

## **Under Pressure: Political Liberalism, the Rise of Unreasonableness and the Complexity of Containment\***

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Over the past few years, right-wing populist parties have been attracting more and more supporters across Europe and beyond. For example, in the 2014 European elections, the Front National secured a relative majority in France.<sup>1</sup> In June 2015 the coalition including the Dansk Folkeparti won the Danish national elections; with 21.1 percent of votes, the Dansk Folkeparti became the second-largest party in the country, doubling its support from the prior elections.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charlotte McDonald-Gibson and John Lichfield, ‘Far-Right Parties Flourish across Europe in Snub to Austerity’, *The Independent*, May 24, 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/european-election-results-2014-far-right-parties-flourish-across-europe-in-snub-to-austerity-9434069.html> (last accessed May 5, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Aisha Gani, ‘Danish Election: PM Concedes Defeat and Resigns’, *The Guardian*, June 23, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2015/jun/18/denmark-general-election-2015-results-live> (last accessed May 5, 2017).

In November 2016, Donald Trump, who conveyed right-wing populist messages during his presidential campaign, was elected as the forty-fifth president of the US.

While this recent rise of right-wing populism (RWP) is an extremely hot topic in political science,<sup>3</sup> it has received little attention from mainstream political theorists. However, the spread of RWP offers a concrete example of a general phenomenon that poses a serious challenge to one of the most influential frameworks in analytical political theory: John Rawls's political liberalism. This challenge concerns the role played by the notion of reasonableness in political liberalism.

Political liberalism rests on the acknowledgement that human judgement is burdened by factors that make it likely that even well-intentioned, intelligent and well-informed persons will disagree about complex matters. At least part of the current disagreement upon religious, philosophical or otherwise comprehensive doctrines is due to the so-called burdens of judgement, and therefore counts as 'reasonable pluralism' — that is, pluralism resulting from the free exercise of human reason.<sup>4</sup> Reasonable pluralism creates a problem for the legitimacy of any just liberal society. More relevantly for this paper's topic, reasonable pluralism threatens the very possibility of the stability of liberal societies. According to Rawls, stability can only be achieved if it is 'for the right reasons' — stability grounded in citizens' principled acceptance of institutions.<sup>5</sup> However, it seems impossible for citizens holding incompatible comprehensive doctrines to have principled reasons for supporting the same political framework.

The solution to these problems is grounded in Rawls's idea that very diverse comprehensive doctrines can still form an overlapping consensus on a certain political conception. At the most fundamental level, this agreed-upon conception includes basic political ideas of society as a fair system of cooperation and of persons as free and equal members of this cooperative system. It also includes principles of justice such as the universal

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<sup>3</sup> In political science, the debate over RWP is so inflated that scholars started to comment ironically on their own choice to contribute further to it. See, e.g., Andrea Mammone, Emmanuel Godin, and Brian Jenkins, 'Introduction: Mapping the "Right of the Mainstream Right" in Contemporary Europe', *Mapping the Extreme Right in Contemporary Europe: From Local to Transnational*, ed. by Andrea Mammone, Emmanuel Godin, and Brian Jenkins (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 1-14, at p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, expanded ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 54–56.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 391–392.

provision of basic rights and opportunities, the acknowledgement of their special priority and the supply of all-purpose means to make them effective for all citizens.<sup>6</sup> This conception forms a platform for the public reason of society to emerge. If participating in the overlapping consensus, citizens can make political decisions by grounding their arguments on this shared platform, without making reference to their idiosyncratic comprehensive commitments. For Rawls, they have a duty of civility to advance at least one such argument whenever constitutional essentials and issues of basic justice are discussed in the so-called public forums, which are closely connected to the formal exercise of political power. Therefore, public reason primarily applies to politicians and the judiciary, while common citizens should only abide by it when voting and contributing to political campaigns.<sup>7</sup> Given the strong liberal flavour of the agreed-upon political conception, if enough citizens share it, the stability of liberal institutions is guaranteed.

