. In Rawlsian terms, this relation is characterized by reciprocity and civic friendship. Civic friendship is one of the strengths of a liberal order

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[363] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 459.

that contributes to its stability. Such friendship describes a citizen-to-citizen relation akin to appreciative, warm regard, though it is not an imitation of private friendship. Rawls tells us that civic friendship is essential. It is an affiliative tie that assures the continued work of politics. It bears reminding that political activity is inconsistently rewarding and gratifying. Cooperation with different others can be labor-intensive and discouraging. Its stability is reinforced if there is positive regard among citizens.

But justice pluralism, stabilized by a family of conceptions of justice, potentially burdens civic friendship by introducing a potential for discord and disagreement. Arguably, the diversity of ideas about justice could also make political discourse more restrained and cautious. In both cases, more pluralism diminishes prospects for stability. If these are causes to be concerned about whether the family creates inhospitable conditions for civic friendship, Melissa Yates (2012) argues that burdens of judgment foster respect, not disdain, for reasonable disagreement:

> … people can defend a wide range of competing beliefs and values about religious and moral matters without being guilty of erroneous or irrational thinking. I suggest that we describe this deliberative attitude as respecting the fact of reasonable disagreement. In other words, the acceptance of the burdens of judgment should lead citizens to respect reasonable disagreement.[364]

There is further reason to be optimistic that the family encourages civic friendship if we assume that citizens are and will remain adjusted to its continued existence, irrespective of whether it underwrites their motivation to cooperate. A family of reasonable liberal conceptions is already perennial so long as there is pluralism in the political domain. If

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[364] Melissa Yates, "Political Liberalism and Respect for Citizens as Reasoners," *The Review Journal of Political Philosophy* 9 (2012): 107-130.

the family is the stable object, it should generate civic friendship, just any single

conception would, because civic friendship is tied not to the conception but to the sense

of justice. As Weithman (2011) points out,

> Rawls sees the sense of justice as arising as a consequence of three psychological laws: the affection for others, the trust for them that develops over time, and the wish for them to benefit from just social cooperation. Jaf is inherently stable because the persistence of the scheme generates, in accordance with the second psychological law, inclinations which further support it.[365]

Further, Rawls states in IPR, that civic friendship is a relation specified by public reason,

as follows:

> …the ideal of civic friendship is arrived at by starting with the idea or the concept of the relation among citizens and using the principles of public reason to specify an ideal of how citizens are to treat one another in public political discussion.[366]

If principles of justice (or a family) are stable they will engender certain attitudes. In this

respect stability begins by taking a psychological form.[367] The stability of convictions

will in turn inspire further loyalty from and among citizens. The resulting level of

genuine commitment is shared and known. It immunizes the political environment from

unrest that could stem from lack of buy-in. This background of public commitment is

what enables civic friendship that will support the ongoing stability of the family of

conceptions.

Liberal Legitimacy

Liberal legitimacy is an aspect of stability that reinforces the commitment to cooperate.

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[365] Weithman, *Why Political Liberalism?* §III, referring to *A Theory of Justice*, 502.

[366] Weithman, §III, referring to *A Theory of Justice*, 502.

[367] George Klosko, "Rawls's Argument from Political Stability," *Columbia Law Review* (1994): 94.

Citizens have reason to cooperate with exercises of state power of they view as justified.[368] Legitimacy refers to coercive institutions' correspondence to the freely chosen ideals of justice that prevail and which citizens have accepted. This match confirms that citizens can see as legitimate the exercises of state power required to enforce laws. Legitimacy enables social trust, and the assurance of compliance by others that sustains the motivation of each citizen to cooperate. Tal Brewer (2002) presents legitimacy as the fundamental problem that PL must solve, because the idea of the social contract implies voluntary consent. And, though the laws to which we are subject seriously impact us, we have little options for refusing to comply.[369] We are born into our societies and those societies shape us.[370] Meanwhile, the state has a "near monopoly on coercive force, and this threat seems capable of securing acquiescence even to morally dubious demands."[371] Liberalism denies the permissibility of certain forms of coercion.[372] Brooke Ackerly (2015) points out that legitimacy assures the neutrality of the state with respect to plural comprehensive doctrines. "Only by coercion could the state favor one of these conceptions and suppress its rivals. But coercion is not compatible with a well-

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[368] Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* 216.

[369] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* 15.

[370] Rawls, 94.

[371] Brewer, "A Review Essay on John Rawls' Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*,"* 100-15.

[372] Some theorists claim that the answer to this question is a principle of respect for persons. This brand of respect links back to our capacity for rationally justifying our convictions. Acknowledging such respect is recognizing our ability to have reasons for action and to be able to assess our own reasons. Coercion risks denying the ability of the other to act based on reasons. Not only do forced rules fail to inspire people's endorsement; coercing obedience treats a person's rationality as a mere means. The respect principle means that others' views must be as justifiable to them by reason as ours are to us. Everyone who is coerced should be able to endorse political principles on the expectation that others have their own reasons for agreeing. Thus, even if everyone does not explicitly agree on respect for persons, there is a form of respect built into the model. (See Charles Larmore, "Political Liberalism: Its Motivations and Goals," in *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy*, eds. David Sobel, Peter Vallentyne, and Steven Wall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 63-88).

ordered liberal democratic, pluralistic society."[373] Leif Wenar (2017) emphasizes this same idea as a conundrum: "no comprehensive doctrine can be accepted by all reasonable citizens, and so no comprehensive doctrine can serve as the basis for the legitimate use of coercive political power." But at the same time, "reasonable pluralism softens but does not solve the challenge of legitimacy: how one law can legitimately be imposed on diverse citizens?"[374]

The key idea is that democratic citizens must have full authorship of the laws to which they are subject, and these laws must be grounded in the accepted political ideals. For this notion to carry weight, citizens will have to be offered an acceptable justification for laws they must obey. Otherwise, the idea that citizens are truly the authors is "ideological cant."[375]

If fixed principles of justice (society's shared conception of it) establish the standard for liberal citizens' acceptance of the constitution and its essentials as legitimate, the present question concerns whether and how cooperation based on a stable family will serve to underwrite and verify the legitimacy of society's laws and the state's coercive role.

Wenar's discussion offers some support for the idea that the family can be seen as legitimate. In his explanation of how reasonable pluralism poses problems for legitimacy, he reminds that the political conception of justice that can underwrite the legitimacy of laws comes from political culture:

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[373] Brooke, Ackerly, "John Rawls: An Introduction," *Perspectives on Politics*, 4, no. 1 (2006): 80.

[374] Leif Wenar, "John Rawls", https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/rawls/. Also see PL 100-01.

[375] Brewer, "A Review Essay on John Rawls' Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*,"*100-15.

For Rawls, there is only one source of fundamental ideas that can serve as a focal point for all reasonable citizens of a liberal society. This is the society's public political culture. Since justification is addressed to others, it proceeds from what is, or can be, held in common; and so we begin from shared fundamental ideas implicit in the public political culture in the hope of developing from them a political conception that can gain free and reasoned agreement in judgment.[376]

This statement confirms that a family of conceptions can assure legitimacy if it can win the support of (now) more diverse citizens. If what persuades citizens to accept the political conception of justice is its provenance in their political culture, the same condition is satisfied in the case of the family, and in the say way extends to the question of legitimacy. Fabienne Peter (2007) explains the liberal principle of legitimacy as "the fundamental building block" of a political conception of justice and requires a political liberalism that is "doctrinally autonomous" which is to say that the political conception depends completely on public justification.[377] As explained in the above discussion of *societal co-deliberation*, this, too, is a standard that the family, as a collection of strictly political conceptions, could meet.

