

## **Political Community and the Reciprocity Principle (title changed to preserve anonymity)**

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### **Abstract:**

We provide a justification for political liberalism's Reciprocity Principle, which states that political decisions must be justified exclusively on the basis of considerations that all reasonable citizens can reasonably be expected to accept. The standard argument for the Reciprocity Principle grounds it in a requirement of respect for persons. We argue for a different (but compatible) justification: the Reciprocity Principle is justified because it makes possible a desirable kind of political community. The general endorsement of the Reciprocity Principle, we will argue, helps realize joint political rule and relationships of civic friendship. The main obstacle to the realization of these values is the presence of reasonable disagreement about religious, moral and philosophical issues characteristic of liberal societies. We show the Reciprocity Principle helps to overcome this obstacle.

**Keywords:** Civic Friendship, Joint Rule, Political Community, Political Liberalism, Political Philosophy

## 1. Introduction

The principle of reciprocity in political justification is a defining feature of political liberalism:

*Reciprocity Principle:* When making political decisions, citizens must rely only on considerations that they can reasonably expect all reasonable citizens to accept.<sup>1</sup>

Characteristic examples of considerations that we cannot reasonably expect all reasonable citizens to accept are those that issue from religious, moral, and philosophical convictions. Political liberalism holds that we can reasonably expect all reasonable citizens to accept a set of liberal democratic values including freedom, equality, and the ideal of fair social cooperation. The Reciprocity Principle asks citizens to rely only on such public considerations in their political deliberation, and to refrain from appeal to their private religious, moral, and political views. The principle applies to the political deliberation of legislators and judges, but also to ordinary citizens in their capacity as voters. The Reciprocity Principle is central to political liberalism's accounts of public reason, political legitimacy, and religious toleration.

The Reciprocity Principle places a strong restriction on citizens' political deliberation, so the principle requires justification. The standard justification of the principle grounds it in a requirement of respect for persons. On this view, political decisions are characteristically coercive, and respect for persons requires that the exercise of coercive force is justifiable to those subject to it. The standard view takes the Reciprocity Principle to capture this requirement: being

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<sup>1</sup> Classic statements of political liberalism include John Rawls's *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), and Charles Larmore's *The Morals of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

coerced on the basis of considerations that you can reasonably reject is a particularly serious form of disrespect.<sup>2</sup>

In this article we offer a different justification for the Reciprocity Principle. We argue that, given plausible background conditions, citizens' general adherence to the Reciprocity Principle realizes two values of political community: joint rule and civic friendship. Citizens' profound disagreement on religious, moral, and philosophical issues threatens the realization of these values, but citizens can overcome this threat by complying with the Reciprocity Principle.

John Rawls's writing contains suggestions in this direction, and Kyla Ebels-Duggan and Andrew Lister have recently argued that political liberalism is animated by a concern for political community under conditions of pluralism.<sup>3</sup> Our discussion builds on this work by providing detailed and separate accounts of joint rule and civic friendship, and by specifying precisely how citizens' compliance with the Reciprocity Principle realizes these values of political community. Our argument is compatible with the standard view, so it is possible that the Reciprocity Principle is supported by considerations of respect as well as the value of joint rule and civic friendship.

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<sup>2</sup> For examples of political liberals who hold the standard view, see Charles Larmore, "The Moral Basis of Political Liberalism," *Journal of Philosophy* 96 (1999), Martha Nussbaum "Perfectionist Liberalism and Political Liberalism," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 39 (2011), and James Boettcher "Respect, Recognition, and Public Reason," *Social Theory and Practice* 33 (2007).

<sup>3</sup> For example, see: Rawls "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," p. 771; Kyla Ebels-Duggan "The Beginning of Political Community: Politics in the Face of Disagreement," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 2, 2010: pp. 50-71, Andrew Lister *Public Reason and Political Community*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

## 2. The Reciprocity Principle

Before we turn to our main argument, we need to specify how we understand the Reciprocity Principle. Our formulation of the principle is simplified in two ways. First, it does not include Rawls's proviso, allowing citizens to appeal to their religious, moral, and philosophical convictions "provided that, in due course, [they] give properly public reasons to support the principles and policies [their] comprehensive doctrine is said to support."<sup>4</sup> Second, our formulation of the principle leaves open whether the Reciprocity Principle applies to all political decisions, or to some narrower range of questions such as those concerning constitutional essentials or matters of basic justice. This means that our statement of the principle may be too strong, but in both cases, our argument will not depend on these further specifications of the principle.

Three features of the Reciprocity Principle are important to highlight, since they figure importantly in our argument below. First, the principle governs political justification, conceived as an activity that citizens engage in. When citizens deliberate about how to vote in a referendum on public funding for religious education, they are engaged in a process of political justification. The Reciprocity Principle imposes a duty of citizenship (not a legal requirement) on individuals engaged in this kind of justification: they should not appeal to a consideration unless they can reasonably expect all other reasonable citizens to accept it. This contrasts with related principles that impose a necessary condition on the justification of political outcomes, where justification is understood as a property of such outcomes. According to principles of this kind, political outcomes, such as laws or policies, are justified only if they are sufficiently supported by considerations that all reasonable citizens can reasonably be expected to accept. We do not argue

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<sup>4</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 453.

against principles of the latter kind, but it is crucial to our arguments that the Reciprocity Principle be understood as a principle that regulates citizens' political deliberation and decision-making.

Second, the Reciprocity Principle is *premise-targeting*. It imposes a restriction on the considerations citizens can properly take to speak in favor of or against political decisions; it does not impose a restriction on political outcomes directly. In many cases, the requirement to appeal only to a restricted set of considerations will narrow the scope of political disagreement, but the principle leaves room for reasonable disagreement about which laws or policies are supported by the set of shared considerations. In this respect, the Reciprocity Principle differs from *conclusion-targeting* principles of mutual justifiability that a number of authors have recently defended. According to these principles political outcomes, rather than the considerations that justify these outcomes, must be the object of idealized agreement.<sup>5</sup> These views do not construe mutual justifiability as requiring that the law or policy be supported by any reasons that are shared among reasonable citizens. Instead, the demand of mutual justifiability is satisfied when each citizen has sufficient reason to accept the law or policy based on her own worldview.