Crucially, Rawls believes that all—and only—reasonable persons come to participate in such an overlapping consensus. Reasonableness must be understood in terms of two features. First, reasonable persons are willing to propose and abide by fair terms of cooperation for mutual benefit between free and equal persons. Persons are conceived as free and equal simply in virtue of having two moral powers—namely, the capacities for a sense of justice and a conception of the good—that make them fully cooperating members of society.<sup>8</sup> Second, they ‘recognise the burdens of judgement and accept their consequences’.<sup>9</sup>

Rawls discusses at length the possibility of an overlapping consensus emerging where there is none—the possibility of reasonableness progressively creating its own support.<sup>10</sup> However, from within political liberalism, it is also paramount to focus on the case in which this progress is reversed because the overlapping consensus stops attracting new participants and starts eroding over time. The greater the number of unreasonable persons, the more the stability of liberal institutions—a central concern for political liberalism—is threatened.

The rise of RWP should concern political liberals for at least two reasons. First, it constitutes a concrete example of how the number of unreasonable persons can increase in broadly liberal

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<sup>6</sup> John Rawls, ‘The Idea of Public Reason Revisited’, *University of Chicago Law Review*, 64 (1997), 765–807, at p. 774.

<sup>7</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, pp. 212–254.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158–168.

societies. Second, it shows how the category of unreasonableness and, relatedly, the task of dealing with unreasonable persons are much more complex than has been acknowledged so far. Not only do the majority of supporters of RWP display a specific type of unreasonableness, but also they hold comprehensive doctrines of a certain kind. The combination of their type of unreasonableness with that kind of comprehensive doctrine presents very specific challenges and opens distinct avenues for any attempt to react from within political liberalism to the threat to stability posed by unreasonable persons.<sup>11</sup>

This paper is interested in the majority of supporters of RWP as a real-world instance of persons who display a particular kind of unreasonableness and also see the connections among the components of their comprehensive doctrines in a specific way. Our first aim is to argue that political liberals should prioritise the problem of the spread of unreasonableness. This is because, as we show in section 1, unreasonableness comes in different variations, which, in turn, interact with other categories of Rawls's political liberalism in interesting yet unexplored ways. Our discussion of RWP concentrates only on one such interaction, and further work needs to be done to investigate other possible combinations and their normative implications. Sections 2 and 3 turn to our second aim, which is to offer a novel strategy from within political liberalism to face the rise of RWP—a strategy tailored to the specificities displayed by the majority of its supporters. Our strategy centres on a 'duty of pressure', which applies to citizens in nonpublic forums and includes using certain rhetorical devices to turn unreasonable persons towards greater reasonableness. While section 2 provides a justification for the introduction of this new duty, section 3 illustrates its main components. Section 4 discusses the implications of introducing the duty of pressure for political liberalism in general. This duty deepens our understanding of the politics of political liberalism by incorporating some insights provided by frameworks traditionally at odds with it. Our third aim is precisely to show that political liberalism can incorporate those valuable insights while staying within its limits.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> We return to these two reasons in section 1.

<sup>12</sup> This paper focuses only on Rawlsian political liberalism, and all references to political liberals should be interpreted as references to political liberals of a Rawlsian kind. Rawls's is but one model of so-called consensus political liberalism, usually contrasted with convergence models. However, Rawlsian political liberalism is extremely influential. Moreover, our argument is that certain categories *as understood by Rawls* are well suited to think about RWP, and that, at the same time, analysing RWP helps advance our understanding of those Rawlsian categories. Therefore, the question of whether the

## 1. Right-Wing Populism through Rawlsian Lenses

Within political science, there is a lively debate over how best to characterise parties like the Danish Dansk Folkeparti, the Italian Lega Nord and the Swiss Schweizerische Volkspartei, leading different scholars to label them differently (e.g., ‘populist radical right’ and ‘the extreme right’).<sup>13</sup>

We follow Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell’s influential account, which chooses the term ‘right-wing populism’ and defines it as

[a] *thin-centred ideology* that pits a virtuous and homogenous people against a set of elites and dangerous “others” who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their values, rights, prosperity, identity and voice.<sup>14</sup>

‘Thin-centred ideology’ is a term of art that originates in Michael Freeden’s seminal analysis of ideology.<sup>15</sup> In contrast to thick ideologies like fascism, thin-centred ideologies draw on a limited range of political concepts and thus cannot provide a ‘broad, if not comprehensive, range of answers to [...] political questions’.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, this already-limited array of concepts lacks internal consistency.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Ruth Wodak and Majid KhosraviNik note that the programmes of right-wing populist parties are usually issue-specific because they ‘aim to address and mobilize a range of equally contradictory segments of the electorate’.<sup>18</sup> For

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duty of pressure is compatible with other models of political liberalism falls outside the scope of this paper. For an overview of different understandings of political liberalism, see Jonathan Quong, ‘Public Reason’, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/public-reason/> (last accessed May 5, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Piero Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 11–59.

