Chapter One

POLITICAL LIBERALISM

Motivational Foundations

Every political view includes a principle of legitimacy, a principle, that is, which explains when and why the exercise of political power is justified. To fully exposit a political view, it is not enough to simply set out an account of how people should order their public institutions, an account, that is, of social justice. Justification of state power should also include an account of the reasons the persons who live there have, or should have, for affirming those particular institutions. The principle of legitimacy provides that extra element.

Not surprisingly, there are as many rival principles of legitimacy as there are rival political views. Theocrats, for example, say the use of political power is justified in the end by otherworldly considerations, such as the salvation of citizens' souls. Fascists have seen political power as justified by the needs of the state as an organic entity; communists, by the historic imperatives of a society's economic development.

The liberal principle of legitimacy—like each of the others—reflects what its proponents believe is most important in human social life. For liberals, this is the idea that in the conditions of pluralism that mark modern societies, *individual citizens* must be recognized as the ultimate arbiters of what gives value to their own lives. Political power must be justifiable in principle to each of them. For liberals, the justification of social structures must be provided not in the unified terms of any single religious doctrine, story of nation, or all-encompassing economic theory. Rather, justification must proceed in terms of whatever questions citizens themselves think fit to ask. The liberal principle of legitimacy says that a system of social order is justified only if it is conducted on the basis of principles that citizens might be expected to endorse after asking their questions and considering the best answers the defenders of that social order might give.[1]

Political liberalism was born out of a crisis in this principle of legitimacy. The ambition underlying all versions of liberalism has long been to define the common good of political association in terms of a minimal moral conception—that is, a basic value or set of values that most citizens share despite even their many important differences.[2] Political principles are neutral—and thus satisfy the liberal principle of legitimacy—insofar as they can be justified by reference to such shared values, without assuming the validity or truth of any particular (controversial) conception of the good life.

This liberal principle of legitimacy does not require that every person must agree with every particular rule, policy, or court decision that is enforced by the liberal state. Rather, the idea is that if many people agree to have some set of foundational principles regulate the basic structure of their society, including the processes by which particular policies and laws will be arrived at, then they affirm the use of political coercion even regarding the particular outcomes they dislike.

In the seminal formulations of Kant and Mill, the liberal commitment to state neutrality was justified ultimately by reference to a particular view of human moral nature—one championing autonomy (for Kant, a life lived according to rational will) or individualism (for Mill, an experimental attitude toward one's projects). Both Kant and Mill, each for his own reasons and in his own way, affirmed the idea that the liberal state should not seek to impose any particular view of the good life on its citizens. Rather, these liberals argued that forms of life have their value to people because, and only when, individuals freely come to affirm those ways of life for themselves. Some contemporary liberals—Ronald Dworkin, Will Kymlicka, and Joseph Raz prominent among them—continue to defend liberal politics firmly within this tradition. These contemporary "ethical" liberals, and Raz in particular, have defended more expansive or even communitarian conceptions of autonomy—for example, conceptions of autonomy that give increasing place to the demands of a person's history or (unchosen) social context of choice. But what liberal citizens are said to share, on all the many variants of this broad approach, is a commitment to the moral importance of individual choice-making rather than to any particular outcome of choice. It is upon this shared ideal of individualism that a liberal rights-based politics can be built.

However, many other liberal theorists have come to worry that even a broadened ideal of individualism is something on which people may reasonably disagree. Charles Larmore, for example, traces a Romantic movement from Herder to Alasdair MacIntyre and Michael Sandel in our day, one central strand of which has been a critique of precisely those moral ideals associated with Kant and Mill. In opposition to the traditional liberal emphasis on reflective individualism as a philosophy of life—the idea that people should always maintain a contingent allegiance, revisable on reflection, to their own view of the good life—thinkers in this Romantic tradition have stressed the values of belonging and custom.[3] For these people, Larmore says, "such ways of life (shared customs, ties of place and language, and religious orthodoxies) shape the sense of value on the basis of which we make whatever choices we do." These commitments reach to the foundations of people's nature as moral beings. "They are so integral to our very conception of ourselves as moral beings that to imagine them as objects of choice would be to imagine ourselves as without any guiding sense of

morality."[4] From this perspective of the nature of moral value, the individualistic philosophy of ethical liberalism has seemed bound to destroy the roots of morality itself.