Third, the Reciprocity Principle refers to reasonable citizenship. The relevant notion of reasonableness is not an intuitive notion of who is a reasonable person; rather, it expresses a substantial ideal of citizenship. According to this ideal, all reasonable citizens endorse a set of

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<sup>5</sup> See Gerald Gaus's "Basic Principle of Justification," and the ensuing discussion in §14 of his *The Order of Public Reason*, p. 263-265; Kevin Vallier's "Convergence and Consensus in Public Reason," *Public Affairs Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 4 (2011), pp. 261-279; and Christopher Eberle's "Consensus, Convergence and Religiously Justified Coercion," *Public Affairs Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 4 (2011), pp. 281-303.

basic liberal-democratic values, such as freedom, equality, the rule of law, and the idea of fair social cooperation, together with a set of uncontroversial political values such as security and efficiency. These values provide the Reciprocity Principle with some of its positive content. Despite reasonable pluralism about religion, morality, and philosophy, reasonable citizens can expect one another to accept these political values.<sup>6</sup> As a result, citizens can rely on these values when they justify political decisions. Of course, it is important for political liberals to explain what entitles them to this substantial conception of reasonableness, but that is not a question we consider in this article.

### **3. The Reciprocity Principle and Political Community**

Our justification of the Reciprocity Principle starts with two assumptions. The first is that it is important that citizens jointly exercise political power; the second is that it is important for citizens to stand in a relationship of civic friendship to one another. As a consequence, if citizens' general compliance with the Reciprocity Principle realizes joint rule and civic friendship, then each citizen has a strong *pro tanto* reason to comply with that principle, on the condition that their fellow citizens comply with the principle as well. These are substantial assumptions, so a full justification of political liberalism in terms of the values of political community should provide a further defense of them. We briefly return to this point in section 4.

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<sup>6</sup> Political liberals disagree about what else, if anything, is included in the conception of reasonable citizenship. For a systematic discussion of the requirements of reasonableness, see R.J. Leland and Han van Wietmarschen, "Reasonableness, Intellectual Modesty, and Reciprocity in Political Justification," *Ethics* 122 (2012), pp. 721-744.

The main arguments of this article are in support of two further claims. First, in section 3.a, we argue that citizens' general compliance with the Reciprocity Principle, provided a number of plausible background conditions are satisfied, makes it the case that citizens jointly exercise political power. Second, in section 3.b, we argue that general compliance with the Reciprocity Principle among citizens, when a number of plausible background conditions are satisfied, makes it the case that those citizens stand in a relationship of civic friendship to one another. As will become clear, one of the most important obstacles to the realization of joint rule and civic friendship in liberal democracies is the presence of religious, moral, and philosophical disagreement. In the course of arguing for our main claims, we will develop conceptions of joint rule and civic friendship suitable to such pluralistic societies. So, our overall aim is to show how the Reciprocity Principle makes possible robust forms of civic friendship and joint rule despite profound but reasonable disagreement.

Given our two assumptions, our arguments lead to the following conclusion: when a number of plausible background conditions are met, it is important that citizens generally comply with the Reciprocity Principle, and citizens have a strong *pro tanto* reason to comply with the Reciprocity Principle if their fellow citizens likewise comply.

#### *a. Joint Rule*

There is a long tradition of thinking that a genuinely democratic society should support a robust form of joint rule. When a democratically elected government (a government *of* the people) rules, it is, or should be, rule *by* the people. Once we acknowledge that conditions of freedom give rise to reasonable disagreement about a wide range of moral, philosophical, and religious issues, it can seem that this idea of joint rule ought to be abandoned. After all, it does seem that,

if we could expect citizens to endorse a particular moral, religious, or philosophical doctrine, then this shared worldview could provide a basis for joint rule. So long as a democratically elected government in such a homogenous society ruled on the basis of the shared worldview, there would be a straightforward sense in which the government's rule was the rule of the people. This type of unified political society, for which Rawls reserves the term "political community,"<sup>7</sup> is not compatible with the protection of individual liberties—freedoms of conscience, expression, association, and so on—and the pluralism that arises wherever those liberties are honored. If this homogeneity of worldview were the only basis for joint rule, we would be forced into a choice between individual liberties and the democratic ideal of joint rule, and it would seem wise to give up the latter.

One way to respond to this tension between liberalism and democracy is to temper our ambitions for joint rule. For example, we might hold that the point of democratic institutions, such as voting procedures, is to aggregate individual citizens' preferences or judgments. We could then say that citizens of a democracy rule together, not because they share any substantial beliefs or values, but because the procedure counts and each citizen's preference or judgment and weighs them all equally. *We* rule because each of us has an equal say in how political power is exercised. This aggregative conception of joint rule is disappointingly thin. Perhaps this is the most we can have in a liberal society characterized by reasonable pluralism, but it is worth considering whether a more robust conception of joint rule can be instantiated in a modern liberal democracy.

A second response to the tension between individual liberty and joint rule seeks civic unity in nationality. Even if citizens in a liberal society are divided by faith, morality, and philosophy,

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<sup>7</sup> *Political Liberalism*, pp. 40-43.

perhaps they are united by a sense of shared history, a common bond to a particular territory, a language, shared cultural practices, and so on.<sup>8</sup> When the citizens of a state are bound together by a shared national culture of this kind, then political decisions that reflect these shared commitments are, arguably, the decisions of the people. The problem with this proposal is that it offers a conception of joint rule that demands conformity to a national culture. Membership in such a culture may be compatible with reasonable disagreement about religion, morality, and philosophy, but the demands of membership nonetheless exclude cultural outsiders and impose pressure for homogeneity in ways that seem at odds with liberal-democratic commitments. Perhaps this is a price worth paying, but before we reach that conclusion, it is worth asking whether a more attractive basis for joint rule is available.