<sup>14</sup> Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, *Populists in Power* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), p. 5, our italics.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>16</sup> Michael Freeden, ‘Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology?’, *Political Studies*, 46 (1998), 748–765, at p. 750.

<sup>17</sup> Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, p. 485. See also Paris Aslanidis, ‘Is Populism an Ideology? A Refutation and a New Perspective’, *Political Studies*, 64 (2016), 88–104, at pp. 88–91.

<sup>18</sup> Ruth Wodak and Majid KhosraviKik, ‘Dynamics of Discourse on Politics in Right-Wing Populism in Europe and beyond: An Introduction’, *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*, ed. by Ruth Wodak, Brigitte Mral, and Majid KhosraviKik (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. xvii–xxviii, at p. xvii.

example, in countries such as France, many followers of right-wing populist parties previously supported communist parties.<sup>19</sup> Like fascist parties, communist parties were arguably centred on a thick ideology that, however, strikingly fell at the other end of the political spectrum than present-day right-wing populism.

Translating these observations into Rawlsian categories, the previous paragraph provides independent reasons to accept Rawls's general claim about the prevalence of 'partially comprehensive' doctrines, at least when applied to RWP supporters. When explaining how an overlapping consensus over a liberal conception of justice can emerge, Rawls argues that 'many if not most citizens' endorse political principles 'without seeing any particular connection, one way or the other, between those principles and their other views'.<sup>20</sup> Their political views are only loosely connected with their beliefs in domains such as morality and religion, which contributes to making their doctrines partially, not fully, comprehensive. Large numbers of RWP supporters seem to fit this description. They appear to be attracted to proposals regarding specific political issues because they find such proposals compelling in themselves and not because they see a link between those proposals and their disparate comprehensive doctrines. The doctrines held by many supporters of RWP, thus, exemplify a feature that, according to Rawls, characterises the worldviews of many members of our societies—*partial comprehensiveness*.

Another important element of Albertazzi and McDonnell's definition is the 'us/others' dichotomy. Generally, populism is characterised by a Manichean logic of a virtuous people against a corrupt elite.<sup>21</sup> What matters here is that the message conveyed by RWP also sets the virtuous people against social groups like Muslims, Roma and Sinti minorities, migrants and persons of immigrant descent. If a group is included among these 'others', its members are systematically singled out qua members of that group and depicted as unable to be and even become fully functioning members of society. For example, the political campaigns of the Front National centre on the idea that Muslims as Muslims cannot be truly French because

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<sup>19</sup> Maria E. Lanzone and Gilles Ivaldi, 'From Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen: Organizational Change and Adaptation in the French Front National', *Understanding Populist Party Organization: A Comparative Analysis*, ed. by Reinhard Heinisch and Oscar Mazzoleni (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 131-158.

<sup>20</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 160.

<sup>21</sup> Among many others, see Yves Mény and Yves Surel, *Par Le Peuple, Pour Le Peuple: Le Populisme et Les Démocraties* (Paris: Fayard, 2001), pp. 14–21.

they are unable to accept and live by French political values.<sup>22</sup> This idea is shared by many other European right-wing populist parties—for instance, in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland.<sup>23</sup> As another example, the Romani population are the targets of depersonalising, if not dehumanising, discrimination by the Italian Lega Nord, which has even depicted them as ‘more difficult to eradicate than rats’.<sup>24</sup>

Reading these remarks through Rawlsian lenses, those who accept RWP’s message about groups like Muslims and Roma effectively accept that members of those groups typically lack the sheer capacity to even become fully cooperating members of society. As explained in the introduction, this capacity is what makes persons politically equal in the eyes of reasonable persons. To say that membership in a group systematically translates into lack of such sheer capacity sounds utterly implausible. Therefore, RWP supporters unreasonably deny the bases for the status of equal persons to many who should count as equal. This denial is what makes supporters of RWP *unreasonable* in a Rawlsian sense.

Moreover, this unreasonable attitude translates into policy proposals that are unreasonable also because they clash with the equal provision of basic rights and opportunities across society, which, as explained in the introduction, all reasonable persons accept. Consider the 2009 Swiss ban on the construction of minarets, which arguably violates freedom of religion. This ban was introduced through the influence of the Schweizerische Volkspartei, and it received praise from the leaders of many other European right-wing populist parties.<sup>25</sup> As Fabio Wolkenstein stresses while discussing the tension between RWP and liberalism at large, these sorts of exclusionary allocations of rights and entitlements are inconsistent with liberal theories.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Sylvain Crépon, *Enquête au Coeur du Nouveau Front National* (Paris: Nouveau Monde Éditions, 2012), p. 218.

