

EPISTEMIC DEMOCRACY, POLITICAL LEGITIMACY, AND REASONABLE PLURALISM

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ABSTRACT

After presenting some of Cerovac's theses (2020), the article explains some challenges to the criticism of all forms of epistocracy that he developed. The objections are expressed through the employment of some elements of Rawls's conception of public justification, more precisely of public reason. It is remarked that Rawls's theory of public reason has two sides. One is represented by the characterization of reasonable disagreement. The other side is represented by the fact that disagreement is not reasonable in all cases. In such situations, limited forms of sophisticated epistocracy are justified.

KEYWORDS

Epistemic democracy, epistocracy, public reason, Rawls.

1.

It is a privilege to have the possibility to discuss Ivan Cerovac's book (2020). The volume represents an important contribution, both in summarizing the debate on epistemic democracy, so far, as well as in providing new arguments to the dispute.

Cerovac's main thesis is on the line of David Estlund's famous epistemic democratic doctrine (Estlund 2008). The main tenets of the position are that, in order to have political legitimacy, a political framework of political decision-making (i) must be fair toward its participants; (ii) must be the epistemically best model, among all those that are fair. To illustrate, let's think about three models: (a) epistocracy – the epistemically best citizens rule; (b) democracy – each citizen has an equal say and equally shares political power in the political decision-making process; (c) political lottery – the name of the one who rules is extracted by chance. Political lottery is ruled out because it does not have any epistemic credential. But the main thesis endorsed and supported by Cerovac is that epistocracy is ruled out because of being unfair. This is because citizens are not treated like equals, and

the different treatment is not adequately justified. Thus, a central tenet in Cerovac's book is that inequalities are unfair, if they are not properly publicly justified.

The conception of adequate justification corresponds to John Rawls's liberal principle of legitimacy: "Our exercise of political 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 the light of principles and ideals acceptable to their common human reason" (Rawls 2005: 137). Cerovac, correctly, puts it in relation to John Stuart Mill's criterion of legitimacy. Thus, like Cerovac remarks, when Mill justifies some inequalities in the process of public decision-making, he strongly remarks that it would be unreasonable, from people's own perspective, to refuse them. Mill highlights the difference between the inegalitarian system that he proposes, on one hand, and disenfranchisement of some persons, on the other hand. The latter can be reasonably rejected: "Every one has a right to feel insulted by being made a nobody, and stamped as of no account at all. [...] To have no voice in what are partly his own concerns, is a thing to which nobody willingly submits to" (Mill 1977: 474). But, on the contrary, some inequalities in the public decision-making process cannot be reasonably rejected: "No one but a fool, and a fool of a peculiar description, feels offended by the acknowledgment that there are others whose opinion, and even whose wish, is entitled to greater amount of consideration than his" (Mill 1977: 474). On the contrary, some inequalities in political influence "are such that can be understood and accepted by the general conscience and understanding" (Mill 1977: 476). This general capacity to assess, through each person's own cognitive abilities, that stronger political influence of some people is justified, is fundamental. Namely, "this superior influence should be assigned on grounds which [each qualified person] can comprehend, and on which he is able to perceive the justice" (Mill 1977: 474). This appears to mirror Rawls's principle of legitimacy, and it will be the criterion for assessing legitimacy of public decisions in the present paper, in accordance with Cerovac's book.

I discuss Cerovac's exclusion of all forms of epistocracy, as the alleged result of the application of Rawls's liberal principle of legitimacy. Such an exclusion appears as problematic in consideration of Rawls's description of valid public reasons. Such are the reasons that we employ in relation to some particularly important public decisions, and that we may reasonably be expected to endorse as free and equal persons. In fact, in my view, Cerovac does not pay sufficient attention to the difference present in Rawls's determination of public reason, between conditions of reasonable pluralism, on one hand, and unreasonable objections to public decisions, on the other hand. This is partly justified by the fact that Rawls's main concern is represented by managing with conditions of reasonable pluralism. But, Rawls was perfectly aware that some disputes are not matters of reasonable

disagreement. In such cases, public reasons are simply the best reasons, and there is no reasonable disagreement about them. If such reasons are a matter of knowledge of particular skilled persons, a specific authority is attributed to them. The rest of us manifest reasonableness by endorsing the legitimacy of reasons put forward by them, and, conversely, unreasonableness in rebutting such reasons.