The Reciprocity Principle plays a central role in an account of joint rule that avoids the problems of the aggregative and nationalist responses. Reasonable citizens' commitment to the Reciprocity Principle, when taken together with some other plausible assumptions about their attitudes toward political cooperation, means that those citizens are involved in a shared activity of justifying political decisions. The resulting decisions are the people's decisions because they are the outcome of such a shared activity of political justification.

The Reciprocity Principle helps realize a kind of joint deliberation at the political level that is structurally similar to processes of joint deliberation found in smaller groups, so we begin with a smaller-scale case of shared governance before turning to discussion of joint political rule.

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<sup>8</sup> Some proposals that emphasize the significance of nationality for liberal democracies are: Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996); David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

Consider a philosophy department deciding who should receive a new professorship in the department. Members of the department often care that the decision is made by the department as a whole, rather than by a faction or a particular member. Formal voting procedures are one element of many departmental joint decisions. In such decisions, each member has the opportunity to vote, with each vote given equal weight. By virtue of these features, a vote can contribute to the sense in which the resulting decision is made by the department as a whole. Imagine, however, that holding a vote of this kind is *all* that the department does to ensure that the decision is made by the department as a group. It can make sense to speak of the resulting decision as the department's, but, as in the political case, this would be to invoke a very minimal sense of joint decision.

A common way to secure a more robust form of shared decision-making is to deliberate together before voting. Members of a department may have a face-to-face discussion on the relative merits of the candidates, in which each is free to have her say, and the views of each are considered by all. When a candidate is selected by a fair vote after such a process of deliberation, the resulting decision is the department's in a stronger sense than is the case when the voting procedure takes the undiscussed judgments of the individual members as inputs. But this type of face-to-face deliberation is not feasible at the scale of most contemporary political entities. Small subsets of citizens and the members of a legislature could deliberate in this way, but the people as a whole cannot.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This suggests a third response to the tension between liberalism and democracy: we should temper the ambitions of joint rule by limiting joint rule to small groups of people acting as representatives. If the resulting picture is that the representatives rule together rather than the people, then this response does not deliver an attractive ideal of democratic joint rule. If the

Is there a kind of shared deliberation that citizens could engage in at the scale of a contemporary political society? We think there is, and that it is one commonly engaged in by smaller groups as well. When it comes to hiring decisions, members of philosophy departments typically spend a lot of time reading application files alone. By itself, this is merely deliberation at roughly the same time rather than shared deliberation. But such activities can become a part of a process of shared deliberation when the individual members of the department evaluate the application files in light of a shared commitment to treat certain considerations as reasons counting for or against candidates. The members of the department may have a shared commitment to treat a research interest in epistemology and an impressive writing sample as reasons that speak in favor of a candidate, to treat the absence of demonstrated interest in undergraduate teaching to count against a candidate, and to treat the prestige of the candidate's graduate institution as irrelevant. Department members can participate in such a shared commitment even if some of them personally disagree with it. A member can look at files against the understanding that *we* are looking for someone working in epistemology, even if *she* thinks the department has too many epistemologists and would do better to hire a political philosopher.

Shared commitments of this kind commonly structure processes of shared deliberation more generally. Members of a board of directors deliberate about the company strategy in light of a shared commitment to treat certain considerations (say, short-term profits) as irrelevant to a

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picture is that the people rule through the decisions of a group of representatives, we would need a story about why the decisions of the representatives count as decisions of the people. Part of this story will likely be the claim that the people jointly select the representatives. This kind of joint decision to appoint representatives is exactly the kind of joint decision we discuss.

company's decisions. Family members resolve together to treat warm weather or remoteness, but not the local cuisine, as considerations that bear on where the family should vacation. The question is, can citizens' political deliberation be structured by a shared commitment to treat certain considerations as reasons? To answer this question, we turn to Michael Bratman's work for a systematic treatment of such shared commitments.

On Bratman's view, the following features suffice to give rise to cases of shared deliberation among members of a group:

(a) The members each intend:

(1) that all members take into account only a particular set of considerations in their deliberation together;

(2) that (1) proceed by way of members' (a)(1)-intentions and their meshing sub-plans to realize these intentions.

(b) There is mutual interdependence between each of their (a)-intentions.

(c) (a) and (b) are common knowledge among the members.<sup>10</sup>

In order to avoid circularity in the proposal, the "deliberation together" mentioned in (a)(1) should be understood in a shared-intention neutral sense, as deliberation where each member of the group does his part in the decision-making, but not necessarily with the intentions specified by (a)-(c). To illustrate: imagine a scenario in which each uses only the right considerations when reasoning, but does so without knowing and intending that others do likewise. Condition (a)(2) requires that participants intend the joint deliberation to come about because all

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<sup>10</sup> See Michael Bratman's *Shared Agency*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), Chapter 7. Bratman's focus is on shared commitments to the *weights* of reasons. But, as he notes, the approach also works for shared commitments to count certain commitments *as reasons*.

participants freely bring it about (rather than under pressure of coercion, for example). It also requires that they all intend for one another to be mutually responsive in forming sub-plans to realize the intended result. For instance, if you take files 1-20 home to read, I will plan to read those files another time.

The mutual interdependence mentioned in (b) means that the persistence of the intentions of each of the members described in (a) is conditional on the known persistence of the (a)-intentions of the other members of the group. When (b) is satisfied, some members' defection from the shared plan will lead others to likewise withdraw their (a)-intentions.

Condition (c) is a common knowledge condition. It requires all members to know: that (a) and (b) are satisfied by all the members, that members know that each of them knows that (a) and (b) are satisfied, and so on. This condition supports the mutual dependence listed under (b).

We will assume that Bratman's account correctly describes one way in which people can engage in a shared process of deliberation.<sup>11</sup> To show that the Reciprocity Principle contributes to joint rule, we will show that the general endorsement of the Reciprocity Principle secures a central component of a Bratmanian structure of interlocking attitudes, and that given plausible background conditions, reasonable members of a political society can satisfy each of the conditions (a)-(c) and thereby engage in a process of shared political deliberation.