But as Brewer reminds, "The exercise of political power must meet a very high standard of justification. Accordingly, it can only be legitimate if it accords with basic principles justifiable to all citizens on terms that each can reasonably be expected to accept."[378]Again, we have established already that the family's constituent views make

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[376] Leif Wenar, "John Rawls", https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/rawls/. (See also Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* 100–01).

[377] Fabienne Peter, "Rawls'(s) Idea of Public Reason and Democratic Legitimacy," *Journal of International Political Theory* 3, no. 1 (2007): 129-143.

[378] Brewer thinks that Rawls's liberal principle of legitimacy is the "closest thing his anti-foundationalist theory has to a foundational postulate." (See Talbot Brewer, "A Review Essay on John Rawls' Justice as Fairness: A Restatement," *The Hedgehog Review* 4, No. 1 (Spring 2002): 100-15, also see Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* 40-1, 89-92.)

up the content of public reason. What is lost, in shifting from a single conception, is the purported alignment between the constitutional essentials and the fixed principles. But Rawls speaks of the sense of justice as engendered by constitutional essentials after they are accepted. Brewer comments further on what establishes legitimacy in JAF:

> To meet that standard, Rawls has sought in *Justice as Fairness* to recast his theory in the shape of what he now calls a purely political liberalism--that is, a liberalism built up from normative commitments found in the public political culture of Western liberal democracies and tailored to the narrow task of governing specifically political aspects of political power is regarded as the power of free and equal citizens as a collective body.[379]

Insofar as the family is less specific than a single conception, it may be harder for citizens to see state power as legitimate based on its contents. I contend that it is so in the sense that it may require more effort and interpretive work. But as previously noted, the members of the family share the same provenance—they are all normative commitments found in the public political culture. As such, they will be able carry justificatory weight just as the single conception can.

The Family as the Basis of Cooperation

Having identified the ways in which the family assures the four aspects of the family as identified by Garthoff, we can now ask what enables this stable family to serve as the basis for liberal cooperation.[380] Here it is relevant that Garthoff represents the aspects of stability as specifying relationships between and among citizens—to one another, the state, and future generations—that obtain in a stable liberal order. Thus, we can consider a further and fifth aspect of stability—a relational aspect. This additional aspect flows

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[379] Brewer, "A Review Essay on John Rawls' Justice as Fairness: A Restatement,*"*100-15.

[380] Garthoff, "The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus Revisited,"183-96.

from and reinforces the four in Garthoff's discussion. But it is also its own stand-alone requirement in the sense that it presupposes a moral psychology beyond the two moral powers. By this I refer to the pro-social or *other-regarding* orientation that is sometimes included in accounts of moral agency. Liberal cooperation, if underwritten by a citizenship duties and allegiance to abstract ideas, also confirms relationship as a basic condition of life that defines the political domain as well. If citizens incorporate the first four aspects into their political values, they have confirmed their ability to see themselves as situated in communal life and as part of a shared enterprise with common aims. This is significant, because many commentators have protested what they view as Rawls's overcommitment to autonomy and the idea of the abstract individual. The limitations of space prevent me from elaborating, but such criticisms are not well-founded. Once we recognize the extent to which Rawlsian liberal theory links political interconnectedness and practices (public reason) to citizenship virtues, it becomes clear that the person's experience in both society and the narrower political context is defined relationally.

From this idea it is easy to see a plural family of conceptions as the basis for cooperation. Cooperation, a fundamentally pro-social behavior, is assured by the relational aspect of stability that follows from the family's fulfilling the other four aspects.

Understood this way, stability is a higher order ideal in a liberal system than Rawls's previously indicated. This reframing means that stability is now one degree of separation away from any single conception of justice that happens to prevail and regulate—which already implicit since different citizens, even in perfectly ideal justice, are affirming different views.

The Role of Resilience

This section is an account of resilience in the liberal political system under justice pluralism as I conceive it. The relation I propose is between resilience and stability, where the former plays an enabling role. At issue is the puzzle of securing stability under more fluid conditions than liberal society faces in previous accounts. Rawlsian stability is not contingent—it establishes the system as continuing indefinitely if things work properly, which explains why stabilizing cooperation is the end goal. Within a Rawlsian framework, the stability question for justice pluralism is not complete. It does not follow immediately that stabilizing the family extends to cooperation. In PL, the strength of shared allegiance to the OC motivates enduring cooperation, but the certainty afforded by an OC is now out of the picture. If citizens can initially form an allegiance to a family of conceptions and cooperate, we have not seen why their allegiance persists over time and through internal and external disruptions. For justice pluralism, an account of stability also requires attention to the influence of pluralism on the nature of disruptive disagreements and the ways the liberal order can justifiably meet them. A prior discussion explains why the family is adequately resourced to inspire allegiance and cooperation initially. We need an account of how it can stay that way. I submit resilience as an idea that could solve this puzzle.

Framing Liberal Resilience

What does the attribute of resilience do, in and for, a liberal system? My answer is: resilience in the liberal system enables it to cope with disruptive disagreements brought by justice pluralism so that cooperation remains generally stable.

Resilience manifests at different levels and in specific forms. As a general rule, system resilience is evidenced by two types of responses: *adaptation* and *recovery.* Both correspond to internal disruptions—in the form of disagreements or conflicts over societal changes—that have implications for matters of basic justice. Both have a reinforcing effect on general stability and apply specifically to citizens' allegiance and commitments.[381]

The system under consideration—a well-ordered liberal society—is a stable equilibrium. Among its properties, or attributes, is resilience. We can represent this generally as "a resilient and stable well-ordered society." On my view, resilient responses (adaptation or recovery) involve interactions at specific system levels. These sites are also in equilibrium and represented by 1. a family of conceptions, accepted as the content of public reason; and at a more specific level, 2. citizens' allegiance, understood as the aggregation of their support for this content.

First, the stable family of ideas is a generally stable equilibrium at a higher system level. Constituent ideas share a family resemblance if they do not all overlap at a single point. I have stipulated that this family is "accepted" as a basis for unity and cooperation. Acceptance of the family includes its fixed conditions for membership—*liberal* and *reasonable*. Its acceptance is confirmed by its broad public recognition as liberalism's accommodation to justice pluralism, and by references to its contents in public political deliberation.

Second, citizens have allegiance to this family to the extent that they endorse its

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[381] Setting aside ambiguities already noted, I treat these responses as distinct, but only to mark the advantages of justice pluralism explained later.

constituent ideas, or at least recognize them as among ideals in the shared political culture. I interpret liberal allegiance as a separate and specific equilibrium. Allegiance, motivated by the right reasons, refers to citizens' own reasons. Citizens do not fully endorse all ideas in the family, even if they regard all as worthy of inclusion. The family is not a consensus on fixed principles, so public deliberation will take up matters of basic justice. Admissible reasons are not all justificatory (even with an OC). We should therefore expect justice pluralism to introduce doubts that come and go, which means allegiance, even in ideal conditions, is elastic. In equilibrium, allegiance represents the state in which conviction outweighs doubt. An uptick in disagreement can shift it below a threshold and into disequilibrium. If the allegiance in an equilibrium state cannot be constant, it needs to obtain often enough or to a degree that can motivate and sustain cooperation.

These possibilities explain the significance of resilience. If a dynamic set of attitudes constitutes allegiance, and this set is susceptible to disruption, *it must also tend toward equilibrium*—which is to say, it must be resilient enough to move back into balance. Here we can recall the definition of a resilient equilibrium as a set of interacting forces that, if disrupted from its balance, will activate its internal capacities to regain it.