In the paper I proceed as follows. First, I briefly represent Cerovac's theses that I intend to discuss. Second, I describe Rawls's description of valid public reasons, and the Rawlsian challenge to Cerovac's rejection of all forms of epistocracy. Third, I express some ideas of a more nuanced approach to epistocracy, in conformity with Rawls's doctrine, and respectful of Rawls's, and partly Mill's, conception of legitimacy.

2.

Epistocracy, criticized by Cerovac, to put it simply, is the conception of legitimacy of public decisions, according to which public decisions made by people with superior epistemic status have legitimacy, in virtue of this epistemic status. Cerovac presents three forms of epistocracy (Cerovac 2020: 118).

Strong epistocracy attributes the exclusive legitimacy to rule on all questions to the epistemically privileged persons. The legitimacy of public decisions derives from the legitimacy to rule of the members of this epistemic elite, based on their epistemic merits. Moderate epistocracy relies on the privileged epistemic status of some persons in some fields. This status attributes them the exclusive legitimacy to rule in their fields of expertise. Thus, only climatologists have the legitimacy to rule, when climate issues are disputed. The basic idea is that all citizens have a potential right to participate in public decision making, at some moments, during their lifetime. However, they are not allowed to participate in ruling in every occasion, but, just when they have specific competence for the decision under examination (Cerovac 2020: 121). Weak epistocracy, that Cerovac refers to as sophisticated, as well, attributes to each minimally competent citizen the legitimacy to participate in the process of public decision making. However, not all citizens have an equal say. The arrangement is paradigmatically represented by the plural voting system pictured by John Stuart Mill (Mill 1977). In such a system, every citizen who has a basic level of education is allowed to participate in the ruling of society. However, equal influence is not allowed to all citizens. Thus, for example, persons with higher education have a stronger influence manifested in having more than one vote in the process of public decision-making.

The first argument employed by Cerovac is called 'the expert-boss fallacy'. It represents the moral argument against epistocracy. Like Cerovac says, the authorship of this argument belongs to Estlund (2008) and Rawls (2005). The basic idea is that expertise does not imply authority. In addition, a form of consent, that does

not need to be actual, and that attributes authority to experts, is required (Cerovac 2020: 122-125). However, we cannot expect the needed consent to appear. Let's remember that public decisions, and, among them, those that establish the political order of a political community, must be acceptable to all reasonable persons. The problem for epistocracy is that reasonable persons can disagree on it on at least two grounds. The first is related to the idea of public equality, as defined by Thomas Christiano (2008). The idea is that epistocracy contradicts public equality that, on the other hand, requires procedural equality of all citizens in the decision-making process. This, according to the view, represents a basic violation of justice. The second ground to reject epistocracy is represented by the republican idea of non-domination (Pettit 1999). The idea is that our freedom is respected as it should be only when we are not under the domination of other people. For example, we are not really free if we are in a condition of slavery, even when our master permits us to do everything that we want to do. We are not free, because our freedom is under the discretionary power of the master. The fact that she has decided to be absolutely permissible is not sufficient to define us as free. We are free only in an order where we have the status of equals in the public decision-making process. This, obviously, is not the case in an epistocratic order, and this is why a republican cannot accept it.

The second kind of objection is epistemic. In fact, there are two distinct epistemic objections. The first is represented by invidious comparisons (Cerovac 2020: 125-126). The basic problem is constituted by the fact that the moderate epistocratic thesis must be accompanied by the possibility to identify who the experts are, for any single field, otherwise, the thesis is ephemeral. But, Cerovac says that "in the conditions of reasonable pluralism of moral and political doctrines, having such public agreement on the criteria for expertise or on particular experts is impossible", (Cerovac 2020: 125). He offers a few illustrations, and I mention two of them. First, we see disagreement (that Cerovac needs to judge like reasonable) among supporters of the moderate and the weak epistocratic thesis. The two theses identify experts in a basically different way. According to the former, experts are scholars in specific fields, let's say, economics, climatology, epidemiology, etc. According to the latter, expertise is generalized. Experts are represented by all prominently educated people in general, and they are privileged by the epistocratic norm in all fields. The second illustration is represented by epistocrats who think that experts in God's will need to rule. They diverge about these experts, in relation to the religion that they endorse.

