

Political Testimony

Han van Wietmarschen (j.wietmarschen@ucl.ac.uk)

ABSTRACT

I argue that reliance on political testimony conflicts with two democratic values: the value of mutual justifiability and the value of equality of opportunity for political influence. Reliance on political testimony is characterized by a reliance on the assertions of others directly on a political question the citizen is asked to answer as part of a formal democratic decision procedure. Reliance on expert testimony generally, even in the context of political decision-making, does not similarly conflict with democratic values. As a consequence of the argument, citizens have pro tanto reason to rely on their own political judgment when determining their vote, and democratic societies have reason to only ask citizens questions they are able to answer without reliance on political testimony.

KEY WORDS

Testimony; Voting; Public Reason; Political Influence; Political Equality; Democracy; Moral Testimony; Democratic Deliberation; Political Epistemology.

1. Introduction

On June 23, 2016 the British people had the opportunity to vote in the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum. I wasn't allowed to vote in the referendum, but imagine I was. Consider the following scenario:

Expert Testimony: before I vote, I seek out the judgment of legal scholars, economists, immigration experts, historians, political scientists, and so on, about the likely effects of the UK leaving compared to remaining in the EU. Based on this information, I make up my mind about whether it would be better to remain or leave and vote accordingly.

It seems that in this scenario, I'm an admirable participant in the referendum. In particular, it seems that I make appropriate use of expert testimony. Of course, there are plenty of questions about who should count as a genuine expert in any of these domains, and about what would count as a good reason for me to believe that various people are genuine experts. Yet, there does not seem to be anything wrong in general with using expert testimony in this way. Compare this to the next scenario:

Political Testimony: before I vote, I seek out a number of people who I know to be very well informed about European politics in general, who have extensive knowledge of the likely effects of leaving compared to remaining, and who I believe have good judgment in political matters. I ask them whether leaving is better than remaining. Based on their answers, I make up my mind about whether it would be better to leave or remain, and vote accordingly.

In the first scenario, my judgment and decision-making about a political issue are informed by the testimony of others concerning a range of relevant considerations; in the second scenario, my judgment and decision-making are informed by other people's testimony directly on the political issue at hand. Some people believe that my use of the judgments of others in the second scenario

is problematic in a way that my use of expert testimony in the first scenario is not.¹ This article is concerned with whether this belief is correct. More precisely, my question is whether there is something problematic about what I will call *political testimony*, in the context of a democratic political society.

The importance of this question is underscored by two findings from the political science literature. First, citizens of contemporary democratic societies tend to be poorly informed about political issues.² Second, one of the strategies citizens use to form political views, despite low levels of political knowledge, is to take cues from more knowledgeable elites or acquaintances.³ The literature investigating the phenomenon of “cue taking” does not distinguish between political testimony and certain other forms of reliance on the views of others, but political testimony is certainly one example of cue taking. Given evidence that cue taking is a widely used strategy for coping with a serious problem of voter incompetence, it is important to know whether some forms of cue taking are problematic from a democratic point of view.

¹ This belief is not universally shared. Two recent book-length discussions of the ethics of political citizenship represent opposing views on this issue. Brennan sees no problem at all in voters deferring to those with better political judgment (2011, chapter 4); Beerbohm sees this as a problematic form of dependence (2012, 152-155).

² See, for example, Campbell et al. (1960), Converse (1964), and Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996).

³ See Gilens and Murakawa (2002) for an overview of this literature.

My discussion is indebted to the recent debate about the appropriateness of relying on *moral* testimony.⁴ I will point to various similarities and differences between political and moral testimony as I go along.

2. Political Testimony

My opening examples are only meant to illustrate the phenomenon of political testimony. In this section, I will explain the notion of political testimony at issue in this paper. My focus is on the appropriateness of *relying* on testimony for one's political views, not on the appropriateness of *providing* such testimony. I will take a person S to rely on S₁'s testimony with regard to S's belief that *p* if and only if S's belief that *p* is based on S₁'s assertion that *p*.⁵ This definition refers to the epistemic basing relation, the character of which is subject to significant debate.⁶ My arguments

⁴ See Jones (1999), Nickel (2001), Driver (2006), Hopkins (2007), Hills (2009), McGrath (2011), Sliwa (2012), Howell (2014), Lillehammer (2014), Crisp (2014), Enoch (2014), and Groll and Decker (2014).

⁵ This biconditional simplifies matters in two ways. First, it only applies to beliefs that are based on the assertion of a single person. It could be amended to take the possibility of beliefs based on the assertions of several people into account, with the result that people could rely on the testimony of several persons with regard to a single belief. Second, it focusses on assertions rather than on a wider category of sayings. My arguments will not depend on any specific features of assertion as distinct from other ways of saying things.

⁶ For a helpful overview, see Korcz (1997)

will be compatible with a variety of different interpretations of the basing relation, so I won't here take a position in this debate. The following remarks may, however, help specify the phenomenon at issue in this article.

First, a person's belief being based on another person's assertion does not imply that the belief is justified by the assertion. If the asserter is unreliable, for example, her assertion may fail to provide sufficient justification, or any justification at all, to believe what is asserted. Nonetheless, another person's belief can be based on that person's assertion. Second, a person's belief being based on another's assertion depends on the *current* grounds for the belief, not on the *origin* of the belief. I might, for example, originally form my belief that the UK should remain in the EU on the basis of an expert's assertion that it would be best if the UK were to remain, but I might subsequently acquire a set of non-testimonial grounds for my belief. In this case, I do not regard the belief to still be based on the expert's assertion. Finally, I will take S's belief that *p* being based on S₁'s assertion that *p* to imply that S's knowledge of S₁'s assertion is a *decisive* component of S's current grounds for believing that *p*: if it weren't for S₁'s assertion that *p*, S would not believe that *p*. This means that if S has sufficient other grounds to maintain her belief that *p*, in addition to S₁'s assertion, then her belief does not count as being based on S₁'s assertion. Further, S's belief that *p* counts as based on S₁'s assertion even if S has various non-testimonial reasons for believing that *p*, as long as S would not believe that *p* if it weren't for S₁'s assertion that *p*.

My discussion will focus on cases of reliance on *political* testimony, by which I will mean cases in which a person relies on testimony with regard to their belief that *p*, and this person is

asked to express their opinion about p as part of a formal democratic decision procedure.⁷ I will further limit my discussion to the political decision-making of ordinary citizens, excluding the the political decision-making of legislators, judges, and elected officials from consideration.⁸ It follows from these limitations that my arguments do not apply to the wider domain of informal political opinion formation and decision-making. Whether to join a union, march in a demonstration, or sign a petition, for example, may be regarded as political decisions, but such decisions are not within the scope of my discussion. My focus is on the beliefs underlying citizens' decision-making as part of formal democratic decision procedures, of which referenda and elections are paradigm examples.