Whatever in the end one might oneself come to think of this view of moral personality and value, many theorists have come to see that this is a view that many citizens of modern societies do hold. The Romantic ideal is as much a part of Western culture as the contrary ideals of autonomy and individuality described by Kant and Mill.[5] For a growing number of contemporary theorists, these forms of enthusiasm for custom seem to be incompatible with any single ideal of moral personality on which liberal politics might be directly founded.

However, if any recognizably liberal ideal of individualism or autonomy is itself subject to irresolvable controversy, no such ideal can serve as the minimal moral conception on which liberal politics has long hoped to rely. Any liberal theory that is founded on a controversial view of moral personality would be overly restrictive, and in an illegitimating way. Many citizens will consistently object to the state coercively enforcing liberal strictures against them. For example, such citizens may object to judicial decisions protecting heretical or blasphemous speech in the name of personal freedom, or to decisions disallowing devotional Bible study in public schools based on a similar rationale. Crucially, such people will object not just to the particular rulings but to the justificatory foundation of the public decision-making system itself, a foundation made up of an autonomy-affirming philosophy of life that they themselves reject for moral reasons.[6] If traditional versions of liberalism must invoke moral notions of autonomy or individualism that are incompatible with the ethical outlooks of many of these Romantic citizens, then the acceptance of Romanticism as a way of life undercuts the traditional justification of liberal politics.

John Rawls, who has given by far the most detailed account of political liberalism, sees the motivational foundations of this emerging version of liberalism just this way—though Rawls describes the crisis of legitimacy as arising internally to his own argument for justice as fairness. If state-backed coercion in the name of some set of principles of justice is to be justified, according to Rawls, it must be shown that those principles matter to citizens in a first-personal and moral way. Rawls calls this the test of stability.

In the third part of *A Theory of Justice* (henceforth *Theory*), Rawls describes how people who have once acquired a sense of justice could reasonably be expected to regard justice not just as a constraint on their actions but as a good in itself for them. "The desire to act justly and the desire to express our nature as free moral persons turn out to specify what is practically speaking the same desire."[7] Rawls was confident that this congruence would obtain because of the way the principles of justice were themselves derived. Those principles were derived from a device called the original

position, a device that in *Theory* is sometimes described as representing an important fact about people: people's true moral nature is to be free. A conception of justice derived from a particular view of human nature—if the view hit upon were true—could then reasonably be expected to be recognized by people as reflecting who they really are. Insofar as people desire to express their true moral nature, and thus avoid giving way to "the contingencies and accidents of the world," they could be expected to see that acting according to those principles would be congruent with their own good.[8] Coercive power exercised on the basis of principles derived that way could thus satisfy the liberal principle of legitimacy.

However, as Rawls came later to see, "*Theory* relies on a premise the realization of which its principles of justice rule out."[9] The premise is that all good citizens must converge on the particular view of human moral nature that the original position was said to model: the true moral nature of people lies in their capacity for freedom. But that particular view of human nature—as much as the individualism of Mill or Kant—is something on which many citizens of goodwill, and Romantic "citizens of faith" in particular, disagree. Indeed, disagreement about the true character of human moral nature is particularly likely in a society that gives central place to associative and deliberative liberties, the hallmarks of a liberal society. Liberal principles of justice support precisely the institutional conditions that undercut (or make unrealistic) the comprehensive form of justification upon which Rawls's argument in *Theory* depended. Some citizens who grow up in a free society may reasonably be expected to ask questions that no reference to the individualist ideals of Kant or Mill (or to the modified conceptions of autonomy of Dworkin, Kymlicka, or Raz) can satisfy. And citizens may ask these questions while still very much wishing to take part in political association with (diverse) others on terms that all can accept. How might liberal forms of state coercion be justified to "politically reasonable" citizens such as these?

On the traditional or "comprehensive" liberal approach the hope has been to defend some suitably general liberal view about true human moral nature against critics by means of philosophical argumentation. The critics having been confronted and their beliefs about human moral nature shown to be false, philosophers could then use their own true view of moral personality as a shared moral basis for liberal politics. But accepting the fact of reasonable value pluralism requires that liberals now abandon all such philosophical ambitions. In conditions of institutional freedom, convergence on a single conception of human moral nature is unlikely, no matter how long or cleverly philosophers argue. A new trailhead must be considered: perhaps liberals should begin looking for the shared moral basis for liberal politics merely in the cluster of moral ideas that people

in Western democracies already hold, however inchoately, regarding their *political* lives.