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<sup>11</sup> For alternative accounts, see Margaret Gilbert's plural subject theory in Chapters 6-7 of *A Theory of Social Obligation: Membership, Commitment, and the Bonds of Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), or Raimo Tuomela and Kaarlo Miller's account of we-intentions in "We-Intentions," *Philosophical Studies* 53, 1988: pp. 367-389.

Imagine the citizens of a democratic society deciding an important political question by referendum—for example, whether same-sex marriages should be legally recognized.<sup>12</sup> A general endorsement of the Reciprocity Principle among reasonable citizens means that each intends to deliberate about whether same-sex marriages should be legally recognized exclusively in terms of considerations they can reasonably expect all reasonable citizens to accept. As we mentioned before, the “reasonableness” referenced by the Reciprocity Principle is a substantial political ideal, not simply an intuitive idea of reasonableness. So, in the scenario under consideration, each citizen intends to deliberate using the same set of considerations as their fellow reasonable citizens. This means that the general endorsement of the Reciprocity Principle provides a key component of the structure of shared deliberation: citizens who endorse the Reciprocity Principle intend to take into account only a particular set of considerations in their deliberation together. A general commitment to treat certain considerations as relevant in political deliberation is not, however, a joint commitment to do so. The question is whether, under plausible circumstances, the further conditions that give rise to a shared process of deliberation could also be satisfied.

Start with condition (a)(1). Consider the difference between a citizen’s deliberation about the legal recognition of same-sex marriages in the context of a discussion at church or among friends, and a citizen’s deliberation that results in a political action, like casting a vote. The Reciprocity Principle only restricts the second kind of deliberation.<sup>13</sup> In our referendum scenario,

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<sup>12</sup> For a detailed discussion of the relationship between public reason and same-sex marriage in Canada, see Andrew Lister, *Public Reason and Political Community*, chapter 6.

<sup>13</sup> This accords with Rawls’s idea of a background culture that is not constrained by a duty of civility, see *Political Liberalism*, p. 220 and p. 382.

citizens are aware that their deliberation results in political action. They are also aware that their own deliberation is part of a larger decision-making process in which many of their fellow citizens participate, and that the final decision is sensitive to the conclusions of all participants. A citizen's commitment to the Reciprocity Principle signifies a concern for political decisions to be made on the basis of public considerations. Given that citizens are aware of the modest role their own decision plays in the overall process, it would be odd for any one citizen to be concerned only with her own conformity to the Reciprocity Principle. Rather, the concern with public justification, expressed by the endorsement of the Reciprocity Principle, plausibly translates not just into an individual intention to comply with the principle, but also into an intention that we all deliberate in accordance with the principle. This suggests that reasonable citizens could satisfy condition (a)(1) given a plausible level of understanding of the political process.

Condition (a)(2) rules out forms of shared deliberation that bypass the intentions of some of the members of the group, and it rules out conflicting sub-plans. An example of the former phenomenon, in the case of shared action rather than shared deliberation, would be if we both intend to drive to Boston together, but I intend to drive to Boston with you by tying you up and putting you in my trunk. Here, we each intend that we drive to Boston together, but I do not intend to do so by way of your intention to drive to Boston together.<sup>14</sup> Since we already assume reasonable citizens to be concerned to treat one another as free and equal persons (recall our discussion of reasonable citizenship in section 2), this part of (a)(2) is normally satisfied. For an example where sub-plans conflict, suppose that we each intend that we travel to Boston together, but I intend that we take a plane and you that we take a train. In a functioning democracy, we don't see a reason to doubt that this part of condition (a)(2) would be satisfied.

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<sup>14</sup> Bratman discusses a similar case at p. 104 of "Shared Intention" *Ethics* 104 (1993): 97-113.

Under plausible conditions, would reasonable citizens' (a)-intentions be conditional on a similar commitment on the side of their fellow reasonable citizens, as demanded by condition (b)? Since the central intention is the intention that all citizens govern themselves by the Reciprocity Principle, it seems that there would be little reason to maintain that intention unless others have matching (a)-intentions.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the Reciprocity Principle imposes a demanding restriction on citizens. Political decisions often have profound effects on individual citizens' lives. When making such decisions, citizens are asked to leave aside their religious, moral, and philosophical views. Many citizens take such views to be central to their lives, and these views often have strong *prima facie* implications for how political questions should be decided. This alone suggests that citizens may be unwilling to make this sacrifice if their fellow reasonable citizens are not prepared to do the same. For these reasons, it seems that reasonable citizens' (a)-intentions would often be conditional on their fellow reasonable citizens' (a)-intentions.

This does not rule out scenarios in which some citizens are unconditionally committed to the Reciprocity Principle. For instance, those who believe that violations of the Reciprocity Principle constitute disrespectful treatment of other citizens might not alter any of their commitments to the principle even when their fellow citizens withdraw their commitments. A society of such unconditionally committed citizens would not be jointly committed to the principle, and their general commitment to the principle would not contribute to their joint exercise of political power. However, our claim is not that the general endorsement of the Reciprocity Principle

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<sup>15</sup> Here we differ from Andrew Lister, who thinks that reasons of political community for compliance with the Reciprocity Principle persist whenever at least one other citizen is also committed to the Reciprocity Principle. See his discussion of bilateral and multilateral reciprocity in *Public Reason and Political Community*, chapter 5.

*inevitably* gives rise to joint political rule; we only claim that the general endorsement of the Reciprocity Principle, given plausible background conditions, does realize the conditions for joint rule. The possibility of a society of unconditionally committed citizens does not undermine our argument.