⁷ My discussion of political testimony differs from the literature on moral testimony here. In the literature on moral testimony, it is generally assumed that there is a distinctive moral subject matter, so that cases of reliance on moral testimony are simply cases in which the relevant belief has moral content. Political testimony, as I use the concept, is not specified in terms of the content of the beliefs involved, but in terms of the formal political decision procedures in which the subject is participating. In principle, the beliefs involved in political testimony could have any proposition as their content, as long as the proposition is made the target of a democratic decision procedure.

⁸ A discussion of such political actors would bring a number of complications into play, having to do with various forms of delegation, the role of political parties, and so on. Whether reliance on political testimony is appropriate for a specific political actor will likely depend on the design of the democratic institutions in the context of which this person acts.

For example, if I am asked to vote in a presidential election, I will take my vote for candidate X to reflect my belief that X is the best candidate, and I will rely on political testimony if and only if my belief is based on the assertion of another person that X is the best candidate. If I am voting in a referendum concerning whether to adopt policy Y, I will treat a vote for the policy to reflect the belief that it is better to adopt the policy, and I would rely on political testimony if and only if my belief is based on the assertion of another person that it is better to adopt the policy. In both cases, my reliance on the testimony of others counts as reliance on *political* testimony, not because there is something intrinsically political about the content of the beliefs involved, but because a formal democratic decision procedure asked me to express my belief about some proposition and my belief is based on the assertion of others that the proposition is true or false. By contrast, in the Expert Testimony case, my belief that the UK should remain in the EU is based on my beliefs about the likely effects of leaving and remaining, and I in turn rely on the testimony of others with regard to those beliefs. However, I do not rely on testimony with regard to the belief that the UK should remain, so I do not count as relying on *political* testimony in the Expert Testimony case.

In many cases, a single person will serve as a source of both political and non-political testimony. When deliberating about whether to vote for or against leaving the EU, I might read an opinion piece making the case for remaining. I might learn both about various considerations that weigh in favor of remaining, but also that the author judges that remaining is, all things considered, best. If I subsequently conclude that remaining is best and vote accordingly, then I rely on political

testimony if the author's judgment that remaining is best is a decisive consideration for me. This can happen even if I am interested in, understand, and critically reflect on the author's reasoning.⁹

My argument relies on a cognitivist interpretation of citizens' voting behavior, according to which individual citizens express a political belief or judgment by voting. This interpretation of voting behavior should be seen as an element of a normative conception of democratic politics: in a well functioning democratic society, votes express political beliefs or judgments. I do not claim that actual voting behavior in existing democratic societies is best explained as issuing from political judgment or belief, rather than from citizens' preferences or will.¹⁰ Cognitivist interpretations of voting have been defended by a wide range of authors, and are presupposed in large areas of contemporary democratic theorizing, including much of the literature on deliberative democracy, and all of the literature that looks at democracy from the viewpoint of formal theories of judgment aggregation.¹¹ Proponents of these views disagree about the content of the beliefs or

⁹ My characterization of reliance on testimony differs from characterizations that focus on beliefs held *solely* because another person asserted the view (see, for example, McGrath 2011, p. 113), and from discussions that focus on beliefs of which *any part* of justification involves the testimony of others.

¹⁰ See Cohen (1986) and Estlund (1990) for further discussion of the difference between an interpretation of voting as part of an explanatory theory and an interpretation of voting as part of a normative political conception.

¹¹ Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1997) is an important early source. Explicit defenses of cognitivist interpretations of voting can be found in Cohen (1986), Coleman and Ferejohn (1986), and Estlund (1990). The literature on democracy that interprets voting behavior as

judgments expressed by voting behavior: Wollheim (1962), for example, takes votes to express ought-judgments, Estlund (1990) beliefs about the common interest, Coleman and Ferejohn (1986) judgments about the collective ought, and so on. My arguments will apply without modification to cognitivist interpretations of voting generally. For ease of exposition, I will simply take a vote in an election to express the belief that the person voted for is the better candidate, and a vote for a policy in a referendum the belief that it is better to adopt the policy.

Of course, there is also a tradition in democratic thought which interprets voting behavior as expressing preferences, or other non-cognitive attitudes.¹² On such views, issues of political testimony, as discussed in this paper, do not arise. People can recommend voting for a particular candidate or policy, but such recommendations would have to be construed as expressions of preference. To base one's voting behavior on such recommendations would involve conforming one's preference to the preferences of others; it would not involve basing one's beliefs or judgments on the assertions of others.¹³ Preference-based conceptions of democracy may have

expressing political judgments or beliefs is vast, and cannot properly be covered with a series of references. For three recent examples, see Beerbohm (2012), Landemore (2013), and Brennan (2011).

¹² See, for example, Arrow (1951), Dahl (1956), and Riker (1988).

¹³ One might, further, rely on the judgment of others to form beliefs about what one's own political preferences are, or what they would be if one were better informed. Indeed, some of the cue-taking literature is presented in this way. The relevance of such information, and the relevance of voters' beliefs about their own political preferences, presupposes a cognitivist

reason to object to certain forms of reliance on the preferences of others to form one's political preferences, but those reasons would have to be different from the ones discussed in this paper.

3. A Defense of Pessimism

Following the literature on moral testimony, I will call the view that there is something wrong, or problematic, about relying on political testimony *pessimism*, and its negation *optimism*. In this section, I will argue for a pessimist view of political testimony.

Before I turn to the main argument, we need to distinguish between two kinds of pessimism.¹⁴ The first kind holds that whenever a citizen relies on political testimony, this citizen's political deliberation fails to (fully) realize an ideal of citizenship. It is useful to think about this view in terms of the reasons citizens have not to rely on political testimony:

Pro Tanto Pessimism: each citizen has a *pro tanto* reason not to rely on political testimony.

The second kind of pessimism holds that citizens are required not to rely on political testimony:

Decisive Pessimism: each citizen has decisive reason not to rely on political testimony.

According to *Pro Tanto* Pessimism, when a citizen relies on political testimony, it would, other things equal, be better if she did not rely on political testimony. Other things may not be equal, however, such that the *pro tanto* reason not to rely on political testimony is outweighed by other

interpretation of voting according to which voting behavior expresses a judgment or belief about what one's preferences are.