For comparison, a stable equilibrium is (relatively) immune to disruptions. As we have also seen, some stable systems are dynamic collections of *nested equilibria*. In such cases, general stability is conditioned on stability at lower levels, or alternatively, resilience to disruptions at these levels that keeps the system away from stability thresholds. We can now understand why, in a pluralist liberal order, resilience plays a crucial role. It acts to maintain important internal equilibria (allegiance) that are disrupt-

able. Hence, liberal resilience denotes capacities for adaptation and recovery of allegiance in pluralist conditions. Such capacities insure against doubts becoming chain reactions that lead to loss of assurance and defection from cooperation.

How does the process work? Attitudes or belief changes have the potential to mitigate disagreements and "refuel" disrupted allegiance. These are adaptations that allow a shift to a new specific equilibrium—a refreshed allegiance inspired by new considerations (new reasons). Alternatively, recovery is the effect of restoring a previous state. Recovery follows a resilient response that activates some part of the system (extant reasons) that reinforces allegiance in the face of disagreement. I envision adaptive responses as preceded by a search for new ideas, and recovery as the result of reflecting on and reconsidering familiar justifications.

Resilience at specific levels takes the forms discussed. Predicated of the whole system, liberal resilience is an attribute engendered by liberal citizens' willingness to accept justice pluralism. It supports stability in an ongoing way. Insofar as adaptive and restorative responses also reinforce a general disposition to cooperate, resilience is a self-reinforcing system attribute.[382]

We now know enough to understand that a Resilience View sees liberalism's resilient capacities as supporting liberal unity and stable cooperation based on a family of

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[382] It is worthy of notice that the self-reinforcing aspect of resilience is one of several contiguities between RV and Rawls's ideas in *A Theory of Justice*: "It is an important feature of a conception of justice that it should generate its own support. That is, its principles should be such that when they are embodied in the basic structure of society men tend to acquire the corresponding sense of justice. Given the principles of moral learning, men develop a desire to act in accordance with its principles. In this case a conception of justice is stable," (*TJ*, 138) and elsewhere, "If a conception of justice is unlikely to generate its own support, or lacks stability, this fact must not be overlooked. For then a different conception of justice might be preferred" (*A Theory of Justice,* 145).

reasonable, liberal conceptions of justice. In such a system, citizens sustain their cooperation by renewing (adapting) their allegiance as changing conditions necessitate, or by overcoming temporary doubts to re-confirm their allegiance. From a broader perspective, what enables resilient responses is acceptance of the family as the expression of commitment to liberal cooperation in pluralist conditions. The next sections address how citizens cooperate with ideals they do not consider the most reasonable.

Forms of Liberal Resilience

The liberal model under consideration is justice pluralism, a liberal order regulated by and unified around a family of reasonable, liberal conceptions of justice. Citizens accept the family as the source of reasons to which public justification can appeal. Its liberal pedigree and grounding in political culture confirm its constituent ideas can win allegiance and motivate cooperation. If society is stable and well-ordered, citizen will regard these conceptions as reasonable enough to serve the aim of justice.

The family is also a dynamically stable equilibrium in dynamic background conditions. As society changes, we can expect it to absorb new ideas about liberal justice that inform public reason. When liberal society meets external change and internal pressures, it is guided by a set of commitments that is bounded but also fluid. The next sections consider how resilience protects stable cooperation in these dynamic conditions. I discuss three sites of dynamic interaction that represent resilience in the liberal order: i) at the level of conceptions of justice; ii) at the level of ideas about citizenship and its virtues; and iii) at the level of the political culture.

Resilient responses occur at the level of the conceptions of justice. As explained above, a plurality of ideas can be the basis for liberal cooperation if among them are ones that inspire liberal citizens' allegiance. I define allegiance as an attitude or stance endorsing the system's aims and ideals. In a liberal system, allegiance is won by and through public political reasoning.

Previously, I identified allegiance as motivating cooperation. We can stipulate citizens acquire sincere and durable allegiance to their system generally—which extends to its defining features and associated citizenship duties. This broad endorsement is part of motivation "for the right reasons" and necessary for liberal unity and cooperation. Resilient responses help to sustain this broad allegiance.

An explanation is required for how allegiance functions in this way in light of the following: 1. citizens can form allegiance to the family as such; 2. the strength of their allegiance varies with respect to specific conceptions of justice (it refers to some, though not all liberal conceptions); and 3. disruption and change can introduce doubts about different conceptions, causing conflict that can strain allegiance generally.

Allegiance is a site where resilient responses can have a unity-preserving effect. I contend that *adaptive reasons* can overcome contentiousness, at least some of the time. My view is that they can do so often enough to protect general allegiance.

If citizens form a broad allegiance to the liberal order, one way they can maintain it involves responding to conflicts and tensions by reasoning adaptively—or by introducing adaptive reasons. Specifically, such reasons pertain to pluralism and how it bears upon justice. When introduced into conflicts as new considerations, they can help parties

reframe and manage disagreements. Adaptive reasons appeal explicitly to the pluralist context of disruptive disagreements. We can assume parties are committed to the idea of the family of conceptions, and to ideas within it they consider most reasonable and compelling. The reasons for allegiance to the family of conceptions of justice become more salient when pluralism and difference engenders conflict.

As an example, it matters that this family of ideas is understood as representing ideas about justice present in and familiar to the shared political culture. These are, and should be, regarded as reasonable, liberal, and admissible in the political domain. They are so, because the principle of reciprocity specifies equal citizens are owed justifications that are, to them, at least reasonable and attendant on recognized values. It is fair to suppose that emphasizing reciprocity and civic friendship—civic virtues that are part of a just society—could moderate the tone of contentious debates.

A further point might speak to what is signified by the appearance of dissonance. In PL, we are reconciled to the idea that Jaf is one among plural conceptions that can become an overlapping consensus. In a system of cooperation without a consensus on justice, political deliberation will appeal to and formulate reasons on the basis of any ideas in the family. It follows that reasonable citizens should expect some dissonance to be unavoidable under justice pluralism. Reasoning parties are recommended to look upon dissonance as reminders of liberal toleration.

As important, these dissonant circumstances reinscribe the idea that the fact of justice pluralism, like the fact of reasonable pluralism more generally, is a consequence of the exercise of liberal freedom. Citizens may recall that justice pluralism is not to be lamented. That reasonable citizens differ about what justice requires confirms their

reasons are compatible with liberal ideals and their own reasons—which is to say they are, by the lights of justice pluralism, *right reasons*. And right reasons differ. Different ones can justify the OC, but where there is no consensus, reasons may not converge but lead to different conclusions. Open-mindedness is called for if justice pluralism represents the system's fidelity to its own ideals amidst background conditions (diverse perspectives) outside anyone's control.

The identified reasons are adaptive in the sense that they reframe conflict, putting it in the best light, and also invite adaptation of perspective. In this case they show why parties should, at times, be prepared to affirm and cooperate with views they consider less reasonable, or even barely reasonable.

At this point we can identify a form of resilience. Conflicts over the aims of justice and reasons offered into consideration will arise if citizens persist in thinking that "most reasonable" means "most reasonable to me." Adaptative reasoning adds a further reasoning step that searches for an adjudicative reason—for instance, whether an alternative is more likely to be stable. This step does not promise, but improves the prospects for, adaptations that can move debates beyond positions first presented. They can encourage restoring a familiar interpretation that reduces the conflict.

The sense of justice could also do some work here. If citizens care about justice and desire to live in ways that conform to what justice requires, the absence of fixed set of principles means the justification test is sufficient harmony or affinity with recognized shared family of ideas.