Political liberals, thus propose two major adjustments to the traditional liberal paradigm. First, political liberals recast their arguments for state neutrality as arguments that appeal only to people's beliefs about politics itself. For example, Rawls recasts his basic argument for justice as fairness in *Theory* as a freestanding *political* conception of justice. Instead of reading the original position as representing any particular view about the true moral nature of persons, a reading that was strongly implied in the text of *Theory*, Rawls says that we should instead view that device—and his other arguments for justice as fairness in *Theory*—as based on the shared elements of the public life of a democratic culture. Rawls sets aside questions about the truth of the (various) foundations of those shared public elements. He emphasizes instead the formative role of liberal institutions in leading otherwise diverse people to share a common set of political ideas—central among them the shared idea that whatever their differences, all people in liberal societies should be respected as free and equal for political purposes.

This first adjustment, a change in the way the liberal conception of justice is justified, is known as the *politicization of justice*.[10] The politicization of justice in turn forces many other changes and, in particular, calls for the development of a whole cluster of theoretical concepts that had not been needed by liberal philosophers before. These ideas are needed to show how a conception of justice constructed merely from people's political views could meet the first-personal stability test I described above. After all, moral and religious convictions typically matter more to people then even their most basic political beliefs. So, people might accept principles justified in this political way as a general matter, and yet reject such principles whenever they conflicted with their own religious or comprehensive moral beliefs. To remedy this requires the second major adjustment of political liberalism: the addition to liberal theory of further stages of justification, stages concerned not with justice but with legitimacy.

If coercion in the name of some conception of justice is to be justified in a social world marked by reasonable value pluralism, liberals think that citizens must be able to affirm those shared political principles on the basis of their own views of what gives life its ultimate meaning and value. They must be able to embed the political conceptions within their own comprehensive conceptions of the good, and thus achieve "full individual justification."

A Catholic, for example, might embed certain basic liberal political principles within her own comprehensive doctrine through the doctrine of free faith—a doctrine that is essential to the Catholic account of each person's relation to Jesus Christ. She adopts core liberal principles out of her concern for her own Catholicity.[11] Rather than thinking that philosophical

argument must lead all reasonable persons to affirm liberal principles for the same set of moral reasons (the view suggested by *Theory*), political liberalism operates from the more modest hope that different groups may come to affirm some common set of principles for their own diverse sets of reasons.[12] For example, an atheist might join the Catholic in affirming political protections of free faith, though do so purely out of concern for his own very different moral belief system. He is concerned, as an atheist, that he will be able to live his own life atheistically, even while sharing a social world with Catholics and others who personally reject his worldview.

If people who have achieved full individual justification in a plural society find that they do share a political conception of justice, then an "overlapping consensus" forms and an even further level of justification—"public justification by political society—has been achieved. In that event, the conditions of liberal legitimacy have been met.[13] Political liberal theory has provided us with an argument for a particular conception of justice *and* an account of how it is possible that such a conception could be enforced legitimately even in a society that contains citizens of faith as well as autonomous individualists.

The general idea of a political conception of liberalism—while still in its infancy—has proven tremendously attractive and is rapidly gaining adherents.[14] Political liberalism holds out the possibility of a form of political union that is accommodating to a wide range of social diversity—moral, philosophical, and religious—while avoiding the bitter fights about deep moral value that have historically dogged liberal theory. If the political face of liberalism can indeed be detached from any particular comprehensive view of moral life, then political liberalism may prove to be more accommodating than even the most capacious variant of ethical liberalism. Political liberalism might be thought of as an attempt to fulfill the broadminded promise at the heart of Locke's famous *Letter Concerning Toleration*: to find a moral form of human living-together for people who see the point of their lives in irresolvably different ways but are committed to sharing a social world with one another.

Still, this nascent view is controversial, and has already come under attack. Some question whether political liberalism can succeed on its own terms. When we look closely, such critics say, political liberalism rests on foundations that cannot really abstain from controversies about the good life.