¹⁴ Crisp (2014) emphasizes this distinction.

considerations and the citizen has, all things considered, most reason to rely on political testimony. According to Decisive Pessimism, citizens always have, all things considered, most reason not to rely on political testimony.

The relevant reasons should be understood as practical reasons, not epistemic reasons. Pessimism does not hold that we have epistemic reason to believe contrary to our evidence, nor that we have epistemic reason to ignore testimonial evidence when forming beliefs about political matters. Pessimism is consistent with the claim that we should proportion our beliefs to our evidence, including our testimonial evidence. Instead, pessimism is a claim about reason to act or refrain from acting in certain ways. When a person is asked to vote on a certain issue, and that person's belief about the issue is based on political testimony, she has, broadly speaking, three options: (1) vote in accordance with her testimony-based belief; (2) investigate the political issue so as to arrive at a belief about the political issue which is not based on political testimony;¹⁵ or (3) retain her political belief based on political testimony, but vote in accordance with what she would believe if she would ignore the political testimony. If pessimism is true then she has reason, *pro tanto* or decisive, against (1). My defense of pessimism does not provide reasons that discriminate between (2) and (3). Given a cognitivist interpretation of voting, however, it seems to me that (3) comes at a significant cost: in voting for a candidate or policy, one expresses the judgment or belief that that candidate or policy is the best out of the available options, but one would not actually hold this belief or judgment. It is not part of this paper to argue that (3) is problematic, but it seems to me that (2) is the main alternative to reliance on political testimony. I will discuss cases in which (2) is costly or unavailable in section 4.

¹⁵ This process of investigation may involve acquiring non-political expert testimony.

A straightforward way to argue for a pessimist view would be by arguing that political testimony, unlike other forms of testimony, fails to confer epistemic justification on the resulting belief. One way to support such a view is to deny that the requisite kind of expertise exists in the political domain. The assertions of others do not provide us with genuine evidence for political propositions, and when we rely on political testimony in forming political beliefs, the resulting beliefs fail to be epistemically justified. For the purposes of this article, I will leave this skeptical view aside. I will assume that we can be justified in believing that another person is both reliable and trustworthy when it comes to a certain political question, and that the assertion of such a person can provide us with genuine evidence for political propositions.¹⁶ With these assumptions in place, what is left for pessimism to fault us for when we rely on political testimony? In the remainder of this section, I will argue for *Pro Tanto* Pessimism about political testimony; in section 4, I will extend the argument to a restricted form of Decisive Pessimism.

I will argue that reliance on political testimony conflicts with two important democratic values: the value of mutual justifiability, and the value of equal opportunity for political influence. In addition to these two values, reliance on political testimony may be in conflict with various other moral or ethical commitments citizens may have, such as ideals of political understanding,

¹⁶ Williams (1995, 205) argues for the view that we should not rely on moral testimony because of the lack of moral expertise. For arguments against this view, see Jones (1999), Driver (2006), and Hopkins (2007). Given my characterization of political testimony, this type of argument for pessimism is even less plausible in the political domain than in the moral domain.

or certain conceptions of political virtue.¹⁷ Citizens of democratic societies are, of course, free to form such commitments and to try to live in accordance with them, but these commitments are not themselves part of the democratic ideal.¹⁸ Even if widespread reliance on political testimony undermines ideals of political understanding or virtue, this would not show that reliance on political testimony is problematic from a democratic point of view. My focus is on two distinctly democratic values because I am ultimately interested in whether democratic societies and their members have reason to be concerned about systematic forms of reliance on political testimony.

3.1. Reciprocity in Political Justification

I will start with the value of reciprocity in justification. A widely held view in contemporary political philosophy is that political decisions should be justifiable to all people subject to those decisions. This general idea has been discussed in terms of public reason, mutual justifiability, and

¹⁷ I use these two examples because the main arguments for pessimism about moral testimony aim to show that reliance on moral testimony is in conflict with a valuable kind of moral understanding (Nickel 2001, Hills 2009) or with moral virtue (Howell 2014).

¹⁸ This claim is subject to disagreement. I believe that values of political understanding or virtue are not fit for inclusion in an ideal of a democratic society characterized by reasonable pluralism, but others will disagree. My arguments do not depend on which side is right about this: if I am wrong, there could simply be additional grounds for my conclusions.

reciprocity in justification.¹⁹ The literature has given rise to a considerable variety of specific principles, but my discussion will focus on the following:

Reciprocity in Justification: when making political decisions, citizens should rely only on considerations they can reasonably expect all reasonable citizens to accept.²⁰

The Reciprocity Principle restricts citizens in their political deliberation to what I will call *public* considerations.²¹ Paradigm examples of public considerations, according to defenders of principles of this kind, are distinctly political values inherent in the idea of a well-functioning liberal democracy: values of freedom, equality, fair social cooperation, the general welfare, public health, national defense, efficiency, equality of opportunity, and so on. The relevant expectations are normative expectations: we can normatively expect our fellow citizens to accept these values, even if we do not predict that they all do in fact accept these values. This means that the notion of reasonableness involved in the Reciprocity Principle refers to a substantial ideal of reasonable

¹⁹ See Rawls (1993) and Larmore (1996) for canonical statements, and Gaus (2011) for a more recent account.

²⁰ On some views, principles of this kind only apply to political decisions about constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice. I see little basis for such restrictions on the demand of mutual justifiability, but if the Reciprocity Principle must be restricted in this way, the argument for pessimism provided in section 3.1 would only apply to the restricted set of political decisions.

²¹ As stated, the principle is arguably too strong and should be made subject to a proviso allowing citizens to appeal to non-public considerations as long as they supply public considerations in due course (see Rawls, 1997). Whether such a proviso applies will not affect my discussion, so I will leave this issue aside.

citizenship, not to an intuitive idea of who counts as a reasonable person.²² Paradigm examples of non-public considerations are those issuing from comprehensive religious, moral, or philosophical doctrines, such as considerations of moral desert, freedom of the will, or the afterlife. Such considerations are subject to reasonable disagreement, so we cannot reasonably expect our fellow citizens to converge on the same view on these matters. The Reciprocity Principle itself is controversial, but a defense of the principle falls outside the scope of this article.²³

Note that the Reciprocity Principle does not rule out reasonable disagreement about political outcomes. For example, if all citizens deliberate exclusively on the basis of public considerations when deciding whether to adopt a progressive tax policy, they may nonetheless reasonably disagree whether the policy should be adopted. They may weigh the relative importance of equality and efficiency differently, for instance. If a fair democratic procedure leads

²² This leaves open what the precise content of political liberalism's conception of reasonableness is. My argument is compatible with a variety of specifications of this content. In Leland and van Wietmarschen 2012, I provide an account and defense of political liberalism's conception of reasonable citizenship.