Finally, would citizens' commitment to the Reciprocity Principle be common knowledge among reasonable citizens, as condition (c) requires? Political decision-making in democratic societies is public in character. This does not mean that everyone's voting behavior is public information, but political leaders, judges, and other officials regularly state the reasons for their decisions; ordinary citizens discuss political ideas and policies; decisions themselves are made public to the citizenry along with polling information about how and why voters made decisions; and so on. If citizens, including citizens in the capacity of legislators, judges, and the like, are consistently committed to the Reciprocity Principle, it seems that this commitment would be apparent in circumstances of publicity. This falls short of common knowledge, since some citizens may not know that everyone else recognizes the commitments of others, but it seems that generally available knowledge of widespread commitment to the Reciprocity Principle would be sufficient to support the conditionality of citizens' commitments required by (b), which is the relevant consideration here.

Taking all this together: given a general commitment to the Reciprocity Principle and a number of further conditions that could plausibly be met by reasonable citizens in democratic societies, (a), (b), and an approximation of (c) are all satisfied. Against the background of these conditions, reasonable citizens are committed to deliberate about political issues together with their fellow citizens exclusively in terms of a particular set of considerations, conditional on their fellow citizens being likewise committed, and in the knowledge that they are so committed. This

structure of interlocking attitudes realizes a robust sense of shared deliberation. If such a process of shared deliberation is brought to bear on a political decision in the right way, then the resulting decision is a joint decision.<sup>16</sup>

We used the special case of a decision by referendum to illustrate our argument, but our account straightforwardly applies to democratic decisions to elect representatives, and to the decisions of groups of elected officials, such as members of a parliament, as well. The further idea that decisions of a group of representatives also count as the shared decisions of the citizenry as a whole, in virtue of the representative relation between citizen and legislator, requires additional steps that we cannot spell out here.<sup>17</sup>

This completes our argument for the claim that that general compliance with the Reciprocity Principle among citizens makes it the case that the exercise of political power is the joint exercise of political power by those citizens, provided a number of plausible background conditions are in place. It should be clear that we have not argued that the general endorsement of the Reciprocity Principle is sufficient for joint rule. Instead, we have argued that the general endorsement of the Reciprocity Principle provides a key component of a set of interlocking attitudes and activities that together constitute a process of shared deliberation, which in turn forms the basis for a joint decision. The requisite attitudes and activities are compatible with a

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<sup>16</sup> It is not obvious what “the right way” amounts to in this context. The issue seems similar to the difficult problem of deviant causal connections between intention and action in the philosophy of action. Though we do not wish to diminish the complexities involved at this point, we cannot discuss these issues here.

<sup>17</sup> See Eric Beerbohm’s *In Our Name* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2015) for a recent account of these steps.

wide range of religious, moral, and philosophical convictions, so our account of joint rule is consistent with reasonable pluralism.

Our shared deliberation account does not reduce the ideal of joint rule to the aggregation of preferences, nor does it presuppose a shared national culture. There is, however, a fourth view of joint rule that we have not yet considered. Like the aggregative conception, this view takes democratic decision procedures to be central. But rather than accounting for joint rule in terms of the *implementation* of democratic procedures, this view takes a *joint commitment* to such a democratic procedure to be central to democratic joint rule.<sup>18</sup> This “joint procedural commitment account” conceives of joint rule as a product of citizens’ joint commitment to treat the outcome of a fair democratic decision-making procedure as determining the group’s decision, and this need not include a commitment to the Reciprocity Principle. Hence, although the argument from joint rule shows that a general commitment to the Reciprocity Principle can help realize a robust form of joint rule, the argument does not show that our account of joint rule is preferable to the joint procedural commitment account. The argument from civic friendship, in the next subsection, will discriminate between our view and the joint procedural commitment account.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See Chapter 7 of Anna Stiltz’s *Liberal Loyalty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009) for a view where citizens take on a shared commitment of this kind to participate in a democratic process.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Billingham argues that Andrew Lister’s community-based defense of political liberalism fails, in part, because Lister does not show that compliance with the Reciprocity Principle is necessary for joint rule. Billingham points out that a view like the joint procedural commitment account can also secure joint rule (see “Does Political Community Require Public Reason?: On Lister’s Defense of Political Liberalism,” *Politics, Philosophy, and Economics*, pp. 5-7 (forthcoming, DOI: 10.1177/1470594X15573460)). Our view differs from Lister’s in clearly

### *b. Civic Friendship*

The idea that the political relationship of citizens should involve a form of friendship, affection, or mutual interest and concern plays a significant role in the history of political thought. For instance, Aristotle regards civic friendship as the force “that seems to hold cities together,” and claims “the highest form of justice seems to be a matter of friendship.”<sup>20</sup> Rousseau also regards citizens’ affections for one another as an essential ingredient of a well-functioning political society.<sup>21</sup> The proposals of philosophers who emphasize civic friendship differ in matters of detail, but they generally insist that citizens in a well-functioning state ought to care about one another’s fates, and regard their political responsibilities as a way of seeing to the interests of their fellow citizens.

However, another common thought is that civic friendship cannot be established or maintained under conditions of pluralism. Rousseau, for instance, regarded the maintenance of a shared national identity and the imposition of dogmas of civil religion as necessary to maintain civic friendship.<sup>22</sup> More generally, it seems that the absence of a shared world-view or shared sense of ethnic or cultural membership can threaten citizens’ concern for one another’s good. In

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distinguishing joint rule from civic friendship and in arguing that only the latter rules out the joint procedural commitment account.

<sup>20</sup> See *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Roger Crisp, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1155a.

<sup>21</sup> See “Of the Social Contract,” in *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), II.9, and *Emile*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 40.

<sup>22</sup> See “Considerations on the Government of Poland and Its Projected Reformation,” 3.2-3.4, and “Of the Social Contract,” IV.8.31-35, both of which are collected in in *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*.

this section, we show how citizens' general compliance with the Reciprocity Principle, given favorable background conditions, realizes relationships of civic friendship among citizens who reasonably disagree about religion, morality, and philosophy.