Here it may be objected that adaptive reasoning skirts too close to a *modus vivendi*. This worry might be compelling if adaptive reasoning were understood as aiming at

conflict resolution. But it is not. There is no call to comprise or settle—and parties'

regarding a new development as sub-optimal would disqualify it. What is aimed for is

justification. For liberal political deliberation, justification must be amenable to

considerations that are relevant. Reasons pertinent to a meta-conversation about pluralism

are germane in conflicts that are, at least in part, engendered by pluralism.

It might appear that adaptive reasons favor majoritarian outcomes. Whether this is so,

broad agreement can sometimes be coextensive with justice in a Rawlsian system

wherein conceptions of justice have a social character. Adaptive reasoning is a pro-social

behavior that fits a liberal order in which matters as basic as justice are worked out

socially. That they are gives us cause to expect liberal citizens to be disposed to reason

adaptively. We will also recall that, whether for a single conception or a family of plural

conceptions, the most fundamental basis for unity is the concrete reality of the public

political culture, the fact that the citizens all grew up and came to hold doctrines in

(broadly speaking) the same environment. Understood this way, the conceptions of

justice co-exist in a way that can be compared to the way that plural comprehensive

doctrines (also reasonable) supply reasons admissible in the political domain—bearing in

mind the important difference that plural comprehensive doctrines can influence political

deliberation only to the extent that they give reasons translatable to the politic domain.[383]

Finally, on the Resilience View, the final object of liberal stability, and its value to

liberal political systems is cooperation itself. This means that full consensus about what is

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[383] Nor can they be the basis of liberal unity—a condition of which is that reasons are exclusively
political and public. In the dynamic system the political conception leads and the comprehensive doctrines
trail. Foundational postulates are constitutive of comprehensive doctrines, not political justice.

just is secondary to unity. If citizens are sincere and can find a basis for sustained cooperation motivated by justice, it matters not whether the prevailing political conception of justice matches the everyone's top-ranked conception. It need only be compatible with one's comprehensive doctrine and a conception of justice located within the family of liberal conceptions. The operative phrase here is "compatible with." Ideas of justice are liberal. They are not perfectly consistent—but consistent enough to motivate cooperation, and resilient enough to be oriented toward cooperation.[384]

At this point we may wonder—how Rawlsian is this picture? It will be apparent how a Resilience View begins to stray from distinctively Rawlsian commitments. However, I maintain that we can find in his work many statements that may be interpreted as laying the groundwork for the possibilities RV proposes. I offer two examples. The first is the idea that the "work" associated with and necessitated by justice pluralism can be likened to reflective equilibrium. To recall relevant passage from Chapter 1, 41:

> RE…is "reflective" in the sense that it involves moving back and forth between considered judgments and principles. This process allows them both to be revised until they harmonize with each other in a way that is recognized as coherent and justifiable.[385]

I previously presented in a discussion pointing to the suitability of a Rawlsian focus. We can now see how, upon comparison, how adaptive resilient responses identified as resilience, can be likened to the process of *reflective equilibrium*. The difference is that the latter precedes unity, while resilient adaptations maintain unity in a system already

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[384] Jonathan Garthoff commented in a 2022 conversation that one way to put the point is to say that Rawls's version of Rousseau's general will is not a leviathan, it is not *e pluribus unum*. We do not form a super-agent when we come together to act within a democracy; we remain plural.

[385] Shortened from passage in Chapter I.

putatively stable and unified around a set of ideals.

A second observation is a statement pertaining to the interpretive latitude involved in committing to a conception of justice. It is found in a footnote 517 in PL:

> Note here that different political conceptions of justice will represent different interpretations of the constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice. There are also different interpretations of the same conception, since its concepts and values may be taken in different ways. There is not, then, a sharp line between where a political conception ends and its interpretation begins, nor need there be. All the same, a conception greatly limits its possible interpretations; otherwise discussion and argument could not proceed. …The difference here might be seen as how to interpret the same political conception, one interpretation allowing public funds, the other not; or alternatively, as the difference between two political conceptions. In the absence of particulars, it does not matter which we call it. The important point is that since the content of public reason is a family of political conceptions, that content admits the interpretations we may need. It is not as if we were stuck with a fixed conception, much less with one interpretation of it.[386]

At minimum, these remarks re-emphasize the priority of sincere endorsement of and allegiance to ideals over fidelity to a conception of justice that is spelled out correctly and precisely. More importantly, they reinforce the idea that Rawls's non-foundational (non-metaphysical) account sees political conceptions as dynamic and revisable. Likewise, the family of views is to be sourced for interpretations that (in whatever ways) fit our needs.

Resilience and Citizenship

My account sees a second role for resilience as it relates to liberal citizenship. For Rawls, citizenship comes with specific duties and political virtues. Properly enacted, citizenship

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[386] Footnote 517, Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* 454. This note refers to a passage in "Part Four: The Content of Public Reason." Rawls further annotates his note as follows: "This is a comment on Kent Greenawalt, *Private Consciences and Public Reasons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 113—120, where Political Liberalism is said to have difficulty dealing with the problem of determining the interpretation of political conceptions."

duties instantiate and also cultivate the liberal system's resilient capacities.

Rawls shifts from the idea of "free and equal persons" in TJ to "free and equal citizens" in PL, where he gives the idea of the citizen a heightened significance and a more formal status. Matt Lister (2015) interprets this shift as corresponding to the political turn.[387]

Rawls refers frequently to the political virtues associated with citizenship: "attitudes, dispositions, and other qualities of character that would characterize good citizens of a just and stable liberal-democratic constitutional regime."[388] Boettcher (2015) notes that while there are some variations in the text about what is on the list, they key idea is that there are certain qualities that we would associate with "the ideal of a good citizen of a democratic state – a role specified by its political institutions."[389] The stability of a well-ordered society depends on citizens acquiring these virtues.

In PL, a citizen inherits the duty to distinguish political and non-political reasons. On a view of justice pluralism, this duty can be assumed to shift to fit a plural family that supplies the content of public reason. Citizenship virtues establish a willingness to appeal to public reason for guidance. If such a person understands that a circumscribed set of political ideals are necessary for political liberalism to function, the ideal of public reason prescribes allegiance to a family of ideas under justice pluralism.

Along such lines, Rawls's idea of civic friendship identifies a site of resilience. In this

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[387] Matt Lister, "Citizen," in *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon*, eds. Jon Mandle and David Reidy, 97-99. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[388] James Boettcher, "Political Virtues," in *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon*, eds. Jon Mandle and David Reidy, 631-634 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[389] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 195.

case, we are not focused on specific adaptations but rather a disposition to behave adaptively. Civic friendship is a relation between and among citizens and is treated by Rawls as a by-product of the cultural habit of working together and following a principle of reciprocity. Rawls's account of it describes a congenial feeling amongst parties who recognize that they share common motivations with fellow citizens and "reciprocal respect and egalitarian concern."[390] It is presented as being publicly observable in daily interactions as well for law and other social institutions. Civic friendship is a necessary condition for an overlapping consensus, and Rawls believes that democracy depends on it to reach its ideals. Under justice pluralism, we can suppose that civic friendship and reciprocity supply motivation to seek common ground where it is not given by consensus.

Civic friendship does not occur automatically. It grows over time in a society that is committed to fair social cooperation. The congeniality engendered by civic friendship can be expected to increase. Such an effect will establish civic friendship as a resilience-enhancing relation. As I have elsewhere explained, resilience has a self-reinforcing quality: one effect of resilient responses to disturbance is enhanced resilience thereafter. A further feature contributing to resilience is the principle (or criterion) of reciprocity. Rawls addresses reciprocity in TJ, where he presents it as implied by Jaf, but in PL it is given a foundational role as a component of public reason.[391] Rawls identifies reciprocity as a principle that infuses liberal politics. "Reciprocity is a relation between citizens in a well-ordered society expressed by its public political conception of justice."[392] Though he

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[390]Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 195.