Ethical liberals explicitly base their politics on a theory of true moral personality. But critics claim that political liberals do just the same thing—they just do it indirectly, through their moralized account of the citizen. Political liberals, whatever they say, do take as basic, and as fixed, a partially comprehensive conception of moral personality—the part of moral personality relevant to politics. But, this objection continues, if political liberalism

does surreptitiously rely on a conception of the person, then the two allegedly different patterns of justification—one ethical, the other political—turn out on close examination to be indistinguishable. Beneath all the technical camouflage, political liberalism is merely a species of comprehensive liberalism. The politicization of justice does not allow liberals to bypass the old moral disputes after all. Political liberalism inherits all the difficulties (and has only the same strengths) of the traditional liberal view.[15]

I do not find this line of criticism compelling. Political liberalism does not start with any fixed ideal of moral personality and then go on to ask what political forms would best support and express the requirements of people's realizing that ideal. What is radical about politicization is that it insists that we work in just the reverse. Political liberalism, insofar as it starts with anything, starts with a very general idea of *society*—something like the idea of a moral union, or democratic agreement, in the face of reasonable pluralism. It then asks whether such a society is possible. One of the conditions of having such a society is that people share certain moral elements of fellow-treatment. In particular, people in such a society must share the moral idea that humans are the kinds of beings who are owed reasons, in terms that they themselves can accept, that justify coercive actions undertaken by the state with respect to them. Political liberalism is only suited for a social environment in which people do affirm that moral ideal, so no doubt there are a great many social environments in which political liberalism can have no place. But the contours of the moral personality that political liberals affirm are always in service to what they make possible—the conception of society—and not the reverse.[16] The contours of moral personality requisite for liberal politics are not fixed in advance philosophically. Political liberalism does not rest ultimately on any theory of the good for persons. Strictly in terms of its justificatory structure, political liberalism is a radically new liberal view.

However, there is a different way of challenging political liberalism that I find potentially much more interesting. This is a challenge not about political liberalism's formal justificatory structure—for example, about whether political liberalism starts from the same thing or proceeds in the same way as ethical liberalism. It is a challenge about political liberalism's practical implications.

This different challenge springs from the worry that political liberalism—even if formally distinct as a justificatory type—in practice *amounts to* the same thing as ethical liberalism. In terms of the psychic economies of real citizens' lives, the effects of meeting the "purely political" requirements of the one turn out over time to be indistinguishable from the comprehensive ethical requirements set out by the other. Liberalism has the same transformative and homogenizing implications as ever before. It just now brings about those changes in an indirect and long-term way. To some,

political liberalism may even seem to be a kind of fake or fraud: ethical liberalism in stealth mode.

The two directions of criticism I just mentioned—the justification-directed one and the one about sociological effects—are not wholly distinct. One part of the sociological challenge I have in mind can be addressed only by developing more detailed arguments about threshold problems of stability (arguments that are central to the justificatory project as political liberals currently understand it). But there are dimensions of this latter challenge that persist even if, on its own terms, the form of justification sought by political liberals *succeeds*.

These worries about political liberalism's sociological effects are more elusive than the purely justification-directed ones I described a moment ago. They are elusive because they do not emerge directly from the conceptual domain within which analytical philosophers traditionally confine themselves. These worries emerge from the interstices of theory and practice. For this reason, the challenge based on them persists even after the formal, conceptual conditions for the legitimate use of state force have been met. Let us consider this challenge.

Neutrality of Effect

I said earlier that neutrality plays an important part in any liberal conception of justice. One sense of neutrality to which political liberals do see their account of legitimacy committed is neutrality of aim: the liberal state should not to do anything *intended* to favor or promote any particular comprehensive doctrine rather than any other. But there is another dimension of neutrality, neutrality of effect, that political liberals reject as a constraint on their view: the state is not to do anything that makes it *more likely* that individuals accept any particular conception rather than any other. Rawls is adamant about this:

> It is surely impossible for the basic structure of a just constitutional regime not to have important effects and influences as to which comprehensive doctrines endure and gain adherents over time, and it is futile to try to counteract these effects and influences, or even to ascertain for political purposes how deep and pervasive they are. We must accept the facts of commonsense political sociology. . . . Neutrality of effect or influence political liberalism abandons as impracticable.[17]

Political liberals are right to reject neutrality of effect as impracticable. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine *any* set of norms that succeeded in binding people together into a polity that could be neutral in this sense. Political arrangements intimately affect people's life prospects and thus shape their ethical orientations. These effects typically extend well beyond

the formal requirements of citizens' allegiance to the political institutions of their society, influencing the wider culture of the society as a whole.