<sup>23</sup> E.g., Hans-George Betz, ‘Mosques, Minarets, Burquas and Other Essential Threats: The Populist Right’s Campaign against Islam in Western Europe’, *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*.

<sup>24</sup> Elenora Martini, ‘Rom, la Paura e l’Odio: Salvini Soffia sul Fuoco’, *Il Manifesto*, May 29, 2015, <https://ilmanifesto.it/rom-la-paura-e-lodio-salvini-soffia-sul-fuoco/> (last accessed May 5, 2017). On Antiziganism in *Lega Nord*, see also Nando Sigona, ‘“Gypsies out of Italy!”: Social Exclusion and Racial Discrimination of Roma and Sinti in Italy’, *Italy Today: The Sick Man of Europe*, ed. by Andrea Mammone and Giuseppe A. Veltri (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 143-157.

<sup>25</sup> Anas Altikriti, ‘Minarets and Europe’s Crisis’, *Al Jazeera*, December 2, 2009, <http://www.aljazeera.com/focus/2009/12/200912281637353840.html> (last accessed May 5, 2017).

<sup>26</sup> Fabio Wolkenstein, ‘What Can We Hold against Populism?’, *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 41 (2015), 111–129, at pp. 113–14.

Now, we aim to suggest not only that RWP supporters are unreasonable, but also that they generally display a specific kind of unreasonableness, further complicating this Rawlsian notion. As Albertazzi and McDonnell observe, RWP followers ‘do not always position themselves on the extreme Right (quite the opposite in fact)’.<sup>27</sup> More specifically, unlike, say, neo-Nazis who proudly embrace racist views and explicitly strive for dismantling liberal institutions, many RWP supporters do not regard themselves as enemies of liberalism. They often regard themselves as guardians of liberal values against the threat posed by ‘others’ whom they (unreasonably) see as inherently unfit for citizenship in a liberal society. Right-wing populist leaders are well aware of this feature characterising a significant component of their electorate, and use it for their advantage. Indeed, the unreasonable message of such leaders is often framed as a defence of liberal democratic values.<sup>28</sup> For example, Marine Le Pen—the leader of the Front National—has repeatedly invoked French liberal tenets (e.g., women’s rights and the rejection of homophobia) in her attacks against the Muslim population.<sup>29</sup>

The case of the majority of RWP supporters suggests that at least two different kinds of unreasonableness can be identified: (i) ‘self-aware’ and (ii) ‘unaware’ unreasonableness. The difference between them is essentially about self-consciousness. While the self-aware unreasonable (e.g., white supremacists) self-confessedly believe that the liberal order should be overthrown, the *unaware* unreasonable (e.g., the majority of RWP supporters) are effectively unreasonable but do not conceive of their political views and activities as ultimately inimical to liberal democracies and liberal ideas of freedom and equality.<sup>30</sup>

Let us take stock. According to Rawls, (reasonable and unreasonable) persons can have either fully or partially comprehensive doctrines. By discussing RWP supporters, we have shown that unreasonableness admits at least two variations: self-aware or unaware unreasonableness. Therefore, there are (at least in theory) four categories of unreasonable

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<sup>27</sup> Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, ‘Introduction: The Sceptre and the Spectre’, *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, ed. by Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 1-11, at p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. See also Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 78–79.

<sup>29</sup> Crépon, *Enquête au Coeur du Nouveau Front National*, chapter 5; Nonna Mayer, ‘From Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen: Electoral Change on the Far Right’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 66 (2013), 160–178.

<sup>30</sup> We thank an anonymous reviewer for helping us with this clarification.

persons resulting from the combination between types of unreasonableness and kinds of comprehensive doctrines, as shown in table 1.