[391] Donald J. Moon, "Reciprocity*,"* in *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon,*" eds. Jon Mandle and David Reidy, 703-6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[392] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 6.

considers Jaf to be the most reasonable conception of justice —in a liberally just system citizens can be guided by other principles provided they meet certain criteria—one of which is reciprocity. To uphold reciprocity is to advance terms of fair social cooperation that others might reasonably accept as equals acting freely. The idea is thicker than motivation for mutual advantage (which may be unjust). Instead, "everyone's benefit is judged with respect to an appropriate benchmark of equality."'[393] The statement suggests a certain harmony between the concept of resilience and reciprocity. Reciprocity specifies what citizens owe one another but implies that citizen need to stay attuned to other subjectivities, a habit that will dispose citizens to responsiveness and curiosity. Brewer (2002) observes that emphasizing civic friendship helps "immunize Rawls's particular brand of liberalism against the common charge that liberalism is objectionably individualistic."[394]

Upholding this duty is also part of legitimacy, because citizens will eventually find themselves, as Michael Blake (2015) puts it, seeking "to engage the coercive machinery of politics."[395] In so doing, they are "enjoined to restrict the reasons they invoke (in certain political contexts) to those that do not rely crucially upon comprehensive doctrines about which the parties can be expected to disagree."[396] Legitimate reasons for coercion are to be drawn from a reasonable political conception of justice. Here Rawls adds that exercising political power is legitimate only when we trust that our reasons

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[393] Rawls, *Political Liberalism,*17.

[394] Brewer, "A Review Essay on John Rawls' Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*,"*100-15.

[395] M. Blake, "Burdens of Judgment," in *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon*, eds. Jon Mandle and David Reidy, 74-78 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[396] Blake, "Burdens of Judgment," 74-78.

would be sufficient coming from officials.[397] When we comply with such constraints, we demonstrate a "principled refusal" to rely on our private (and controversial) views to try to justify constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice. A duty of civility requires that people make this commitment and follow it as they pursue collective agreement.

It follows that if "our exercise of political power is proper only when we sincerely believe that the reasons we would offer for our political actions-were we to state them as government officials are sufficient, and we also reasonably think that other citizens might also reasonably accept those reasons"[398] we must be guided by reciprocity when we make judgments about which political values are most reasonable and how to order them. If we fail to do so, "we fail to exercise political power in ways that satisfy the criterion of reciprocity."[399]

The relations between citizenship virtues and legitimacy contributes normative force to the idea of political justice. Reciprocity is framed as a moral duty. No comprehensive doctrine is to be favored, yet political rights and duties are nonetheless types of moral rights and duties, "for they are part of a political conception that is a normative (moral) conception with its own intrinsic ideal."[400] In the exercise of public reason, reciprocity involves giving reasons that others can not only understand, but ones that "we might reasonably expect that they as free and equal might reasonably also accept," and Rawls emphasizes that "the criterion of reciprocity is normally violated whenever basic liberties

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[397] Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* 47.

[398] J. Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 64, no. 3 (1997): 771.

[399] Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* 479.

[400] Rawls, xlii.

are denied."[401] Here we may add that under justice pluralism, reciprocity will mitigate against destabilizing conflict, or at the least, persistent contentiousness about matters of justice will be at least suggestive of failure to be guided by reciprocity.

I argue that citizenship virtues encourage the degree of attunement to diverse perspectives needed to correct misunderstanding. Civic friendship fosters a trusting attitude. Civic friendship is solidified by ongoing public deliberation. The bonds that form in this type of friendship further encourage necessary deliberation. Over time, after citizens come to welcome the mutually satisfying process of attending to disagreements from a friendly standpoint. They develop and model the tendency to regard their political opponents charitably—which will recommend attending to conflict and paying attention to and seeking to know the array of diverse perspectives.

Civic friendship is bound up with the principle of reciprocity in a way that supports seeking to preserve mutual assurance and regain lost trust. Insofar as citizens recognize an obligation to be guided by both, they cultivate positive regard for fellow citizens and reinforce the willingness to cooperate. At the level of conceptions of justice, civic friendship reinforces the process of reconsidering, revising and recommitting. We can assume ideas about what citizenship requires will be dynamic and open to revision according to this same logic. On a Resilience View, we may add that civic friendship becomes a reason not to defect. In this way, civic friendship among co-participants in political matters cultivates a disposition to cooperate.

Finally, the robust view of citizenship solidifies a picture of political deliberation as

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[401] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 447.

dependent upon relational habits. Virtues required for publicity and public reason also imply that justice is an ongoing practice bound up with the citizenship relation and all responsibilities *qua* citizen. The citizenship role supports unity as a matter of principle and by way of concrete action. Specific duties draw people together. They disallow forms of "stand-your-ground" reasoning and dispose citizens to adaptive considerations at the level of justice. Broadly speaking, they establish the primacy of quality interaction in a context where political justice is constructed through practices. I contend this general picture ultimately leads to the idea that defection is a form of defeat. In such ways, we can say, resilience and its associated ideas—adaptation, recovery, equilibrium, and balance—are built into the logic of Rawlsian liberal citizenship.

Resilience in Liberal Political Culture

We can now consider resilience more broadly as an influence on and, as I propose, an idea extant in, the liberal political culture. My account sees a role for resilience in shaping civic culture and the practice of liberal political activity. But more importantly, I find reasons to support the claim that resilience is already implicit in the culture.

For Rawls, the idea of political culture refers to the set of familiar ideals, including conceptions of justice along with norms of citizenship, that characterize political activity. As he says, the public political culture of a democratic society "comprises the political institutions of a constitutional regime and the public traditions of their interpretation (including those of the judiciary) as well as historic texts and documents that are common knowledge."[402] Leif Wenar (2017) takes such fundamental ideas to include the

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[402] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 13-4.

constitution, the known set of offices, and even historic court decisions.403

Rawls portrays the political culture as the well of familiar ideas and norms from

which ideas about justice are drawn, and also the standard against which we determine

how well political decisions fit our collective self-understanding:

> We start, then, by looking to the public culture itself as the shared fund of
> implicitly recognized basic ideas and principles. We hope to formulate these
> ideas and principles clearly enough to be combined into a political conception of
> justice congenial to our most firmly held convictions.404

Rawls again echoes an idea of "fit" in JAF in a statement about the companion agreement

to the guidelines for public inquiry, which enjoin parties to reason from principles to laws

and policies by assessing which ones "best fulfill them in existing social conditions."405

The discussion brings out a crucial point for a consideration of resilience and the

associated idea of adaptation. When Rawls introduces the idea of a family of liberal

conceptions of justice, he reinscribes the idea that "fit" is not perfection or maximum. As

McMahon (2013) explains it, the family's ideas need not win everyone's full-throated

allegiance; the family is diverse and yet collectively worthy and acceptable, as each

constituent idea "is regarded by everyone in a polity as reasonable, even if only barely

so."406 Reciprocity is the key idea here, because insofar as it specifies the condition all

views must meet, it solidifies an unbreakable link between them all as instrumental in

creating the society we know: "when citizens follow it in their public reasoning, it shapes

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403 Wenar, "John Rawls", https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/rawls/.

404 Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 7.