Let us call the wide social culture generated by any regime's public norms the *ethical background culture* of that regime. An ethical background culture provides a kind of map of meaning to citizens of each regime type. This map influences the personal values, the basic ways of world perception, of the people making their lives there. To abandon neutrality of effect or influence is to affirm that even political liberal regimes unavoidably generate a distinctive ethical background culture. Political norms, even gently and indirectly, cannot help but shape the character of people in their own image. Political institutions have a wider educative function. Society is itself a kind of schoolhouse. This general principle—that every political regime shapes the world outlook of its citizenry—has often been emphasized by historians.

Consider, for example, Gordon Wood's thesis about the radicalism of the American Revolution. According to Wood, the radicalism of the Revolution was not found in the signal it sent about the demise of empire, or in the fact of political secession, or even in the establishment of a new political type. Rather, what was truly radical was the tremendous transformation in *social relations*—the way the Revolution encouraged ordinary people in America think of themselves, and of one another, across the whole of their lives.

Being subject to a king is a political status but it also involves a thick set of social, cultural, and psychological implications. In pre–Revolutionary America, the political order encouraged people to think of themselves as connected vertically to one another. Throughout all aspects of their daily lives, people tended to be more conscious of those immediately above and below them than of those alongside them. Rather than locating themselves in groups, "most people could locate themselves only in superiority or in subordination to someone else."[18] Under the English monarchical system, people did not have class positions or even occupations so much as they had relationships. "Individuals were simultaneously free and subservient, independent and dependent, superior and inferior—depending on the person with whom they were dealing." "Personal relationships of dependence, usually taking the form of those between patrons and clients, constituted the ligaments that held this society together and made it work."[19]

A monarchical society admits no strong separation between subjects' public and nonpublic identities. Indeed, for the British subjects, that psychological distinction would be difficult even to comprehend. This fusing of public and nonpublic identities was basic to the ethical background culture associated with the pre-Revolutionary monarchy in America. But Wood's account goes on to show that even political orders that *do* separate public and private realms likewise have sweeping effects on people's day-

to-day moral outlooks. Indeed, in the American case, it was the very act of making that separation that produced these wider effects.

As Wood says of the revolutionaries, "In destroying monarchy and establishing republics they were changing their society as well as their governments." In particular, their "social relationships—the way people were connected to one another—were changed, and decisively so." The idea that effected the broad social revolution in early America was the rights-based idea of equality on which the U.S. Constitution was established. This idea, once politically affirmed, transformed the social relations between American citizens from a vertical to a more horizontal model. Wood, following Tocqueville, describes this idea of equality as the most radical and powerful force let loose in the Revolution. "Its appeal was far more potent than any of the revolutionaries had realized. Once invoked, the idea of equality could not be stopped, and it tore through American society and culture with awesome power." Within just a few decades following the Revolution, the social effect of allegiance to those political principles became clear: "what remained of the traditional social hierarchy virtually collapsed, and in thousands of different ways connections that held people together for centuries were further strained and severed."[20]

But then what of political liberalism? Is there an ethical background culture characteristic of this political form? Neutrality of effect is indeed impracticable. Liberal institutions cannot help but affect the broad ethical orientations of the people living among them. "The institutions of the basic structure have deep and long-term social effects and in fundamental ways shape citizen's character and aims, the kinds of persons they are and aspire to be."[21] This is why it is so important that the basic structure be just. But it also explains why the attainment of justice in that structure tends to generate unintended effects beyond what justice formally requires. Even within a liberal society that seeks to maintain a strong separation between public and nonpublic matters, no group of people can completely insulate themselves from these wider unintended effects of political membership.

But what precisely are these effects? What is the nature of the ethical background culture associated with political liberalism? How does that culture affect the ethical orientations of people living there? What kind of schoolhouse is a political liberal society?