To better understand how the idea of friendship may characterize the political relationship between citizens, it is useful to consider non-civic interpersonal friendship. Accounts of the nature of interpersonal friendship differ, but all plausible accounts require that friends have a non-prudential concern for one another. A person is motivated to benefit her friends, and regards this as something valuable in its own right, not simply as a means to advance her own ends.<sup>23</sup> There are doubtless further requirements on interpersonal friendship. Plausibly, friends must share a species of intimacy or familiarity, and they may also need to share projects or activities with one another.<sup>24</sup> Because we take a non-prudential concern for one another's interests to be the core feature that civic friendship shares with interpersonal friendship, we will avoid discussing these further requirements, focusing on mutual concern between friends.

The relationship of mutual concern that characterizes interpersonal friendship involves more than just a non-prudential concern to benefit each other. To see why, consider two people who strongly disagree about what is in one another's interest. Erica thinks that excellence in intellectual, artistic, and athletic pursuits is what is important in life, while Patrick believes a

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<sup>23</sup> For an overview of the philosophical literature on friendship, see Bennett Helm "Friendship," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2013), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/friendship/>.

<sup>24</sup> On self-disclosure in friendship, see Laurence Thomas, "Friendship," *Synthese* 72, no. 2 (1987): 217-236. For an account that emphasizes shared ends and activities, see Kyla Ebels-Duggan, "Against Beneficence: A Normative Account of Love," *Ethics* 119, no. 1 (2008): 142-170.

good life requires strong family relationships. It is easy to see that these conceptions of the good can come into conflict: if Patrick is offered a scholarship at an excellent university far from his family, then Erica may think he should go, while Patrick may judge that he should not. Despite the disagreement, Erica and Patrick each have a non-prudential concern to benefit each other.

Two natural responses to this type of conflict are in tension with the relation of friendship. First, Erica could simply defer to Patrick's conception of the good in her interactions with him, supporting and encouraging his choice to stay with his family, even though she does not believe doing so is good for him. This kind of deference may be acceptable at times, but a general practice of deference against the background of significant disagreement about Patrick's good would border on insincerity and become hard to square with being a good friend. Second, Erica could insist on her own conception of the good, acting so as to make it more likely that Patrick takes the scholarship despite his belief in the value of family. Again, friends may understandably act this way in certain cases, but if Erica's general practice were to insist on her own conception of Patrick's good despite his disagreement, her attitude would be a form of paternalism that is at odds with friendship.

This suggests that friendship requires not just a non-prudential concern for one another's interest, but also an at least partially shared conception of what *is* in one another's interest. Erica and Patrick need to agree on a certain set of interests,  $S_E$ , that belong to Erica, and on a certain set of interests,  $S_P$ , that are Patrick's. This kind of agreement allows Patrick to act in ways that both Patrick and Erica can believe to be in Erica's interest, and vice versa. For this to be possible,  $S_E$  and  $S_P$  need not share common elements. Note that as described above, Erica believes that excellence in one's pursuits makes for a good human life in general, and Patrick believes that family relationships are good in general. They would share a conception of one

another's interests in the relevant sense if they would both believe that excellence of pursuits is good for Erica, and that strong family relationships are good for Patrick. Further,  $S_E$  and  $S_P$  can be partial descriptions of Erica's and Patrick's good: Erica and Patrick's friendship can be based around a shared belief that academic achievement is good for Erica, and strong family ties are good for Patrick, even when they disagree about many other aspects of each other's interests.

The idea that interpersonal friendship requires a shared partial conception of what is in one another's interest may be surprising, since good friends often appear to have radically different and conflicting values. Our claims are fully consistent with this observation. First, for any pair of friends,  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  can contain very different elements. If two people have sufficiently pluralistic conceptions of the good, they can have dramatically different beliefs about what is in their own interest, but they can nonetheless each believe that what the other person takes to be in their interest is genuinely good for them. Second, many people believe it is good to live a life in accordance with one's own choices. This conception of what is in one another's interest could form the basis of a friendship, even if the people involved make very different choices in life. If Erica would have this view, then she could regard it as important that Patrick gets to decide for himself whether to decline the scholarship, even if she thinks it would be better if he made a different choice. On this picture, their friendship would still involve a (partially) shared conception of one another's good, in this case the good of making one's own choices.

The requirement that friends share a partial conception of each other's good extends naturally to the case of civic friendship as well. When we say that it is important for a political order to be one in which citizens care for one another as friends, we do not envision some imposing their conception of the good on others, nor do we imagine some deferring systematically to their fellow citizens. Instead, the ideal of civic friendship involves citizens

concerned to advance each other's interests, in ways that all parties regard as genuinely beneficial.

On our view, a non-prudential concern to benefit one another in ways that all parties regard as valuable is central to both civic friendship and interpersonal friendship. However, civic friendship differs from interpersonal friendship in at least two important ways. First, civic friends relate to one another *as citizens*, and this relationship does not require knowledge of, or responsiveness to, the particular features of various citizens' personalities. Second, civic friendship involves a non-prudential concern to benefit one's fellows by distinctively political means—civic friends want to help one another through participation in political life. So civic friendship does not call for citizens to direct their personal lives to benefitting their fellows; they must simply be concerned that their political institutions, together with their participation in these institutions, aim to benefit fellow members of their political society.<sup>25</sup>

In sum, the core feature of civic friendship is present when citizens share a non-prudential concern to benefit one another through political means, on terms that each regards as genuinely advancing the interests of her fellow citizens.

Some people think that it is misguided to expect citizens to have this kind of non-prudential concern for the interests of their fellows. Politics, on their view, is an arena where interest groups compete, with each trying to secure the best outcome for its members (perhaps subject to certain restrictions). This conception of politics as self-interested competition aptly describes some political scenarios, but it gives an overly narrow description of the attitudes of many citizens in well-functioning liberal democracies. Furthermore, it is already part of political

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<sup>25</sup> Our conception of civic friendship is similar to the one developed by Sibyl Schwartzenbach in "On Civic Friendship" *Ethics* 107 (1996): 97-128 (see especially pages 112-114).

liberalism's broader framework to assume citizens' willingness to see the political relationship in cooperative terms and as concerned with justice rather than the mere advancement of personal interest. For these reasons we assume, for now, that citizens have a non-prudential concern to benefit one another (we return to the question of whether citizens can be expected to develop or maintain such a concern below).