405 Rawls, 7.

406 Christopher McMahon, "Rawls, Reciprocity and the Barely Reasonable," *Utilitas* 26, no.1 (2013): 1-22.

the form of their fundamental institutions."[407]

The account here also speaks to a hope that justice pluralism is not, by definition, a risk to unity. Justice pluralism asks us to adopt an approach already known. It is a close parallel with the way we regard diverse but reasonable comprehensive doctrines, which may be "irreconcilable" but still all are understood to be reasonable.[408]

Following the line of this comparison, we see a further similarity in the requirement for reasonable comprehensive doctrines to be liberal, which means they accept "a set of political institutions that gives each member of the polity certain basic rights and liberties, establishes the priority of these freedoms, and secures for each the means of making effective use of them."[409] Though comprehensives doctrines may be irreconcilable, citizens, however, must reconcile themselves to the idea that such diversity is part of the culture.

I take these points as confirming an amenability to resilience that already exists in the political culture. Consider, too that the standard for a person or idea to be "liberal" is minimal enough to allow much variety and also the possibility of antipathy. Yet Rawls has unambiguously ruled out anti-social attitudes in politics in his account of citizenship virtues.

From this we can reasonably conclude that individual citizens will, by the time they have reached a certain age, become accustomed to private, inner self-correction. Rawls emphasizes that participants in a society with just institutions will internalize the sense of

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[407] McMahon, "Rawls, Reciprocity and the Barely Reasonable," 6.
[408] McMahon, 21-2.
[409] McMahon, 21-2.

justice. Justice pluralism alters the idea of a settled conception to that of a family of conceptions. But we can still take for granted that a sense of justice will develop alongside the practices involved in dealing with a plural set, which is to say, we can suppose that citizens who grow up in this context will "acquire the corresponding sense of justice and desire to do their part in maintaining them."[410]

The point returns us to the previous observation about self-scrutiny. Liberal toleration will extend to how citizens regard the family. Here I propose that liberal toleration must reach private subjectivity and be internalized to guide belief formation. If the proposition is unattractive, I note that the same interior terrain is relevant to resisting defection.

More importantly, the orientation to positive regard for diversity is more aptly described, I would argue, as an ideal embedded in liberal culture, and Rawls has many ways of accounting for it as noted. For our purposes it is important that it is fixed in the culture. The family exists in a stable equilibrium state held together by the public political culture and the links among its constituent ideas. I contend that a welcoming orientation to diversity and difference lays the groundwork for needed adaptations that preserve unity. A family of conceptions affords citizens opportunities to adapt to change while continuing to cooperate for the right reasons, those reasons are ones found in the political culture. In PL Rawls says that citizens understand the institutions of the basic structure as just "on the basis of commonly shared beliefs confirmed by methods of inquiry and ways of reasoning generally accepted as appropriate for questions of political justice."[411] The emphasis here is on is on the ways of reasoning which, it can be assumed,

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[410] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* 454.

[411] Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* 66.

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will help promote novel ideas if they are well-defended.

If we are concerned with how and whether resilience has a place in the political culture, perhaps the most the decisive evidence will be its relation to public reason. It is the basis for publicly justifying what justice requires and involves an impartial public form of reasoning. Public reason is also a political value that governs the political relation. It informs how we stand in relation to one another as citizens and is a necessary mechanism of liberal politics.[412] It refers to a distinctively political and transparent form of reasoning that limits political argument to reasons that other reasoning citizens could potentially accept. It is authoritative in guiding parties to identify points of compatibility amidst diverse ideas and "the very basis of our collectively binding decisions."[413]

The account of public reason further supports my previous statements about diversity in that it implies a positive orientation toward unfamiliar perspectives. If the consequence of creating liberal institutions that protect the freedoms exercised is pluralism, we ought not reject controversial views. Public reason does not exclude any moral position that recognizes the aforementioned liberal commitments.[414] Clayton (2021) stresses the same point:

> Only conceptions of justice that satisfy those conditions will count as liberal. Public reason does not, then, reflect the agreement of citizens of our particular society. Rather it is the reason associated with a family of (controversial) liberal

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[412] Charles Larmore points out that though the direct explication of public reason appears in later works, some theorists contend that public reason has always been present in Rawls work, and in *A Theory of Justice* it happened to take the form of "publicity." Larmore's view is that the language of the social contract requires mutual acknowledgement of the principles. (See Charles Larmore, "Public Reason," *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*, ed. Samuel Richard Freeman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 368-93.)

[413] Larmore, "Public Reason," 368.

[414] The exception are arguments for libertarianism—because such arguments do not acknowledge certain other important liberal interests.

conceptions of political morality.[415]

My claim is that, whether Rawls intended it, public reason is purposive beyond its justificatory aims. It applies pressure toward unity, from which it will follow that the efforts to adapt, overcome disruption, and seek common ground where there is none, are implicit in the political culture. If they are, we can call this a resilience mindset. Here McMahon's earlier point is germane:

> The idea of public reason gains prominence in [Rawls's] thought because it becomes the primary guarantor of agreement once he shifts away from the need for a liberal society to pursue the *most* reasonable conception but instead allows that the society will somehow find at least a workable set of norms and principles from within this family.

In IPR, Rawls widens his view of public reason by loosening the guidelines for public justification. The view now permits citizens to offer into deliberation reasons derived from their (reasonable) comprehensive doctrines for certain purposes (provided they can be shown to fit the political culture and are intelligible to fellow citizens). By expanding political deliberation in this way, the widened view of public reason strengthens the same political practices that citizens will rely on when they adapt their conceptions of justice. Tal Brewer (2002) explains in more detail the implication that searching for points of unity is inextricable from the exercise of public reason:

> Whenever we debate about or vote on basic questions of justice, we must seek reasons whose force we can expect other citizens to recognize, despite the fact that they do not share our parochial interests and can reasonably disagree with our fully elaborated conception of the good. If we are to reason as a public and not as an aggregate of mutually disinterested egoists, we must make a sincere

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[415] See Matthew Clayton, "Liberal Equality: Political not Erinaceous," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 19, no. 4 (2016): 416-433.

effort to locate such reasons.[416]

There is little difficulty in drawing the conclusion that public reason is, if not an instantiation of resilient capacity, a call to adapt and restore unity whenever the opportunity presents itself.

The above analysis leads to a further conclusion about justice pluralism generally— that a departure from consensus to a model of justice pluralism is to say that unity is based on public reason alone. Larmore (2003) adds the observation that public reason is prescriptive beyond specifying a procedure. It contains its own principle of fairness:

> Yet precisely when we see this defining feature of public reason for what it is, we may wonder whether Rawls's wish to accommodate a family of liberal conceptions can really be as generous as he supposes…the very exercise of public reason must embody a commitment to fairness. Does not public reason effectively exclude appeal to any idea of justice that does not, like Rawls's, view the distribution of rights and resources as a matter of arranging fair terms of social cooperation? [417]

Larmore's point seems correct, though justice pluralism produces agreement that is always looser than a full consensus. Citizens are willing to cooperate without convergence reasoning to a consensus because they view harmony with the family of reasonable conceptions as full justification.

Resilience in the political culture can be expected to appear, among other things, as an openness to novelty and unfamiliar ideas and a readiness to reckon with conflicts. I have investigated the question of whether the model of justice pluralism might be a plausible future iteration of Rawlsian picture of political culture. It does not stretch

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[416] Brewer, "A Review Essay on John Rawls' Justice as Fairness: A Restatement,"108.
[417] Larmore, "Public Reason," 389.

reason too much to claim that it already fits. That said, I see no need to settle the question of whether Rawls's liberal political culture can vindicate RV as its offspring. It is more important to confirm that RV fits because it relies so heavily on Rawls's ideas as presented and unrevised. RV holds that, whatever its contents, there will be some family of views that can meet liberalism's requirement of free endorsement by citizens. This family of views is stable precisely because it accommodates growing levels of diversity, evolves with the changing times and weathers disruption. Ideal conditions are not static. The family is of and created by a political culture that gives it license to adapt and undergo shifts. It also stays in equilibrium but adds to its constituent views. The family is stable in the sense that it endures as a distinct object, but it is a discreet object in the same sense that Neurath's boat is an object.