The second kind of epistemic worry is represented by the demographic objection (Cerovac 2020: 147-149), that Cerovac reproduces from Estlund (2003). The problem is represented by the possibility that the better educated and skilled part of the population may suffer from some epistemic defects. For example, they can be concentrated in the socially, politically and economically advantaged part of the

society. As a consequence, they can suffer from a biased perspective, with consequent harms for the epistemic quality of decisions.

A problem is represented, says Cerovac, by empirically latent features. Such features are related to possible suspicions that some biases (for example, prejudices toward members of a religion, or an ethnic group) are present in the epistemically advantaged population, even though there is no clear empirical evidence about this. Some people can reject epistocracy because of such suspicions. Second, there can be the suspicion that some epistemically disturbing features are correlated with better education. For example, let's imagine that, even though this is not clearly visible, the best educated have dispositions to competitiveness that reduce those of solidarity, and they are, thus, biased in favour of radically individualistic conceptions of justice. Again, it is not needed that everybody agrees on these suspicions. A public decision, in order to be legitimate, must not be the target of reasonable rejection of some people. Thus, in order to show that epistocracy does not satisfy the liberal principle of legitimacy, it is sufficient that objections are reasonable, and endorsed by some persons.

Cerovac's conclusion is that epistocracy fails to meet Rawls's liberal principle of legitimacy. We cannot assume that reasonable persons will agree about the epistemic elite that can legitimately rule, nor whether it is justified to render public decisions exclusively a question for circumscribed elites.

In my view, it is possible to offer a Rawlsian defence of a form of epistocracy. My central point is that, contrary to what Cerovac says, it is possible to justify a form of epistocracy, through the employment of Rawls's liberal principle of legitimacy. Because, like Cerovac says, this principle corresponds to some of Mill's theses, the defence of a form of epistocracy that I will offer is Millian, as well, although it is different in content, to the one sustained by Mill.

3.

My first considerations regard Rawls's own operationalization of his liberal principle of legitimacy. In fact, contrary to Cerovac, Rawls inspires the justification of the legitimacy of a form of epistocracy through the employment of his principle. In brief, Rawls says that when a public decision is justified through valid public reasons, the decision is, in virtue of this, reasonable and, thus, legitimate. When a public decision contradicts valid public reasons, it is unreasonable and not legitimate. In my view, this founds a challenge to Cerovac's theses.

I start by Rawls's description of valid public reasons. Such are the reasons that we can employ when we justify some qualified and particularly important public decisions. Among valid public reasons, and, paradigmatically for the present paper, there are "the methods and conclusions of science when these are not con-

troversial” (Rawls 2005: 224). This, in my view, inspires a form of epistocracy, in opposition to Cerovac’s overall rejection.

The opposition is not immediate. Rawls speaks about valid public reasons, while Cerovac speaks about who is part of the constituency of public decisions. But, in the present context, the two issues, at the end, overlap. Although Rawls does not say that members of the scientific community have the final legitimacy to make decisions, for example, like a specific decisional institutional body, and this could be the role of a fully democratic institution like the parliament, at the end, the theses endorsed by scientists represent the final verdict for legitimacy. Because of the fact that public decisions are legitimate when, and only when, they are justified through valid public reasons, and “the methods and conclusions of science when these are not controversial” (Rawls 2005: 224) are among valid public reasons, the role of public institutions, like the government, or the parliament, is that of putting in practice such reasons, when they matter. At the end, experts are those who rule, although, possibly, through intermediaries.

Let’s represent through an illustration. Imagine that we must take the decision about prescriptions for the containment of a pandemic. The public decision must be justified through “the methods and conclusions of science when these are not controversial” (Rawls 2005: 224). This can be done directly, by constituting a scientific body that has the public legitimacy to make coercive decisions, or indirectly, by an obligation of, let’s say, the government to put in practice the methods and conclusions of the scientific community.

Now, Cerovac could object and say that public decisions, even in the condition of a pandemic, are rarely issues of a single scientific response. Thus, policies for the containment of a pandemic can require responses from biomedical sciences, but, economics, theories of personal freedoms, psychiatry, and other sciences and fields of expertise, as well (for example, that of participating in religious rituals).

This complicates my thesis, that I interpret as a Rawlsian thesis, because it is coherent with Rawls’s description of valid public reasons. But the basic idea is still valid. The final decision must not be based on conclusions and methods of a single science, but on balancing responses of all relevant sciences. Again, however, the voices of the scientific community establish the range of legitimate public decisions. Such are those decisions that are justified through the complex employment of the conclusions and methods of sciences. Not all voices in society have an equal value, and voices that appeal to theses that contradict the conclusions and methods of science can be legitimately neglected.