*Table 1: Combining Types of Unreasonableness with Types of Comprehensive Doctrines*

	Partially comprehensive doctrines	Fully comprehensive doctrines
Unaware unreasonableness	UUPCDs	UUFCDs
Self-aware unreasonableness	SAUPCDs	SAUFCDs

We have suggested that most RWP supporters are among the unaware unreasonable with partially comprehensive doctrines (UUPCDs), which provide the main focus of the following sections. To reiterate, the fact that UUPCDs hold partially comprehensive doctrines does not make them any more or less unreasonable. In fact, many reasonable persons do likewise. However, we must pay attention to this feature. As shown in section 3, political liberalism faces specific obstacles when it comes to handling unreasonable persons who, like many RWP followers, hold partially comprehensive doctrines. Analogously, it is important to pay attention to the unaware nature of the unreasonableness of UUPCDs because, as it will turn out, certain avenues for countering the spread of the unreasonable are especially well-suited to it.

Another disclaimer is in order. Our focus on UUPCDs is not meant to suggest that other possible combinations of types of unreasonableness and comprehensive doctrines are less threatening for stability, or that nothing should be done about them, or even that the strategy regarding UUPCDs developed in sections 2 and 3 cannot in part be adapted to their case. The other combinations simply fall beyond the scope of this paper, but a future focused analysis of each would be greatly beneficial to political liberalism. Our analysis of UUPCDs aims to show that the most- and least-fitting strategies for handling the unreasonable in this category can only be identified by attending to its specific features, and the same likely holds true of the other three combinations we have identified.

## 2. Containment through Engagement

Despite his faith in progress towards a liberal society grounded in a solid overlapping consensus, Rawls admits that the presence of many unreasonable views is a permanent fact of *any* society, including those at the end of that progress. This ‘gives us the practical task of containing them—like war and disease—so that they do not overturn political justice’.<sup>31</sup> This comment can be interpreted as hinting at the case in which progress towards greater reasonableness reverses and the number of unreasonable persons moves progressively closer to constituting a threat to stability, as with the rise of RWP. However, Rawls never explains how to seek containment.

This section aims to contribute towards filling this gap, especially regarding UUPCDs, by justifying a conception of containment centred on citizens’ discursive engagement. This might sound surprising, given that the state seems best placed to undertake containment. Moreover, in light of Rawls’s comparison with war and disease, one might think that the state should conceive of containment as the implementation of tough measures against the unreasonable. Jonathan Quong develops a novel account of containment that precisely revolves around curtailing the basic rights of the unreasonable. Quong discusses two examples—the right of parents to direct the education of their children and the right to disseminate hate speech.<sup>32</sup>

Despite its immediate plausibility, and although it has a role to play in the big picture of containment, we believe rights infringement cannot be the main strategy for seeking it, especially in relation to the unaware unreasonable. As liberals, political liberals recognise that the rights of individuals are particularly important. Such importance is reflected in Rawls’s claim that reasonable persons not only support providing equal basic liberties to all but give special priority to protecting those liberties over other political goals.<sup>33</sup>

To be sure, Quong recognises that containment through rights infringement is only justified under exceptional circumstances: when there is a ‘real threat’ to stability and,

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<sup>31</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 64 fn. 19.

<sup>32</sup> Jonathan Quong, ‘The Rights of Unreasonable Citizens’, *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 12 (2004), 314–335, at pp. 325–335.

<sup>33</sup> Rawls, ‘The Idea of Public Reason Revisited’, p. 774. For a general discussion of the primacy of liberty within liberalism, see Gerald F. Gaus, Shane D. Coutland, and David Schmidtz, ‘Liberalism’, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta (Spring 2015 Edition), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/liberalism/> (last accessed May 5, 2017).

therefore, to other citizens' rights. According to him, there is 'a strong presumption in favour of non-interference'.<sup>34</sup> On our part, we agree that if, say, there is a fully mobilised unreasonable group with the power and intention to overthrow integral parts of the liberal constitutional order, Quong's coercive solutions are permitted. However, such solutions can be seen as fully justified only if other less extreme strategies have been implemented beforehand and have failed. Indeed, the special value of everyone having equal basic rights is not fully honoured if a liberal society sets a high threshold for the curtailment of rights but then sits back and waits. That society would be ready to passively witness unreasonable views growing increasingly influential, therefore getting progressively closer to the point where rights infringement would be required. To fully honour the value of equal rights, their infringement cannot be the primary containment strategy of political liberalism. A different strategy should be applied earlier on the path to a 'real threat' to stability.