The stable family becomes the basis for cooperation, and even as pluralism generates disagreements, citizens know that there are other options. Because they become accustomed to the expanded possibilities afforded by the family, they learn not to fear that society will become unjust. They accept that values that play a role in political life will be ones they recognize as liberal. What is given by the fact of justice pluralism is the idea that the content of public reason changes and citizens know that it does so because pluralism represents the exercise of freedom. It makes no sense to lament this flow of ideas or even its disruptive effects. What's called for is a reconciliation to this fact as part of reality and part of the background conditions and the shared political culture.

Stable and Resilient Liberalism

Complementary Attributes

RV is an account of two attributes—stability and resilience—working in concert to enable a general stability of cooperation ion the liberal system. The specific relations are between higher and lower levels of the system. Resilience at the lower levels acts as a safeguard against the disruptions that cause discord, preventing them from escalating to the higher level to damage general allegiance to the family. As I have argued, justice pluralism engenders behaviors and habits that represent resilient capacities. These manifest as recovery of a lower-level disrupted equilibrium. This recovery can take the form of returning to a previous state of accord, or of parties adapting their reasoning to restore allegiance and cooperate.

The family itself is stable because interactions at lower levels that are susceptible to disruption within the family are resilient. By sustaining stable cooperation without unanimity about a single conception of justice, the family is the first and liberal cooperation is the final the object of stability in a liberal order.

The family's stability, and the resilient interactions prompted by its constituent members are mutually reinforcing. In accommodating plural views, the family of conceptions can be stable because it makes space for resilient adaptation and flexibility that helps restore unity in the face of disrupting change. What does not change in the family of conceptions are their shared aspects—as Rawls specifies in his requirements for liberal views.[418]

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[418] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 450.

Likewise, what will not change are the behaviors and virtues that are the marks of liberal cooperation. The key idea here is that, in a disruptive context, resilience at the level of conceptions of justice, reinforced by the citizenship role, public reason and the larger political culture —make stability at higher level possible by adapting to preserve an equilibrium at a lower level.

Here one might ask why this is not the definition, if a somewhat more complex one than usual, of stability? Resilient responses are separate from stability. They are contingent and represent an additional system property. We can express this picture more generally. Consider that what makes resilience distinct from stability is that resilience describes a system's capacity to change so as to endure in a present system state while functioning as before. As indicated in Chapter II, RV adopts a functionalist understanding of the system—which is to say that what makes the system the same or different hinges on whether it continues to function in the same ways. Resilience is what allows the basic functions to endure even through adaptations. Applied to a liberal system, this account of resilient lower-level equilibria is not the equivalent of stability but in this case is perhaps a constituent of general stability—which is to say, the liberal system is stable because it is also resilient.

Rawlsian Concepts Reconceived

Well-Orderedness

Stability at a higher level means the family of conceptions exists in a stable equilibrium. If we follow Weithman's account of the original version of well-orderedness as an equilibrium, the acceptance of the family now represents a new form of well-orderedness

around its present liberal versions of justice. The family's coming to the fore as it does leaves no other option than to relinquish the earlier account. Now, society-wide acceptance of principles must be recast as acceptance of the plural views contained in the family of conceptions. The implication of RV for the conception of a well-ordered polity is one step beyond the latest revision to the idea as it appears in its revised political form in JAF:

> Thus we now say: a society is well ordered by justice as fairness so long as, first, citizens who affirm reasonable comprehensive doctrines generally endorse justice as fairness as giving the content of their political judgments; and second, unreasonable comprehensive doctrines do not gain enough currency to compromise the essential justice of basic institutions. This is a better and no longer utopian way of thinking of the well-ordered society of justice as fairness. It corrects the view in Theory, which fails to allow for the condition of pluralism to which its own principles lead.[419]

The development called for by RV fits the definition of equilibrium. Garthoff (2016) likens well-orderedness to an equilibrium state in physics because "in a well-ordered society there are no pressures internal to the system of cooperation which disrupt the consensus on the prevailing conception of justice. Since everyone endorses the society's system of cooperation and lives up to the demands of this system, it will not change unless it is acted on from without."[420] It might appear RV potentially modifies this account by revising the idea that external forces are the only type that can disrupt a stable system. However, it is possible to answer this worry by adding that there are no internal disruptions in a liberal order—especially no disagreements about justice—that do not at one point originate externally. Conflicts about justice, we can assume, will be prompted

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[419] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, 187.
[420] Garthoff, "Rawlsian Stability," 287.

by concerns about how a conception can meet external conditions.

The condition of equilibrium is, as I have argued, established by the link between views within the family established by their fulfillment of Rawls's three criteria for any liberal view. The family exists in a state of balance because these constituent views are compatible enough to help formulate public justification that responds to new conditions. The idea of "order" in well-orderedness is satisfied by the fact that all ideas within are reasonable, and as such they harmonize in a way that can be likened to reasonable people who recognize their membership in a family.[421] Likewise, well-orderedness based on the family can be passed forward to ensuing generations and so preserves Rawls's aim of stabilizing cooperation. The society that is well-ordered around a family of eligible liberal ideas assures against illiberal tendencies, and meanwhile expands the options for free and equal citizens.

RV fulfills the two criteria: (1) everyone accepts and knows that the others accept the same principles of justice, and (2) the basic social institutions generally satisfy and are generally known to satisfy these principles—only now replacing in (1) "the same principles" with "the family of conceptions justice." But most importantly, if a well-ordered society is one that achieves stable agreement on principles of justice, we have shown this is possible, and likewise that RV is "designed to advance the good of its members but when it is also effectively regulated by a public conception of justice."[422]

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[421] For explanation from Rawls about what makes any view reasonable see the Introduction to the Expanded Edition of PL. Here he explains: "The principles of political justice are the result of a procedure of construction in which rational persons (or their representatives), subject to reasonable conditions, adopt the principles to regulate the basic structure of society. The principles that issue from a suitable procedure of construction, one that properly expresses the requisite principles and conceptions of practical reason, I think of as reasonable" (Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* ix-x).

[422] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 4, 458.

It may be objected that the Resilience View asks for compromise and eliminates the sincere endorsement that is the hallmark of a free liberal society, and thus the basis of cooperation is a *modus vivendi* that is not truly stable for the right reasons. It may be hard, at first, to see why normalizing adaptation will not also amount to normalizing lackluster agreement or compromise for its own sake. An equilibrium in this context is not achieved without sincere allegiance. There is a crucial point here about reciprocity that helps explain how full sincerity is more possible than it might seem: irrespective of how individuals independently rank the varying ideals and priorities reflected within the family, the reasonableness (and acceptability) of any set is to be understood in reference to what can unify the citizens by means of the existing political culture. Achieving unity—which means bringing allegiance into equilibrium—will be subject to the requirements of reciprocity. This will necessitate *some* compromise of what each considers maximally best at the start. Citizens know that the "zeal to embody the whole truth in politics is incompatible with an idea of public reason that belongs with democratic citizenship."[423] Whatever form it takes, the allegiance in equilibrium is required for cooperation, which confirms the society's legislating for itself a basis on which citizens can cooperate.