Cerovac could reply by appealing to the distinction between goals and instruments to realize them. He could say that science and experts indicate the way to realize goals that are, however, established in a fair procedure, where legitimacy is linked to procedural egalitarianism.

But I think that this reply is not efficacious. Legitimate goals, again, are circumscribed by valid public reasons. Such are reasons that do not contradict the ideal of citizens like free and equal, certain basic rights and liberties, etc. In fact, such ideal, values and principles are, probably, established more democratically than conclusions and methods of science that are exclusive to an epistemic elite. Every reasonable person, in the Rawlsian view, can assess, and endorse, such valid public reasons. This means that all persons with normally developed human capacities could have the potentialities to be part of the constituency. However, this does not mean that, actually, all persons are included. Some persons, for example, can have the capacities to be reasonable, but for negligence, social impairment that impeded an adequate education, or some other reasons, can be unreasonable, and, thus, not qualified to participate in the determination of legitimate social aims. At the end, it could, even, happen that in some disputes most of people are unreasonable, and only a few are reasonable, and able to establish which are legitimate social goals. In such cases, decisions established through egalitarian democratic procedures, can be illegitimate, and the legitimate decisions can be those established by a restricted body of people experts in the field. Contrary to the cases bodies of scientific experts with the power to make public decisions, that are mainly imaginary, in the usual institutional order in constitutional democracies, here we have a clear possible idea. Such a body could be represented by supreme courts.

Until this point, I have only shown that the Rawlsian thesis is opposed to that defended by Cerovac. This has some significance, because Cerovac develops his thesis by relying on Rawls's liberal principle of legitimacy. However, it is still an open question whether Cerovac's employment of Rawls's principle is flawed. I show, the rationale for Rawls's position, opposed to Cerovac's. In fact, such rationale is offered by Mill, and discussed by Cerovac.

As Cerovac correctly describes (Cerovac 2020: 134-136), the basic idea that Mill has relies on the distinction between the power that one has over herself, and the power one could have over others. The power that we manifest by participating in the political process regards others, and not only ourselves. This puts on each of us responsibility not to make harmful decisions, and this is why the principle of competence becomes prominent. Like I have shown, Cerovac wants to resist Mill's appeal to competence. Now, I discuss and reject his arguments.

I start by the argument that regards the value of procedural equality. It is not in conformity with the liberal principle of legitimacy to assume the value of procedural equality as absolute. It is permitted to deviate from it, if there is justification for this. In fact, Mill provides such a justification – procedural equality is overridden, when the well-being of others is at stake. This is justified, because no one has the right to harm others. Alternatively, we could speak about basic rights and legitimate interests.

This looks reasonable, in the same way as attributing absolute value to procedural equality is not reasonable. This thesis is employed by Christiano, one of the main authors that inspire Cerovac's criticism of epistocracy. In his view, procedural equality in the decision-making processes is not the only constituent of public equality. Substantive rights and liberties matter, as well (Christiano: ???). Thus, it is even legitimate to suspend democratic decisions, when some of them are violated, although, this must be applied with great and due caution (Christiano: ???). Otherwise, all possible sorts of discrimination and various policies that lead to catastrophes, because of the rule of ignorance, could obtain legitimacy.

I reply in a similar way to Cerovac's endorsement of the republican non-domination principle. Non-domination can have a positive, and a negative side, as well. The idea that one is not completely free, if her freedom is at others' disposal is reasonable. Procedural equality in the process of public decision-making is reasonably an answer to such a challenge. However, in the same way as in the discussion that regards Christiano's principle of public equality, substantive values must be considered as well. Decisions that result from procedural fairness can be illegitimately harmful. Think, for example, about the anti-mask reactions in a pandemic. Imagine, which is not difficult to do, that the majority of a population refuses the obligation to wear the medical mask based on science, and opts for a libertarian policy based on pseudo-science and conspiracy theories. Imagine that, because of this, prescriptions to wear medical masks do not pass. The result is uncontrolled pandemic, with resulting harms for the health of people, as well as economic stability and social rights. This appears as an irresponsible use of the principle of non-domination, and, certainly, not one that can be judged as reasonable. At this point, we have an answer to the alleged expert-boss fallacy. In some cases, experts have legitimacy to rule, and the rest of us must give up to their authority, because of the responsibility that we owe to others' legitimate well-being and rights, in social life. In my view, this is a self-evident principle of civilized social life. It is disputable how far does our responsibility toward others' well-being and rights go. But there are clear cases, like the protection of others' health from serious injuries or illness, nonetheless. This is admitted by a radical supporter of the consent theory of legitimacy, like Alan Simmons, as well. "Others have rights against us only that we do our fair shares in contributing to acceptable levels of security and well-being" (Simmons 1999: 768). Our duties toward others are limited, but present, and it is difficult to imagine a civilized society where this is not respected. Such duties represent limits to the legitimacy of procedural equality and can be a possible basis for a form of epistocracy. However, epistemological challenges must be met, before conclusions.