The Ethical Culture of Political Liberalism

I begin by examining a principle that marks out the exact frontier of the psychological commitments political liberalism formally requires. This is a principle, if you like, describing the ethical effects on the citizenry that political liberalism does intend. Unlike ethical liberalism, political liberalism does not seek to cultivate in citizens the distinctive personal virtues of

autonomy or individuality. Instead, as Rawls tells us, political liberalism honors the claims of those who reject those traditional liberal values "*provided only that* they [1] acknowledge the principles of the political conception of justice and [2] appreciate its political ideals of person and society."[22] People are free to approach life's problems any way they like, provided only that they satisfy this conjunctive requirement. Call this two-pronged principle the *political liberal proviso*, or the proviso.[23]

To satisfy the first prong of the political liberal proviso, each person must "acknowledge the principles of the political conception of justice." Citizens must know about the conception of justice that regulates their society and so recognize the rights held by all citizens. To do this, all citizens must develop a facility with the principles of public reason. This is a form of reasoning people use to help them identify laws and policies that satisfy the substantive principles of justice. They use public reason to pick out the fundamental rights and duties they have regarding one another.

Of course, public reason is not meant to supplant the other forms of human reasoning that are likely to be found within a free society—the forms of reasoning found within churches, voluntary associations, friendships, and families, for examples. The public principles are meant to serve as guidelines for how the basic institutions in a society are to realize the values of liberty and equality. Still, public reason is an evaluative perspective that people are expected to be capable of entering at any time, not just on those periodic occasions when they are debating particular legislative proposals or constitutional questions or are deciding how to vote. Within the liberal social world, there is no context that is private in the sense that rights protections are not relevant there.[24] At the minimum, the demands of justice pervade everyday life because of the duties citizens have to respect the rights people have as political equals in all that they do. So the first prong of the proviso requires that citizens know the rights they have as citizens. They must have an appreciation of one another's public standing as they participate in even the most intimate realms of interpersonal life.[25]

The second prong of the political liberal proviso requires that each person "appreciate [that conception of justice's] political ideas of person and society." In particular, each must understand that these principles are justified by reference to political ideas rather than to any particular view about human moral nature. Notice that, unlike with the first prong, politicization here brings about a crucial change. Under many versions of ethical liberalism, people who affirm less reflective, "Romantic" comprehensive conceptions may find the traditional justificatory requirement difficult to meet. Such people find themselves subject to philosophical arguments by liberals aimed at convincing them of the falsity of their worldview and of the truth of the individualistic philosophy of mankind on which comprehensive liberalisms are (variously) grounded. By contrast, political liberals allow that

people can affirm the principles of justice for political reasons found within their own comprehensive doctrines, whether individualistic or Romantic. Political liberals, as such, do not *intend* to promote the philosophy of individualism as a way of life, any more then they intend public reasoning to condition or supplant the various forms of nonpublic reason that most citizens make the center of their lives.

Political liberals hope—solely on the strength of this difference in justification—that their view will not exert a nonpolitical individualizing influence like that of comprehensive liberalism. As Larmore says, political liberalism "offers those opposed to full-scale individualism the best means for blocking a chief way that ideology [of corrosive individualism] has come to play such a large role in our culture, namely, by riding piggyback on the liberal principle of political neutrality."[26]

Is this hope well founded? Are the unintended effects of a commitment to liberal justice ones about which political liberals, as such, have no need to worry? Liberals have increasingly recognized that liberal institutions unavoidably influence the ethical worldviews of all reasonable citizens. What's more, most liberals now acknowledge that these unintended effects are likely to form a pattern: a distinctively liberal curriculum.

William Galston, for example, describes the ethical culture that is inadvertently associated with liberal politics—political and comprehensive alike—as being like a current in a river.[27] Some strong vessels can overcome the reflective, individualizing effects of the liberal background culture. But that current nonetheless exerts an influence on the course of life taken by each and every citizen.[28] Galston describes a basic fact of liberal sociology: "The greatest threat to children in modern liberal societies is not that they will believe in something too deeply, but that they will believe in nothing very deeply at all." Thus, "liberalism is not equally hospitable to all ways of life or to all subcommunities. Ways of life that require self-restraint, hierarchy, or cultural integrity are likely to find themselves on the defensive, threatened with the loss of both cohesion and authority."[29]