Compromising under conditions of pluralism should also be understood in terms of what it means to be uncompromising amidst pluralism. It is possible to frame adaptation and change, not as a compromise, but as fulfillments of a duty to search for common

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[423] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 442.

commitments. Insofar as the family of views is subjected to its scrutiny, the exercise of public reason demands more than appealing to and upholding standards of reasonableness—it demands a commitment to stay the course.

Public reason can be expected to make it evident that pluralism gives rise to new citizenship duties. Deliberation means continuous working to see difference, to seek to understand it, and to find points of contact. This is a political duty with heightened importance in a pluralist context. If this is so, then inevitable disruptions ought not be framed as necessitating compromise for the sake of unity; rather, disruptions confirm the ongoing nature of the work of liberal political unity. Hence this objection mis-frames the pluralist context. Not all compromise is a *modus vivendi*. In a world of pluralism and difference, it is no longer reasonable to aspire to a liberal unity that mirrors one's most cherished ideals. Rawls tells us that in a free society, as times change, human difference proliferates. Thus, the political work in RV will involve accounting publicly for perceived threats to ideals, examining them in reference to the family of views, and deliberating in ways that sustain the hope and the expectation that there are more possibilities than we have yet imagined.

CONCLUSION

The Resilience View presents an idealized, just liberal system as a dynamic, pluralist society that is both enduring and responsive to societal changes. It broadens the account of Rawlsian stability and well-orderedness and describes a liberal model that reflects the realities of reasonable pluralism. Though Rawls never mentions the term 'resilience,' I have argued that we can build on and clarify his latest ideas using the concept. Liberalism is subject to both outside disruptions stemming from social changes and to internal ones engendered by pluralism. A Resilience View reveals overlooked capacities in Rawls's liberal system that enables it to cope with these conditions. Rawlsian liberal resilience can be identified by a set of ideals that define the liberal culture, and in substantive commitments and the characteristics of liberal citizens. It manifests as a capacity to maintain stable cooperation through disruption by shifts to new equilibriums drawn from content found in the family of conceptions of justice and by the general disposition of liberal citizens to cooperate in the ways needed. Interpreting Rawls's original concepts as stable by way of resilience is not a departure from the spirit of Rawlsian liberalism. Doing so imitates the dynamism and fluidity that Rawls himself exhibited. A view of Rawls's latest account of liberalism as having the "unnamed" virtue of resilience opens up new possibilities for explaining why stable cooperation is possible, even in the midst of dynamic challenges posed by shifting background conditions. If these ideas are plausible in light of Rawls's vision, they supply a fresh perspective on the value and virtues of his developed, pluralist political liberalism.

Considered in full view, and compared with Rawls's initial account in PL 1993, my view comes at some cost. It is a more demanding form of association than earlier

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accounts of the liberal society would require. It may be that cooperation based on a family involves much more determination and effort than needed if everyone shares the same conception of justice. This need not be a serious drawback if it is one. Rawls has already insisted that a political system is not a community:

> Thus, I believe that a democratic society is not and cannot be a community, whereby a community I mean a body of persons united in affirming the same comprehensive, or partially comprehensive, doctrine. The fact of reasonable pluralism which characterizes a society with free institutions makes this impossible.[424]

There is, however, negative side to his idea. Rawls thinks politics is not a community because there is no opt-out, unlike a voluntary association. Nor can a community ensure equality, and for the reasons given, we would not be able to envisage a community as structurally just. Even so, for all its pro-social aspects, RV could further distance the two domains by discouraging people from contribution to political life, even if they are committed to their society.

If this is a weakness of the view, it gives reason for optimism as well. The iterative nature of a society reconciled to pluralism that manages to sustain cooperation means it cannot avoid cultivating skills associated with cooperation and conflict resolution more generally. I suggest that with the addition of resilience, liberal society begins to take on even more of the sociality associated with community—groupings in which parties regard others as more than civic friends.

But this is not my main point. I think Rawls has constructed a liberal model with positive implications he may not have anticipated. It should not escape notice that

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[424] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, 3.

Rawls's political virtues, especially civic friendship, will involve affective states that cannot ever be coerced, and ones which, once developed, will seep out into non-political relations. Perhaps we can say, for this reason, that resilient interactions reinforce the idea of citizenship as a morally salient form of association. If pluralism grows and expands as has been argued, then the broader strengthening of affiliative ties should follow suit. Rawlsian liberalism already is, I would argue, a laboratory for testing the potential for humanity to achieve stable peace and more durable amity and good will in social life. There is little doubt that Rawls would affirm these values as noble and worthy, if he did not think they should be promoted in the political domain. Intended or not, his liberal political culture creates conditions for practicing skills that mitigate against our discomfort with difference, and ones that undergird a fuller picture of human flourishing.

Finally, RV does rest on an idea that liberal freedom and liberal justice are worthy aims that leave open the chance for human persons to realize their fullest potential for meaningful, satisfying lives. At the same time, a question may arise about theorizing a role for resilience under ideal conditions. One could argue that a concept that connotes recovery and survival is more suitably applied to the urgency of real-world, non-deal situations. At this writing, liberalism appears to be at a crossroads. The last decade has seen a rise in authoritarian governments and illiberal regimes worldwide. It may be that as an idealization, a resilient view of a Rawlsian liberal system does little to bridge the divide between what is real and what is hoped for regarding liberal freedom and the models that support it. I can do no more than to grant that real-world prospects are unknown and increasingly worrisome.

But I submit that RV's import could be understood in light of Rawls's ideas about the

role of political philosophy. He sees this role as a response to the contentiousness that is a

fundamental aspect of pluralism. This idea is thematic throughout his work and, as

Thomas Hill (1994) suggests, also evidenced by it. Hill reminds that Rawls knew liberal

societies will never eradicate broad disagreement about moral and political matters—

which means the "well-ordered" society put forth in TJ is not entirely realistic. But Rawls

was moved to revise his views after realizing "that the stability of a well-ordered just

society would not be guaranteed even if all citizens initially accepted the basic principles

of justice that [he] had argued for."[425]

    It is this idea—that stable liberal justice, if elusive, is worth reaching for—that

prompts Rawls to invoke "the special task of political philosophy to address differences

and try to resolve them so as to establish shared political understandings."[426]

> This endeavor belongs to political philosophy as reconciliation; for seeing that
> the conditions of a social world at least allow for that possibility affects our view
> of the world itself and our attitude toward it. No longer need it seem hopelessly
> hostile, a world in which the will to dominate and oppressive cruelties, abetted
> by prejudice and folly, must inevitably prevail. None of this may ease our loss,
> situated as we may be in a corrupt society. But we may reflect that the world is
> not in itself inhospitable to political justice and its good. Our social world might
> have been different and there is hope for those at another time and place.[427]

In keeping with this idea, a Resilience View takes Rawls at his word. For this project, I

have looked to theory to conceive new terrain that I regard as following the hopeful

trajectory of liberal philosophy that Rawls set in motion. A Resilience View brings into

view Rawls's distinctively hopeful orientation. Rawls understands liberal citizens as

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[425] Hill, "The Stability Problem in Political Liberalism," 333-52.

[426] Hill, 333-52.

[427] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, 37-38.

possessing the capacity to respect differences and still unify. This outlook is consistent

with his moral psychology and positive view of human nature, and his conviction that

humans are not "irredeemably self-centered and dogmatic."[428] A Resilience View

harmonizes with Rawlsian ideas of a realistic utopia. Envisioning a realistic utopia is part

of the role of political philosophy. Doing so "gives meaning to what we can do today."[429]

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[428] Leif Wenar (2017) compares this to Hobbes's opposing idea, "a perpetual and restless desire of power after power" (1651, 58). (See Wenar, "John Rawls", https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/rawls/)

[429] Rawls, *Law of Peoples,* 128.

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