²³ Some defenders of principles of reciprocity in political justification, such as Larmore (1996, 1999) and Nussbaum (2011), seek to ground such principles in respect for persons. When citizens make political decisions, they exercise coercive force over their fellow citizens, and doing so on the basis of reasonably disputed considerations would be to disrespect one's fellow citizens. Others, such as Ebels-Duggan (2010), Lister (2013), and Leland and van Wietmarschen (2017) argue that citizens ought to comply with the Reciprocity Principle because doing so realizes political values of civic friendship and joint rule.

to the adoption of the policy, then no violation of the Reciprocity Principle has occurred, even though the policy itself is subject to reasonable disagreement.²⁴

Does the Reciprocity Principle rule out reliance on political testimony?²⁵ When citizens vote in favor of candidate X or policy Y, I take them to express the belief that X is the better candidate or that Y should be adopted. When citizens rely on political testimony, the assertion of another person that X is the better candidate or that Y should be adopted forms an essential part of the basis of the belief expressed by their vote, so they rely on this assertion as a consideration that speaks in favor of their political belief. Of course, *that* the person made the assertion will often count as a public consideration. The question is whether this assertion can properly be taken to weigh in favor of a political decision; that is, whether the assertion, directly on the political question at hand, can be a consideration one can reasonably expect all reasonable citizens to accept as speaking in favor of a political decision.

Suppose I am voting whether a policy to ban racial profiling by the police should be adopted. My decision-making conforms to the Reciprocity Principle insofar as I rely on public

²⁴ This focus on the grounds of political decisions is common, but some public reason theorists, such as Gaus (2011), propose views that target the political decisions themselves.

²⁵ It should be clear that the principle *applies* to the type of political decision I'm interested in here: decisions in the context of formal democratic procedures such as voting for representatives or in referenda. The principle applies to all political decisions that authorize the use of political power, including decisions made by legislators and judges, but also by ordinary citizens. The principle is not meant to apply to political decisions made in non-formal contexts, such as decisions to protest, speak in public, join unions, and so on.

considerations. I may, for example, believe that racial profiling leads to an unfair limitation on the freedom of members of the targeted groups, and I may believe that the effects on crime are minimal. If, instead, I believe that racial profiling is unacceptable because it is incompatible with our equal creation in the image of God, and vote on this basis, then my decision-making would violate the Reciprocity Principle. If I rely on political testimony, then whatever other considerations I may take to speak for or against racial profiling, some person's assertion that racial profiling should be banned is a decisive ground for my judgment; without my knowledge of that person's assertion, I would not believe that adopting the ban is best. I may, for example, take Michelle Alexander's assertion that racial profiling should be banned to be a decisive reason in favor of adopting the policy. The question is: should Alexander's assertion be classified as a public or as a nonpublic consideration?

As before, skepticism about political expertise would be a straightforward basis for a pessimist view. Once again, I will set this view aside and assume that citizens can have good reason to believe that another person is trustworthy and reliable on a certain political issue, and that such a person's assertion can provide genuine evidence for political propositions. One can have good reason to believe that Alexander is a highly informed, sincere, and trustworthy reasoner about the US justice system. If she asserts that a policy banning racial profiling should be adopted, I assume that this can give one evidence that such a policy should be adopted. These assumptions rule out skepticism about political expertise, but they do not answer our question.

The first step towards an answer is to observe that the questions democratic societies ask their citizens to answer through formal voting procedures are typically characterized by reasonable disagreement. In both elections and referenda, citizens usually disagree, and disagree reasonably, about which candidate is best and about which policies should be adopted. Moreover, this presence

of reasonable political disagreement is no accident: democratic voting procedures are costly, and it makes little sense to incur these costs when there is only one reasonable answer for citizens to give. This is not to say that it is impossible to hold elections or referenda in which there is only one reasonable candidate or policy, and in which all reasonable citizens can be expected to agree about this, but this would be an unusual scenario.

Second, the distinguishing feature of *political* testimony is that a person relies on another person's assertion directly on the political issue. In the above example, I vote in favor of a ban on racial profiling, based on Michelle Alexander's assertion that such a ban should be adopted. By contrast, if I rely on non-political testimony in determining my vote, I do not rely on anyone's assertion directly on the political issue. Instead, I rely on the assertions of others to form beliefs about considerations I take to be relevant to the political decision, but I then draw my own political conclusion based, in part, on those beliefs. For example, when deciding whether to vote for to remain in the EU, I rely on the assertions of others to determine the likely consequences of remaining and leaving. I then form a judgment about whether remaining is best, based on these and other considerations.

It follows that in typical cases of political decision-making, when a voter relies on political testimony, she relies on the assertion of another person, the content of which is subject to reasonable disagreement. In the example, there is reasonable disagreement about whether a policy banning racial profiling should be adopted.²⁶ If I vote in favor of such a policy, and my decision

²⁶ This might be controversial. If one believes that there is no reasonable disagreement about this issue, a different example can be inserted. My claim is not that reliance on political testimony

is based on Alexander's assertion that racial profiling should be banned, then I am treating her assertion as a consideration in favor of my decision. Given reasonable political disagreement, there are people who reasonably believe that Alexander's assertion is false. Those who reasonably believe that racial profiling should not be banned will also reasonably believe that Michelle Alexander is mistaken on this occasion and that her judgment, at least on this particular question, should not be trusted. Consequently, I cannot reasonably expect all reasonable citizens to accept that Alexander's assertion speaks in favor of adopting the ban. As a result, the Reciprocity Principle rules out appeal to political testimony, at least in typical political decisions characterized by reasonable disagreement.