The first, is the challenge of invidious comparisons. In order to render operative the epistocratic thesis, it is needed to establish reliably who the experts are. However, like we have seen, Cerovac says that "in the conditions of reasonable

pluralism of moral and political doctrines, having such public agreement on the criteria for expertise or on particular experts is impossible” (Cerovac 2020: 125).

This is true, if we focus on the examples that Cerovac offers, for example, the one that regards possible experts in the will of God. However, in some other cases there is no reasonable pluralism, because some theses are clearly wrong. Wakefield’s thesis about the causal link between vaccine and autism is clearly wrong, and it is unreasonable to use it as a public reason (Godlee et al 2011). Thus, we can, also, say that Wakefield is not a reliable expert. The reality of anthropogenic climate change is highly probable, and, thus, it is reasonable to endorse it as a reason in public justification, and unreasonable to deny it (Oreskes 2004). Experts who are engaged in the dispute by following proper scientific methods, appropriate to the field, and rely on the best knowledge at disposal, are reliable. Persons who rely on pseudoscience and conspiracy theories are not reliable. The argument of reasonable pluralism does not hold in the two situations, in conformity with Rawls’s description of valid public reasons. Obviously, there are deniers of science. But this is a fact of mere pluralism, and not a fact of reasonable pluralism. Because of the fact that Cerovac founds his theses on the latter, and not on the former, we have a counterexample to his argument, and we can remove a challenge to the justification of a form of epistocracy.

The second epistemic challenge is represented by the demographic objection. In this context, I comment the argument of latent empirical features, as well. In fact, the demographic objection, and latent empirical features, could be challenges. But a challenge to be reasonable needs to be supported by valid reasons. Mere suspicions are not sufficient. Further, suspicions must not be generalized, but oriented to specific areas. For example, it could be demonstrated that the demographic argument is valid in the field of political economy, but not in the field of climatology. In the absence of clear and specific evidence, the demographic argument and the argument of latent empirical features are not valid public reasons, but mere speculations.

4.

In this section, I offer some ideas of an institutional arrangement that is in conformity with the Rawlsian description of valid public reasons and that, in my view, represents a more pertinent and nuanced scheme, in comparison to Cerovac’s overall rejection of epistocracy.

The basic idea is that of the distinction between disputes characterized by reasonable pluralism among the general population, on one hand, and those that are not distinct by such reasonable pluralism, on the other hand. In the former case, all forms of epistocracy are unjustified, in virtue of the epistemological arguments offered by Cerovac, that I endorse in these conditions. In the latter case, a form of

epistocracy is justified in virtue of the responsibility that we owe to the legitimate relevant interests of other persons. Such responsibility is the defeater of the alleged expert / boss fallacy. When we participate in public decision-making, we must be careful of not harming others' legitimate interests and rights. In some situations, establishing the proper public decision requires not diffused expertise. In such cases we must conform to the experts' knowledge. Not doing this is either an expression of disinterestedness toward others' basic rights and legitimate interests, or a manifestation of the belief that we can know better than people who have been engaged in developing the needed sophisticated skills. This belief is properly characterized by Mill like unreasonable, while such a firm disinterestedness toward others is a manifestation of the moral side of unreasonableness.

I will not even begin to offer an outline of the proper institutional epistocratic arrangement. I offer just some general considerations. First, as I have indicated, it is needed to distinguish between matters of reasonable pluralism, and, thus, not eligible for epistocratic solutions, on one hand, and those that are not matter of reasonable pluralism, on the other hand. Among the latter, there are, for example, disputes, where justification is provided by valid scientific proofs, reasons and methods. Epistocracy, limited to this domain, is motivated by the privileged role that scientists have in these debates. We can relate this idea to Rawls's indication of "the methods and conclusions of science when these are not controversial" (Rawls 2005: 224) as valid public reasons.