Stephen Macedo also has shown a keen appreciation of the social consequences of liberal politics. "Even a suitably circumscribed political liberalism is not really all that circumscribed: in various ways it will promote a way of life as a whole."[30] The skills of detachment and critical reflection that are required of liberal citizens in their public lives will naturally tend to spill over into other spheres of life. Liberal principles cannot just "stay on the surface" of people's lives. Citizens who do not affirm individualism or autonomy as personal values will be forced to divide their lives in a way that is psychologically demanding. Macedo calls this "a system of unequal psychological taxation," a system that is "sufficient to drive out certain patterns of deeply held belief and practice, not all at once but over the course of generations."[31]

Liberal education theorists have been particularly skeptical of the claim that the move to a political liberal form of justification makes any real psychological difference. Amy Gutmann, for example, argues that the civic educational requirements of the most plausible versions of political and of comprehensive liberalism, even if logically distinct, are in practice convergent: "most (if not all) of the same skills that are necessary and sufficient for educating children for citizenship in a liberal democracy are those that are necessary and sufficient for educating children to deliberate about their way of life, more generally (and less politically) speaking."[32] According to Eamonn Callan, "The political virtues that implement the fair terms of cooperation impose educational requirements that bring autonomy through the backdoor of political liberalism."[33] In the realm of education, the actual effects on children of their meeting the "merely political" requirements of political liberalism, though unintended, are said to be indistinguishable from the demands made on them via the supposedly abandoned ethical liberal view.

We must beware some complications here. I defined a political regime's ethical background culture as the collection of informal social effects characteristically generated by that regime's political values. So characterizing a background culture is in part an empirical matter, sandy ground on which to erect any theoretical structure. Two empirical soft spots are especially worth marking.

First, to gain a precise understanding of the ethical background culture of political liberalism, influences on people's general moral outlook that are said to be generated by the political regime would need to be distinguished from changes brought about by other, causally independent social forces—such as advances in science and technology or broad revolutions in religious belief. Galston would argue that the rise of critical individualism he sees in contemporary liberal societies is not only a result of modernization, but is also traceable directly to liberal political forms. But the exact boundary is difficult to mark.

Second, to gain a precise understanding of the ethical background culture of political liberalism, the broad *unintended* effects of that regime's political forms would need to be distinguished from the transformations in people's worldviews that are strictly *required* by that regime's political forms.[34] Some of the transformations Macedo describes, for example, seem to be formal requirements of a society's moving from injustice to greater justice, while other changes he describes seem to be further, unintended transformations in people's outlooks. That crucial line is also difficult to mark precisely. Both these ambiguities about political liberalism's ethical background culture take us to the interstices of theory and practice, of conceptual and empirical modes of inquiry. On that mixed terrain, imprecisions such as these are ineliminable.

Still, the work of these theorists is enough to raise a new and pressing set of questions. Is political liberalism really as successful as it hopes in avoiding the imposition of a single ethical doctrine on all of society? If liberals cannot prevent the spillover of potentially homogenizing effects of liberal doctrine and practice from public to nonpublic spheres, how accommodating of ethical diversity can a political liberal regime actually be? Can a society whose coercive institutions are founded on a political conception of justice actually be receptive of those citizens with whose views it is logically compatible? To what degree can a political liberal society be *a home* to the people it was formally designed to include?

The most basic motivational commitment of liberals is to respond to concerns that their citizens have. Liberal theorists, in everything they write, can be thought of as providing answers to questions that might reasonably be asked by would-be citizens. In response to their citizens' questions, liberal theorists owe arguments that the citizens themselves can accept. They must answer not in a way that pretends that citizens are all and only logicians. Rather, they must answer in a way that takes citizens as they can reasonably be expected to be.

That in mind, I wish now to begin sharpening these questions about spillovers. I wish to consider how various citizens in a diverse society might respond to the admissions about unintended spillovers that liberals themselves have made. Rather than attempting to dig out a foundation of my own in this sandy, empirical terrain, I shall simply imagine would-be citizens as responding to what liberals have themselves said about the wider, unintended effects of liberal political forms. In keeping with good liberal practice, we will take our instructions from these would-be liberal citizens. Since we are describing a social world in which they are to live, we will allow them to tell us what course of theory construction political liberals are now bound to pursue.