One objection to this argument is that I could not only have *good* reasons to believe that Alexander's judgment is reliable and trustworthy, I could have *public* reasons to believe this. If that is the case, I can justify my reliance on her political judgment to my fellow citizens on public grounds. Perhaps we can all reasonably be expected to agree that being a professor of law, being a long-time scholar of race discrimination, and having litigated several class action discrimination cases counts in favor of Alexander's reliability and trustworthiness. I do not deny that such considerations could count as public considerations. If the political question at hand would be whether to elect Alexander to public office, or whether to appoint her to a committee investigating race discrimination in the US justice system, these would be precisely the kind of considerations to which people could appropriately appeal when making their decisions. She could, in keeping with the Reciprocity Principle, be elected or appointed on the basis of such considerations, even

conflicts with the Reciprocity Principle in *all* cases, but only in typical cases of political decision-making characterized by reasonable disagreement.

though there normally would be reasonable disagreement about whether she is the best candidate. However, the question at hand is not whether Alexander should be elected, but whether a ban on racial profiling should be adopted. This decision, like all political decisions, should be made on the basis of considerations that are beyond reasonable dispute. It is not beyond reasonable dispute that Alexander's assertion that the ban should be adopted speaks in favor of the ban. The existence of public reasons for trusting her judgment on this issue does not change that fact.

None of this means that Michelle Alexander and others are not worth listening to when we are trying to decide whether to vote for or against a policy banning racial profiling. This is because she and others have much to say about racial profiling—about its consequences for racial inequality, its relation to mass incarceration, its effects on crime, and so on—beyond the bare assertion that it should be banned. When it comes to information of this kind, it is not unusual for there to be people that we can reasonably expect all citizens to agree are experts in the relevant area. The availability of publicly acceptable non-political expertise is not undermined by reasonable political disagreement in the way that the availability of publicly acceptable political expertise is. If there is reasonable disagreement about a political choice—as I claim there almost always is—then it follows that reliance on political testimony conflicts with the Reciprocity Principle; it does not follow that reliance on non-political expert testimony violates the principle. Note that I am *not* arguing that reliance on political testimony always violates the Reciprocity Principle, and that reliance on expert testimony never does. Instead, I have argued that reliance on political testimony violates the Reciprocity Principle whenever the political issue is subject to reasonable disagreement. By contrast, non-political expert testimony *can* satisfy the Reciprocity Principle, even when the political issue itself is subject to reasonable disagreement. This is the key asymmetry between political and non-political testimony defended in this section. There will

nonetheless be many cases in which we cannot reasonably expect all citizens to agree that some purported non-political expert is an expert, and this can happen even if the person is a genuine expert in the area. In such cases, reliance on the non-political expert testimony would violate the Reciprocity Principle in the same way as reliance on political testimony would.²⁷

3.2. Equal Opportunity for Political Influence

I now turn to the second democratic value: the value of equal opportunity for political influence. Democratic decision procedures have been defended on a variety of grounds, one of which is that they provide all citizens with an equal opportunity to influence the character of their political association. I will argue that this value is in conflict with reliance on political testimony.

Kolodny (2014) provides a helpful specification of the value at issue. Influence can, first, be understood as decisiveness: one is decisive with regard to a particular political decision when, had one's judgment or choice been different, the decision would have been different. Under majority rule, one would be decisive when and only when there is a tie or one is a member of a

²⁷ In the US especially, there has been a sustained effort in the past few decades by some groups to discredit scientific investigation as a source of a mutually acceptable body of knowledge. The view I defend here captures one way in which this is a genuinely worrying development: if various parties are sufficiently effective at spreading misinformation to effectively undermine well-established scientific findings as public considerations, this may limit the scope of political justification. Ultimately, matters will depend on how the concept of reasonableness is defined, something I cannot settle in this article.

majority by a single vote (2014, 320). Influence can also be understood as contributory influence: one has contributory influence in so far as one's judgment or choice has *weight* in determining the political decision. I side with Kolodny in thinking that a democratic concern with equal political influence should be understood as a concern with contributory influence. To determine equality of contributory influence, Kolodny proposes the following: "by X-ing, I exercise equal contributory influence over a decision just when my X-ing has *equal a priori chances of being decisive over the decision*, that is, has equal *a priori* chances of being decisive on the assumption that no pattern of X-ing by others is more likely than any other pattern" (2014, 320-1). To explain a concern for an equal *opportunity* for political influence, rather than actual equality of political influence, it suffices for our purposes to say that when people freely decide not to vote in a democratic decision procedure, this should not count against the procedure.

Proper democratic decision procedures secure, or at least approximate, *formal* equality of opportunity for contributory political influence. Nationwide voting procedures provide each citizen with a single non-alienable vote that is accorded the same weight as every other vote. If we attend to the formal features of the decision procedure alone, each member has an equal opportunity to vote, and each voter has an equal *a priori* chance of being decisive over the decision.

Democratic decision-making is not just a matter of counting votes, and a person's judgment can influence political outcomes in ways other than translation into a single vote. Prior to voting, citizens may engage in a wide range of activities that influence the ultimate political decision, primarily through affecting other citizen's voting behavior. For example, citizens may offer one another reasons in favor of candidates or policy proposals in a process of deliberation, they may bribe or threaten one another, they may manipulate or deceive, or use reputation or fame to influence others. We may call this *informal* political influence. Being in a position to provide

political testimony that other citizens take to be authoritative provides one with an opportunity for such informal political influence.

Opportunities for informal political influence are not always distributed equally. People with greater wealth, social status, expertise, political skill, threat advantage, and so on, may have greater opportunity to influence the voting behavior of others in the direction of their own political judgment. In any sizable group of voters among which informal influence plays a role, opportunities for exerting such influence are unlikely to be equal. This is true for the political influence of political testimony as well: not every person's assertion that candidate X or policy Y is the better choice carries the same weight in the decision-making process. The question is whether this makes political testimony problematic with regard to the value of equality of opportunity for political influence.

Not all differences in informal political influence are problematic. When some citizens have greater influence over political decisions because of manipulation, deception, threats, and bribes, this clearly is problematic. Whether increased influence due to wealth or social status is in tension with democratic equality is a matter of dispute.²⁸ However, democratic theorists tend to agree that when people have greater informal influence over a political decision because they provide good reasons for their judgment, such that others find those reasons convincing and change their voting behavior, no problematic inequality in political power has been established. In fact, a situation in which "no force but that of the better argument is exercised" is sometimes argued to be the hallmark of good democratic deliberation.²⁹ The question is: which differences in people's

²⁸ For opposing views on this point, see, for example, Friedman (2002, 16-21) and Gilens (2012).

²⁹ Habermas (1975, 108).

opportunities for political influence conflict with the ideal of equality of opportunity for political influence, and which don't? Or, what distinguishes proper from improper forms of informal political influence, and on what side of the distinction does political testimony belong?