In frequent real-life situations, however, Rawls's description of valid scientific reasons is too narrow. Frequently, we need responses of science, even when many questions are controversial among scientists. This, however, does not render the disputes matters of reasonable pluralism, in general. We can, still, distinguish between valid methods of science, and eligible conclusions of science, on one hand, and pseudoscience and conspiracy theories, on the other hand. In the latter case, we have unreasonable reasons for the justification of public decisions, and we can simply neglect them and the conclusions that they support. In the former case, we have a matter of reasonable pluralism, and a set of eligible decisions. This is because scientists appeal to valid reasons and follow valid methods, but their conclusions are not victoriously proved. Because of burdens of judgment, empirical underdetermination, etc., valid reasoning and epistemic virtue in research and response to empirical evidence are not sufficient for more determinacy. We do not have a single, victoriously proved conclusion, but a set of eligible conclusions distinct by reasonable pluralism. However, this reasonable pluralism is limited in range. It is reasonable pluralism among eligible conclusions of science, and only experts are involved in it. As far as reasonable pluralism is present, the proper solution can be represented by the procedurally fair choice among eligible conclusions of science made by experts in a fair procedure. We have, then, a form of epistocracy, at the end.

The involvement of experts in epistocratic segments of public decision-making, however, must be complex. Public decisions that require sophisticated expertise is frequently a matter of complex expertise because of being multidimensional. Sustainable development, for example, includes considerations from various natural sciences, but involves questions that regard social sciences, like economics and sociology, and basic human rights. The decisional body must include experts from all these fields. This renders the functioning of epistocratic segments of public decision-making complex, and I am not trying to explain in details how to construct it. Just to offer an idea, they can be based on the power of veto. This power could be used to impede decisions justified through reasons that are not valid public reasons. Such are, for example, reasons based on pseudoscience and conspiracy theories, as well as on unreasonable moral beliefs, like the one that all persons who do not have a sufficiently strong natural immunologic response do not deserve protection, and, thus, prescriptions for the containment of a pandemic are not needed. Another such belief is the one that we do not need to care about what will happen with the planet, and with human beings, in a future distant, let's say, 50 years.

At the end, the epistocratic idea that I propose in alternative to Cerovac's overall refusal of epistocracy, corresponds to a weakened version of what the author defines like moderate epistocracy. Experts have a privileged role in public decision-making, but only to their field of expertise, and, probably, only with a power of veto, to block decisions justified through not valid public reasons. This is, clearly, opposed to Mill's general attribution of a privileged status in the process of public decision-making to the more skilled and educated, like in what Cerovac calls weak epistocracy. However, the proposal is partly Millian, in virtue of the adherence to the elements of legitimacy that correspond to Rawls's liberal principle of legitimacy.

5.

In the paper, I have addressed some challenges to Cerovac's criticism of epistocracy. First, I rely on the fact that, when public decisions are at stake, we owe an attitude of responsibility to others. This is because it is our duty not to harm others' rights and legitimate interests. As a consequence, we must attribute the legitimacy to rule to those most competent, when it is possible to establish who they are. Here the situation varies. Sometimes, all persons who have normal human capacities are competent. Sometimes only a restricted elite includes competent people. Sometimes we cannot establish who is competent. But, when we can establish competent people, we must attribute to them the legitimacy to rule, when basic rights and legitimate interests are at stake.

Second, I follow Rawls, when he says that there are reasons that we can endorse as valid, because they are beyond reasonable pluralism. Such are “the methods and conclusions of science when these are not controversial” (Rawls 2005: 224).

At the end, I indicate complications represented by the fact that sometimes there is reasonable pluralism inside science, but we must make public decisions, nonetheless. Further, situations are frequently complex, and we need the expertise of various sciences, while each of them can pull in different directions. In such cases, the rule of experts can be justified, nonetheless, in virtue of a distinction between their valid public reasons, on one hand, and reasons that are not valid, like the paradigmatic cases of pseudoscience and conspiracy theories, on the other hand. In such cases, decisions must be established procedurally, but only by the inclusion of experts. Proper institutional arrangements must be established in order to render operative this idea.

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