One may object that, even if rights were violated only when stability is under real danger, the explicit threat of this infringement would work as deterrent before that point is reached. If the state proclaimed that the rights of a specific group might soon be infringed, fear would dissuade unreasonable citizens from that group from *becoming* a real threat to stability. Because of this deterrence effect, so the objection goes, rights infringement can be justified even if no other strategy has been attempted earlier on. In a sense, the state never passively witnessed unreasonable views growing increasingly strong.<sup>35</sup>

As others have already pointed out, there are reasons to be sceptical about the deterrence effects on unreasonable persons of threats of last-ditch coercive measures.<sup>36</sup> These threats are likely to exacerbate the problem of instability because they risk making the unreasonable even more alienated from and resentful towards liberal institutions. For instance, by drawing on Carol Swain's empirical study on white supremacist groups in the US, Robert Talisse observes that the members of these groups started mobilising because they felt rejected by the liberal

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<sup>34</sup> Quong, 'The Rights of Unreasonable Citizens', pp. 328–329.

<sup>35</sup> We thank an anonymous referee for this objection.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Corey Brettschneider, *When the State Speaks, What Should It Say? How Democracies Can Protect Expression and Promote Equality* (Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 77–78; Nancy L. Rosenblum, *Membership and Morals: The Personal Uses of Pluralism in America* (Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 2000); Robert B. Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 42–78.

state and mainstream society.<sup>37</sup> Threats of having their rights violated would likely lead such persons to ‘see themselves as excluded, victimized, and oppressed’ even further.<sup>38</sup>

The potential destabilising effects of the threat of rights infringement can be fully appreciated when considering the unaware unreasonable, exemplified by many RWP supporters. As seen, most RWP followers do not regard themselves as enemies of liberalism. However, they do have a sense of grievance against existing liberal institutions, which they perceive as too indifferent towards ‘the people’ and complicit with the allegedly dangerous ‘others’. If these RWP supporters heard from such institutions that their rights might soon be violated because of their views, they would likely become even more frustrated, perhaps to the point of self-consciously rejecting liberal ideas and explicitly mobilising against the liberal project. In other words, they might well turn into self-aware unreasonable persons.

This increased frustration towards liberal institutions would likely push unaware unreasonable citizens to further isolate themselves from mainstream society, by forming or joining ‘enclaves’ with others who share their views. As Cass Sunstein famously argues, ‘When people find themselves in groups of like-minded types, they are especially likely to move to extremes’, which, in the case of unreasonable citizens, increases the risk of instability.<sup>39</sup>

The problems affecting rights infringement show that ‘softer’ strategies should be implemented beforehand, whereas rights can only be infringed after such strategies fail. Remaining focused on the role of institutions, the state could, for example, carefully choose national holidays, build public monuments and craft school curricula so as to celebrate the basic values of political liberalism. In his account of how the state should speak to support liberal ideas of freedom and equality, Corey Brettschneider lists these metaphorical instances of state speech alongside the classic liberal commitment to promulgating the justification behind laws and policies.<sup>40</sup> Also, one might suggest that the rise of RWP and of other unreasonable groups would be more unlikely if the state guaranteed solid economic prospects

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<sup>37</sup> Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict*, p. 61.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>39</sup> Cass R. Sunstein, *Going to Extremes: How Like Minds Unite and Divide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Brettschneider, *When the State Speaks, What Should It Say?*, esp. pp. 42–49.

to the population at large or otherwise implemented a strong conception of socioeconomic justice.<sup>41</sup>

We welcome these sorts of policies. They all seem useful medium- to long-term measures of containment that promise to act preventatively by reducing the chances that the progress towards greater reasonableness will be reversed at some point in the future. However, it seems overoptimistic to say that they would *completely* eliminate the risk of any such reversal. As mentioned above, Rawls voices similar caution when he admits that unreasonable views are a volatile fact of life of any society. In well-ordered societies, one would expect those views to be too weak to threaten stability, but even under such favourable conditions, 'that is the hope; there can be no guarantee'.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, political liberal theorists can only partially accept the proposal to create strong socioeconomic justice. Reasonable pluralism extends to liberal conceptions of justice, and it is particularly difficult to find agreement over the principles regulating socioeconomic inequalities. Consequently, Rawls admits that his own theory of justice, which includes the rather demanding 'difference principle', does not by itself exhaust the content of public reason. Such content is provided by a whole family of reasonable liberal conceptions of justice that only overlap on a weaker sufficientarian principle guaranteeing a social minimum to everyone.<sup>43</sup> Now, even if we knew that the difference principle or another strong principle of socioeconomic justice would considerably help to contain the unreasonable, we could not preempt the 'orderly contest' that should take place in society between reasonable conceptions of justice by imposing a strong commitment to socioeconomic justice on liberal citizens who reasonably reject it in favour of weaker principles.<sup>44</sup> This would amount to bracketing at the level of theory an important aspect of reasonable pluralism, which is a key concern of political liberalism. Therefore, although we accept that a social minimum might be important for containment, we, as theorists, cannot require any stronger redistributive principle because that would preempt the discussion between reasonable conceptions of justice, creating significant tensions with political liberalism.