I will follow the existing literature by distinguishing forms of influence that operate by way of the free and reasoned judgment of other voters, and forms of influence that don't. For example, Brighthouse and Fleurbaey write:

The criterion which distinguishes legitimate from illegitimate sources of unequal influence is just this: those which are legitimate are those where the influence of the person influencing the process of political deliberation is transformed into the authentic influence of the audience at the voting stage, because the voter has accepted publicly articulated reasons on the basis of rational reflection (2010, 147).³⁰

On their view, when someone exercises greater political influence than others by providing good reasons and good evidence for their views, then this influence “enters the formal decision-making process not as their own power, but as that of voters they have persuaded” (2010, 146). Similarly, Kolodny argues that judgment-independent inequalities in opportunity for informal influence may be problematic, but that judgment-dependent inequalities are not (2014, 334). The reason is that if a person has greater political influence because a group of others judge her to have provided good reasons to vote a certain way, then that person has greater political influence as a result of those others exercising *their* equal opportunity to influence the political decision.

It may seem that reliance on political testimony should count as judgment-dependent, and therefore consistent with equal opportunity for political influence, because in typical cases, when

³⁰ see also Brighthouse (1996, 125-27).

a voter relies on political testimony, she takes the assertion of another person to provide her with a reason to vote in favor of a candidate or policy. Unlike fraudulent vote counting or subliminal manipulation, political testimony operates through the deliberation process of the target. Manipulation may cause a person to vote a certain way, and fraud simply changes a person's vote independently of the voter's agency, but political testimony influences a voter's behavior by providing her with reasons. This, however, cannot suffice to show that political testimony is consistent with equal opportunity for political influence: lies, bribes, and threats also provide me with reasons for voting for policies or candidates, and those are clearly unacceptable forms of political influence.³¹

That S's political influence operates by providing me with a reason to vote for or against a candidate or policy does not suffice for S's political power to count as my political power. Instead, I propose that my process of political deliberation transforms S's political influence into *my* political influence only if, as a result of my deliberation, S's influencing actions or assertions do

³¹ One could rule out bribes and threats by demanding that legitimate political influence provides *reasons of the right kind*. Successful bribes and threats provide the target with reasons to vote in favor of a certain candidate or policy, but these are reasons that do not provide grounds for believing that the candidate or policy is the better one. A process of reasoning transforms political influence into the political influence of the voter, we could say, only if the actions of the influencer are taken as reasons for thinking that candidate X or policy Y is best. This strategy might work for bribes and threats, but it would not rule out other clearly problematic kinds of political influence such as deception and certain forms of manipulation.

not themselves constitute reasons for my political belief.³² Non-political expert testimony provides an example of this. If I'm making up my mind about the EU membership of the UK, and I seek out expert testimony about the effects of remaining and leaving, others provide me with information about the likely effects of these outcomes on economic stability, immigration, the border with Ireland, food safety, and so on. When I rely on their expert testimony in determining my vote, this provides the experts with increased political influence. However, to determine my vote, I take their information and reflect on whether this provides me with reasons for or against leaving. Once I conclude that remaining is, all things considered, best, my reasons for this judgment are that the remaining would protect economic stability, lead to a better immigration policy, avoid a problematic border situation, or better guarantee food safety. The experts on whom I rely act as messengers of relevant information, but their judgments are not themselves reasons for voting one way or the other. I could have received the same information from any number of other sources. This, I propose, is an instance of the kind of process of political deliberation

³² I am here treating S's actions or assertions as candidate reasons for belief. On some views, only my beliefs about S's actions or assertions could constitute reasons for belief, not those actions or assertions themselves. On the alternative view, my proposal would read: my process of political deliberation transforms S's political influence into *my* political influence only if, as a result of my deliberation, my beliefs about S's influencing actions or assertions do not themselves constitute reasons for my political belief.

Fleurbaey and Brighthouse, and Kolodny have in mind: my reasoning process transforms the political influence of the expert into my own political influence.³³

When I rely on political testimony, I also engage in a process of deliberation about which policies or candidates are best. However, the crucial difference with expert testimony is that when I rely on political testimony, my ultimate political judgment is based on the political judgment of another person. By definition, when my judgment that the UK should remain in the EU relies on political testimony, someone else's assertion that the UK should remain forms an essential part of the reasons for my judgment.³⁴ Whatever other considerations I take to speak in favor of remaining, these are not sufficient, by my own lights, to judge that the UK should remain. So, in the case of reliance on political testimony, my process of political deliberation does not lead to a

³³ This proposal, as well as the views of Brighthouse and Fleurbaey, and Kolodny, may seem paradoxical. After all, the well-informed, persuasive, and trustworthy non-political expert *has* greater opportunity for political influence than others. Unless we are willing to object to free political discussion and debate, it seems that we should reject ideals of equality of opportunity for political influence. The proposed view should be read, however, not as denying that influential experts have greater influence, but as specifying which kinds of opportunities for political influence the ideal seeks to equalize.

³⁴ Here, again, I am assuming that people's assertions are candidate reasons for belief. If we adopt the view that my beliefs about other people's assertions, rather than those assertions, constitute reasons for belief, my claim would be that when I rely on political testimony, my belief that someone else asserted that the UK should remain forms an essential part of the reasons for my political judgment.

situation in which the influencing actions or assertions of others do not constitute reasons for my political belief. Political testifiers are not mere messengers of relevant information that the receivers could have obtained from other sources as well. Instead, the judgments of political testifiers influence the political decisions of those who rely on them by constituting grounds for those decisions. Political testifiers have greater influence over the political outcome by virtue of my reliance on their judgment, and we cannot properly count this as *my* political influence because their assertions are essential components of the grounds of my political belief. I conclude that political testimony is in conflict with the value of equality of opportunity for political influence.³⁵

One may object that my argument ignores an important way in which people who rely on political testimony may employ their own deliberative capacities. When citizens rely on political testimony, they need not blindly take another person's political judgment to be a reason to vote one way or the other, they may have good reasons to trust that person's political judgment, and they may critically examine and reflect on those reasons. However, one might also exercise one's capacities for critical reflection and deliberation in considering whether and how to respond to threats, bribes, lies, and manipulation. The exercise of our reasoning capacities does not suffice to render such sources of influence compatible with the ideal of equal opportunity for political

³⁵ Another way to see the problem is to consider what happens when our fellow citizens ask us to justify our political decision to them. When we rely on political testimony, we ultimately have to admit that we made our decision, and so exercised political power over our fellow citizens, based on another person's judgment that it was the right decision to make. This may be perfectly acceptable when there is a justified authority structure or system of delegation, but it would be in conflict with each citizen having an equal say in the decision.