However, even when this assumption is made, reasonable pluralism threatens to make a shared conception among citizens of what is in one another's interest unavailable. The Reciprocity Principle offers a response to this challenge. Erica and Patrick, now considered in their role as citizens, can illustrate the problem. Suppose that Patrick endorses extensive parental leave schemes, subsidized child care, tax breaks for families, and so on, based on his view that family relations are central to a good life. Meanwhile, Erica endorses increased funding for elite universities, subsidies for the arts and sports, and so forth, based on the value she attaches to intellectual, artistic, and athletic pursuits. Erica and Patrick both think of these decisions as advancing the interests of all, and so fully in keeping with their non-prudential concern to benefit their fellow citizens, but they disagree about what these interests are. Political liberals regard this disagreement on what makes for a good human life as one aspect of the broader religious, moral, and philosophical disagreement that inevitably arises between reasonable citizens in liberal societies. Insistence on one's own views as the basis for political action on the one hand, and deference to the views of one's fellow citizens on the other are both incompatible with the relationship of civic friendship.

Reasonable pluralism would not threaten citizens' formation of a shared conception of each other's interests if citizens generally endorsed a sufficiently wide pluralistic view of the good, or if they all viewed the good life as a life lived in accordance with one's own choices.

However, to expect this kind of convergence in view would be to expect the absence of genuine pluralism. Political liberals are committed to the ongoing existence of pervasive disagreement on these questions.

As with joint rule, one response to this problem is to temper our ambitions when it comes to civic friendship. Perhaps we should see politics as a process of bargaining in which each aims to secure the best outcome for herself, or as a method of peaceful conflict resolution. On the other hand, one could insist on the value of civic friendship but conclude that this requires a shared national identity.

The Reciprocity Principle helps avoid both these responses. The principle asks each citizen to deliberate on political issues in light of a particular set of considerations that includes a core set of liberal-democratic values: liberty, equality, security, efficiency, and so forth. So when all reasonable citizens comply with the Reciprocity Principle, they make political decisions in light of the same set of considerations, those that all reasonable citizens accept and expect each other to accept. This means that the resulting decisions are based on considerations that all reasonable citizens already take to be among their values, independently of any shared commitment to treat these considerations as reason-giving in political deliberation.

Here is another way to put the point: the Reciprocity Principle defines a conception of the good of citizens that is shared by reasonable citizens. The principle specifies a conception of the good of people *as citizens*, rather than of people as such, in the sense that it singles out a set of distinctly political values, such as freedom and equality, which apply specifically to citizens' standing in a political society. The endorsement of these values is compatible with a wide range of further religious, moral, and philosophical commitments. This allows citizens of pluralistic societies who have a non-prudential concern for the interests of their fellow citizens to avoid

taking a paternalistic or deferential stance. Given the general endorsement of the Reciprocity Principle, any reasonable citizen can: (1) act on her non-prudential concern to benefit her fellow reasonable citizens, (2) regard the actions of those citizens as being in her interest, and (3) expect her actions to be regarded by those citizens as being in their interest. Further, the Reciprocity Principle makes all of this consistent with widespread reasonable disagreement about religious, moral, and philosophical issues. In this way, general compliance with the Reciprocity Principle, assuming citizens have a non-prudential concern for one another's interest, realizes relationships of civic friendship despite conditions of reasonable pluralism.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> On our account, the Reciprocity Principle singles out a set of values that are part of all reasonable citizens' conceptions of their good. As we explained above, however, relationships of friendship only require a shared conception of one another's good in a weaker sense. There must be sets of interests  $S_1, S_2, \dots, S_n$ , belonging to each of the friends involved, such that all agree that each of these sets corresponds to a genuine part of that person's good. There need not be one set of interests such that all believe that the members of that set are part of every person's good. For example, all citizens may agree that economic growth is genuinely good for one group of citizens, environmental sustainability for a second group, and the alleviation of poverty for a third group. In that case, it seems that citizens could reach a compromise on a set of governmental policies that promotes each of these values to some degree, and all citizens could agree that these policies are in one another's genuine interest. If such a constellation of values and beliefs could be found among reasonable citizens, and could be expected of them, then we see no reason why the relevant considerations would have to be excluded from political justification. This might require a minor modification of the formulation of the Reciprocity Principle along the following lines: political decisions must be justified using only considerations that all reasonable citizens can expect one another to accept *as genuinely important for at least some reasonable citizens*. This does not imply a dramatic expansion of the set of considerations ruled in by the Reciprocity Principle. Consider, for example, the value of salvation. It is clear that many reasonable citizens believe salvation to be of the utmost importance. It is not true,

In section 3.a, we considered the joint procedural commitment account, according to which citizens of a democratic society rule together when they are jointly committed to regard the outcomes of democratic procedures as settling the citizenry's decisions about the exercise of political power. As we said, a joint commitment to such procedures can realize joint rule in much the same way that a joint commitment to the Reciprocity Principle can. A joint commitment to democratic procedure does not, however, provide citizens with a partially shared conception of one another's good beyond the very thin sense in which all citizens have an interest in democratic procedure being followed. When different groups in a citizenry, jointly committed to democratic procedure, vote in accordance with their reasonably disputed religious, moral, or philosophical convictions, citizens will not regard the resulting decisions as aiming to advance a shared conception of one another's interests. For this reason, considerations of civic friendship favor the Reciprocity Principle over the joint procedural commitment account.