influence; on my view it also does not suffice to render reliance on political testimony compatible with this ideal. The reason, again, is that however much we examine our sources, when we rely on political testimony, the political judgment of another remains a decisive element of the grounds for our decision.³⁶

4. Answering Questions Together or Alone

³⁶ Given my understanding of reliance on political testimony, citizens may not always be in a position to know whether they rely on political testimony with respect to a given political belief. Citizens can reflect on whether their political beliefs are sufficiently supported by non-testimonial considerations, but such reflection will not always yield a determinate or correct answer. Consequently, my view implies that we are not always in a position to know whether our own political deliberation conforms to the Reciprocity Principle, and whether we provide others with undue opportunities for political influence. This may be concerning, especially if one thinks that it must be possible for the norms of democratic citizenship to be seen to be satisfied. I acknowledge that this may be a cost of the view, but it is not a cost that is uniquely associated with criticisms of political testimony. The Reciprocity Principle asks citizens not to rely on their religious, moral, and philosophical convictions in their political deliberation, and citizens will not always be in a position to know whether they conform to this demand. Similarly, citizens will not always know whether they conform to principles opposing various forms of informal political influence.

The arguments of the previous section support *Pro Tanto* Pessimism about political testimony. Reliance on political testimony conflicts with reciprocity in justification³⁷ and with equal opportunity for political influence. Assuming that these two ideals represent genuine democratic values, citizens fall short of an ideal of democratic citizenship when they rely on political testimony, and they have a *pro tanto* reason not to rely on political testimony. The question of this section is whether the argument can be extended to support Decisive Pessimism about political testimony.

Sliwa's (2012) and Enoch's (2014) defenses of moral testimony point to the main obstacle to such an extension: given that people are subject to various cognitive and moral limitations, reliance on testimony can realize values that compete with those that would be realized by relying on one's own judgment. In the case of moral testimony, the main competing value is the value of doing the right thing.³⁸ Given that people are imperfectly informed and imperfect reasoners, and given that people's moral judgment can be compromised by bias or self-interest, people frequently run a risk of making a wrong decision when faced with a moral choice. Reliance on moral testimony could significantly reduce this risk. Even if there are certain values associated with relying on one's own moral judgment, such as the value of moral understanding or moral virtue, it

³⁷ When the political decision is characterized by reasonable disagreement.

³⁸ I am using the informal language of "doing the right thing" in order not to suggest a specific account of right action. There may be views of right action according to which whether one acts rightly depends on the reasons for which one acts, and according to which moral testimony cannot provide the appropriate kind of reasons. On such a view, Sliwa's and Enoch's claims would be incorrect.

doesn't seem that these values always outweigh the value of doing the right thing. This line of argumentation shows, I believe, that Decisive Pessimism about moral testimony is incorrect.³⁹

This objection to Decisive Pessimism transfers to the political domain. In the case of political testimony, we can think of the competing value as the value of making substantially just political decisions.⁴⁰ The problem is especially clear in cases where citizens are presented with detailed policy questions. As an example, take California's 1994 proposition 184, which supported "three strikes" sentencing laws. On the assumption that the resulting laws are substantially unjust,

³⁹ It does not show, however, that *Pro Tanto* Pessimism about moral testimony is incorrect.

Some of the main defenses of pessimism, such as Howell's (2014) and Crisp's (2014), are explicitly aimed at *Pro Tanto* Pessimism rather than Decisive Pessimism. The discussions of Hills (2009) and Nickel (2001) are less explicit about this point, but they also suggest a *Pro Tanto* reading of pessimism. These views are largely untouched by this line of argument.

⁴⁰ In some cases, none or all of the options may be substantially unjust. This would not undermine the argument here: the argument against Decisive Pessimism only needs there to be *some* cases in which the values associated with relying on one's own judgment competes with the value of justice. Moreover, a similar argument can be formulated without appeal to the value of justice, as long as there are better or worse ways of deciding the issue. For example, some options may be more *reasonable* than others. The argument could even be restated in terms of competing values that do not refer to a standard of betterness applied to outcomes. For example, one might think that it is important for citizens to vote in accordance with what their *informed* political preferences would be. Reliance on political testimony may enable citizens to do so even when it is impossible or too costly for citizens to acquire the relevant information.

citizens who do not have the time to carefully investigate the proposition, or lack the requisite knowledge about the justice system in general, or who are biased in certain ways, could run a significant risk of supporting an unjust political decision. Since we are not perfectly informed, perfectly rational, unbiased, and disinterested reasoners about political issues, we often run some risk of making an unjust political decision. In certain cases, we might be able to significantly reduce this risk by relying on political testimony.⁴¹ The arguments of the previous section don't establish that in such cases the values of reciprocity in justification and equal opportunity for political influence outweigh the value of justice. I take this to show that Decisive Pessimism is not generally correct.

Nonetheless, a crucial asymmetry between moral and political testimony allows for a defense of a restricted version of Decisive Pessimism about political testimony. In many cases, we ultimately have to answer various moral questions as individuals. Sometimes we have to make up our moral minds as a family, or group of friends, or other association, but we often have to make our own moral decisions. We can ask others for advice or for their judgment, but we have to decide for ourselves what career to pursue, whether or not to procreate, whether or not to opt for euthanasia, and so on. Furthermore, we have only limited control over which moral questions we will have to answer. Since the world does not ensure that the moral questions we are confronted with conform to our moral and intellectual abilities, we inevitably end up with cases in which

⁴¹ As in the case of moral testimony, one might deny this claim if one holds that whether a decision is unjust depends on the motivating reasons for the decision, and that political decisions cannot provide motivating reasons that can produce a just decision. On such views, considerations of justice would not provide reasons to rely on political testimony.

answering our moral questions without relying on moral testimony produces a significant risk of doing the wrong thing.

By contrast, in a democracy, we ultimately have to answer our political questions *together*, as citizens of a political society. *We* have to decide what our economic policy should look like, whether to invest in carbon sequestration, and so on, but that does not imply that we *each* have to decide these matters. Which citizens are asked which political questions is itself a matter of political choice. In a society that emphasizes direct democracy, the citizenry as a whole is regularly asked to decide particular policy questions; in a society that emphasizes representative democracy, citizens may only be asked who should occupy various positions of political authority, leaving detailed policy questions to those elected.⁴² Though a democratic society does not control which political questions *it* has to answer, a democratic society does control which particular citizens are asked to answer which political questions. This means that in the political case, unlike the moral case, we can make use of an institutional structure to divide our decision-making labor, which allows us to manage our individual cognitive and moral limitations.