So far, we have assumed that citizens come to the table with a non-prudential concern for one another's interests, and argued that the Reciprocity Principle plays an important role in providing citizens with a partially shared conception of one another's good. But the Reciprocity Principle also plays a role in securing conditions in which concern for one's fellow citizens is likely to develop and remain stable over time. To see how, consider the moral psychology of reciprocity found in John Rawls's work. Rawls assumes that a citizen of a just society will tend to be motivated to comply with the demands of justice, in part, because she will come to want to

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however, that all reasonable citizens can be expected to believe that salvation is genuinely valuable for those who care about salvation. To think otherwise would fail to fully acknowledge the fact of reasonable disagreement; after all, many reasonable citizens believe salvation to be an altogether illusory aim. Similar observations would apply to other religious, moral, and philosophical views normally thought to be ruled out by the Reciprocity Principle.

do good for her fellow citizens upon seeing how they have benefitted her by doing their part in a scheme of fair cooperation for mutual advantage.<sup>27</sup> This moral-psychological conjecture figures importantly in Rawls's argument that a well-ordered society governed by his principles of justice would tend to maintain itself through time.

But when citizens lack a shared conception of one another's interests, this moral psychology of reciprocity is unlikely to produce a non-prudential motive to benefit others through politics. If my fellow citizens do their part in establishing and maintaining a social system, with an eye to benefitting people like me, I am unlikely to be non-prudentially motivated to reciprocate if I think that either (1) their actions were not directed at advancing what I regard as a real interest of mine; or (2) that they did not conceive of themselves as aiming to advance a genuine interest of mine, even if they did so accidentally or deferentially. In the first case, I will tend to find their actions intrusive or paternalistic. In the second case, the fact that they did not see themselves as actually helping me will mute the gratitude and desire to reciprocate that often accompanies being benefitted by others' efforts. By providing a shared conception of citizens' interests, the Reciprocity Principle removes the principal obstacle to the mechanism of reciprocity in social cooperation. So if the moral-psychological conjecture holds, widespread compliance with the Reciprocity Principle promotes the development of motives of friendship by removing a major obstacle to the operation of the mechanism by which those motives develop.

We have seen two roles the Reciprocity Principle plays in establishing a community of civic friends. First, it provides a shared conception of citizens' interests, so that they can be civic friends, assuming they possess the non-prudential motive to benefit one another on mutually

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<sup>27</sup> See, for example: *A Theory of Justice* (rev. ed.), (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 411; *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 196.

acknowledged terms. Second, by doing so, it creates conditions in which the moral-psychological mechanism of reciprocity can operate, so as to generate and sustain the non-prudential motive to benefit one's fellow citizens.

#### **4. Conclusion**

We began with the question: what justifies the Reciprocity Principle? To answer it, we showed how the Reciprocity Principle helps to realize joint political rule on terms of civic friendship among free and equal citizens, despite conditions of profound reasonable disagreement. If our arguments succeed, then citizens' general compliance with the Reciprocity Principle realizes important political values, and citizens have strong pro tanto reason to comply with the principle, provided enough of their fellow citizens likewise comply. In this concluding section, we discuss three limitations of the argument given in this article. Each of these points to further work that could be done to justify political liberalism in terms of political community.

The first limitation is that we have not provided a defense of the exclusion of unreasonable citizens. On the view we presented, citizens can rule together on terms of civic friendship because they endorse the Reciprocity Principle, which directs them to justify political decision in terms of considerations all *reasonable* citizens can be expected to accept. As we mentioned in section 2, reasonableness is a substantial ideal of citizenship. All those who fail to conform to this ideal don't rule together on terms of civic friendship. What value is a political community if it excludes all those who are deemed unreasonable?

This is a large question, the answer to which turns on the appropriateness of taking the values built into political liberalism's ideal of reasonable citizenship as starting points in an account of

political justification. We cannot resolve this issue here, but this concern about exclusion arises for all mutual justifiability theories, not just for views that defend principles of mutual justifiability in terms of the values of political community. Any mutual justifiability theory, including the standard interpretation of political liberalism, will have to decide whether political justification requires justifiability to all points of view, or to some restricted set of “qualified” points of view.<sup>28</sup> The former view would require that political decisions are justifiable to all points of view, even those who are radically opposed to basic liberal-democratic values of freedom and equality (for example, people who support an avowedly racist society). On this picture, mutual justifiability cannot be reconciled with a free society of equals. The latter course leads to the problem of exclusion: what justifies the exclusion of those who hold unqualified points of view, whoever they are, from the justificatory community?

The second limitation is that we have not argued for the importance of civic friendship and joint rule. We have, in section 3, developed conceptions of joint rule and civic friendship, and we have provided responses to a variety of arguments for the claim that civic friendship and joint rule are either impossible to realize or not worth realizing in contemporary liberal democratic societies. We have not, however, provided a positive account of why civic friendship and joint rule are important political values. It is simply not our aim to provide such an account in this article. We have sought to show how citizens’ general endorsement of the Reciprocity Principle, given plausibly background conditions, realizes joint rule and civic friendship, despite conditions of reasonable pluralism. Assuming that joint rule and civic friendship are important political

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<sup>28</sup> We borrow this terminology from chapter three of David Estlund’s *Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

values, this provides justification for the Reciprocity Principle. Of course, a further defense of these assumptions would complement our arguments here.

Finally, we have argued that citizens' general compliance with the Reciprocity Principle helps realize values of political community, and so provides citizens with strong pro tanto reasons to comply with the Reciprocity Principle. We have not, however, weighed these benefits against the costs associated with compliance with the principle, nor have we considered whether a different principle might secure the same goods of political community with fewer costs than those imposed by the Reciprocity Principle. Such comparisons would be necessary to support the stronger claim that the Reciprocity Principle is, all things considered, justified by the value of political community, and the claim that citizens are obligated to comply with the principle when they have assurance that enough others will likewise comply. One possible cost that would need to be considered is the extent to which the demands the Reciprocity Principle imposes on citizens might alienate them from the political process.

If the values of political community, taken alone, are to provide a full justification of the Reciprocity Principle, they must outweigh any such costs. Our arguments also leave open the possibility of a hybrid view, according to which a variety of considerations support the Reciprocity Principle, the values of joint rule and civic friendship being among those values.