With the conclusions of the previous section in mind, I propose the following principle:

Reasonable Demands: a democratic society has *pro tanto* reason formally to ask its citizens only questions that they are able to answer without reliance on political testimony, and without incurring undue costs.

The relevant costs are the costs of gathering, interpreting, and evaluating the information necessary to come to an answer. The argument for Reasonable Demands is simply that reliance on political

⁴² And there are various other decision-making mechanisms that democracies can use, such as lotteries and deliberative polls.

testimony undermines the democratic values of reciprocity in justification and equal opportunity for political influence. Assuming that asking citizens political questions they are unable to answer by themselves increases their reliance on political testimony, a democratic society has *pro tanto* reason not to ask its citizens such questions. These reasons need not be decisive: there may be various reasons to pose certain questions to citizens even if (some of) those citizens are only able to decide the matter by reliance on political testimony.⁴³

The principle of Reasonable Demands allows us to maintain a restricted version of Decisive Pessimism about political testimony: when a citizen is formally asked a political question that he or she is able to answer without recourse to political testimony, and without incurring undue costs, then he or she *ought* not rely on political testimony when answering that question. In other words, when formally asked a question in keeping with the principle of Reasonable Demands, a citizen has decisive reason not to rely on political testimony when answering it. This principle is not undermined by limitations of information, rationality and bias in the way that an unrestricted Decisive Pessimism is: if citizens are not sufficiently informed, rational, or unbiased to come to an informed and competent judgment about some question, or can only do so at significant cost, then the principle does not demand that they refrain from appeal to political testimony.

⁴³ For example, for certain political questions there might be no particular subgroup of citizens such that they can answer the question without recourse to political testimony, and where it is democratically acceptable that they make the decision. In cases like that, citizens who cannot reasonably be asked to answer the question without recourse to political testimony may have to be asked to answer the question nonetheless.

My overall conclusion concerning the acceptability of reliance on political testimony is captured by the following three principles:

1. *Pro-Tanto Pessimism*: citizens have a *pro tanto* reason not to rely on political testimony.
2. *Reasonable Demands*: a democratic society has *pro tanto* reason to formally ask its citizens only questions that they are able to answer without reliance on political testimony, and without incurring undue costs.
3. *Restricted Decisive Pessimism*: when a citizen is formally asked a political question that he or she is able to answer without recourse to political testimony, and without incurring undue costs, then he or she has decisive reason not to rely on political testimony.

I have left open what would count as undue costs in this context. Different conceptions of democracy will come to very different conclusions on this point, depending on two key variables. The first is how much active investigation, deliberation, and participation a political society can properly expect of its citizens. Participatory conceptions of democracy may demand a lot; minimalist conceptions, such as Schumpeter's (1942) competitive conception, demand much less. The second variable concerns what a democratic theory regards as a proper answer to a political question. On some views, a citizen properly votes for a candidate or policy only if the citizen justifiably believes that the candidate or policy is at least as good as the other available options. According to certain conceptions of democracy, proper voting behavior merely requires that the citizen has a better than random chance of selecting the better candidate or policy. Depending on its position on these two variables, conceptions of democracy may come to dramatically different conclusions about the range of questions citizens are able to answer without reliance on political

testimony, and without undue costs. As long as a conception of democracy endorses the values of equal opportunity for political influence and reciprocity in justification, my arguments are compatible with a wide range of positions on these two variables. Where a conception of democracy falls on these variables will make it easier or harder to satisfy the three principles I defend, but that does not undermine the principles themselves.

5. Elitism

By way of conclusion, I discuss a likely objection to the argument of this paper: that my conclusions are unacceptably elitist. My argument suggests that a democratic society has reason not to put detailed or complicated policy questions to the electorate, leaving those questions to be decided by specialized elites. My arguments start from democratic values of reciprocity in justification and equal opportunity for political influence, but the conclusions may seem anti-democratic.

The first part of my response is that no political society can avoid answering the question of who is to make which political decisions. Moreover, I can think of no viable political system that would pose each and every political question to the entire electorate. For this reason, it seems that my claim that we have some reason not to pose certain questions to all citizens is not enough to make my view objectionably elitist.

Second, we should keep in mind that my arguments concern formal democratic decision procedures, such as voting procedures. My arguments are fully consistent with the view that democratic politics should be transparent, and that citizens should be free to discuss all political questions against a background of a free press and free expression generally. The claim that it

would be bad to decide detailed economic policy by nationwide referendum does not mean that the details of economic policy should be decided behind closed doors. Moreover, decision procedures that do not involve all citizens come in many forms, some more elitist in character than others. It is one thing to let a relatively stable ruling class determine political outcomes, but quite another to let elected members of a legislative body or a random sample of the general population deliberate and decide political issues.⁴⁴

Third, I have only argued that there are *pro tanto* reasons not to ask citizens questions that they cannot reasonably be expected to answer without recourse to political testimony. These reasons may be outweighed by other considerations, including considerations having to do with elitism: if it is unacceptable to leave a particular question up to a better informed elite, then this may justify putting the question to the citizenry even if many citizens would have to rely on political testimony to answer it.

Fourth, the set of questions citizens are able to answer without relying on political testimony is not fixed. Suppose that concerns about elitism give us reason to let a wide range of political questions, including complex policy proposals, be decided by the general electorate. My arguments are not opposed to this, nor does my view imply that the value of anti-elitism is necessarily at odds with the values of reciprocity in justification and equal opportunity for political influence. Instead, my view implies that a political society, if it wants to have a significant range of political questions be decided by the general electorate, has reason to put its citizens in a position to properly answer those questions. There are all kinds of ways in which a political society may

⁴⁴ For discussions of various proposals to involve randomly selected groups of citizens in democratic decision-making, see Fishkin (2009) and Guerrero (2014).

expand what it can reasonably expect of citizens: it may, for instance, provide good and accessible information, educational programs, or foster a culture of political discussion.

Finally, it should be clear that my arguments do not support disenfranchising or otherwise excluding groups from democratic decision-making on grounds of their inability to answer certain political questions. The democratic values of reciprocity in justification and equal opportunity for political influence, which form the basis of my discussion, are in conflict with such proposals. The question of which kind of democratic procedure should be used to make a particular political decision should not be confused with the question of whether we should use a democratic or an undemocratic procedure.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Han van Wietmarschen is a lecturer in the Philosophy Department at University College London.