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<sup>41</sup> For a defence of greater socioeconomic equality as the best way to fight 'bad civil society associations', see Simone Chambers and Jeffrey Kopstein, 'Bad Civil Society', *Political Theory*, 29 (2001), 837–865.

<sup>42</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 65.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xviii–xlix and 226–227. For the observation that regarding justice, the widest differences of reasonable opinion are about socioeconomic matters, see *ibid.*, pp. 227–230.

<sup>44</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 227 for reference to the orderly contest.

In sum, the state certainly has a preventative role to play, but it is unable to completely eliminate risks. Also, state policies appear ill equipped to *react* to those cases in which unreasonable views have already started to progressively gain consensus in society—especially if we consider that the provision of socioeconomic benefits, which might seem a comparatively suitable reactive measure, can be only partially guaranteed within political liberalism. And our argument focuses precisely on these sorts of cases, which are exemplified by the trajectory of RWP in many countries.

The fact that state interventions can only do so much to protect liberal institutions from unreasonable views creates the room to justify a ‘duty of pressure’ (DP): a duty to discursively engage the unreasonable that befalls citizens. We derive it from the principle of liberal legitimacy, analogously to how Rawls derives the duty of civility. The principle of liberal legitimacy, which requires that state decisions about the most fundamental political questions be settled on the basis of public reasons, is Rawls’s solution to the tension between the coercive nature of political power and the idea that such power is ultimately the power of the public.<sup>45</sup> Crucially, the goal of liberal legitimacy is important enough to justify duties to be discharged by citizens: ‘since the exercise of political power must be legitimate, the ideal of citizenship imposes a moral, not a legal, duty—the duty of civility—to be able to explain to one another on those fundamental questions how the principles and policies they advocate and vote for can be supported by the political values of public reason’.<sup>46</sup> Immediately afterwards, Rawls adds that civility also requires that citizens be willing to listen to others and display fair-mindedness.

Given Rawls’s identification of legitimately exercised power with public reason, power to the unreasonable would mean illegitimate power. Section 1 explained that the message of RWP demotes all members of certain groups to the status of less than equal in society, clashing with one of the ideas forming the basis of public reason—namely, the freedom and equality of all persons. Therefore, power to parties pushing these sorts of messages would be a huge blow to liberal legitimacy. Since state-led policies to contain the unreasonable cannot cover all bases, the goal of liberal legitimacy requires the imposition of another duty on citizens in addition to civility. As will be explained in section 3, this duty requires that, when certain

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 135-137 and 216-217.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

conditions obtain, citizens should harness the persuasive potential of tailored engagement in the attempt to contain the spread of unreasonableness among their acquaintances—persuasive potential that seems promising in the case of UUPCDs.

This derivation of DP from Rawls’s principle of liberal legitimacy is only a part of our full justification for it. To be fully justified, DP must be shown to be compatible with the main tenets of political liberalism. In particular, because they are both duties of citizens, derived in parallel to one another from the same principle of liberal legitimacy, it is important to demonstrate that the duties of civility and pressure are consistent. After the features of DP have been explained in section 3, section 4 returns to this task, showing that not only does DP not stand in the way of citizens’ obligations of civility as explicitly defined by Rawls, but it is also in line with civility’s animating spirit—namely, the willingness to keep dialogue going in order to avoid descending into open conflict.

### **3. The Duty of Pressure**

To contain UUPCDs, we propose introducing DP. In general terms, DP is a moral duty requiring that ordinary reasonable citizens press the unreasonable they know (e.g., relatives, friends and colleagues) on their political views to change their mind and push them towards greater reasonableness. In this process, reasonable citizens can employ certain forms of rhetoric. DP is an imperfect duty, which means that although reasonable citizens are not required to fulfil it in every encounter with their unreasonable acquaintances, they are certainly morally at fault if they hardly ever engage with them when occasions arise.

After this general characterisation of DP, we now specify its constitutive components, starting with its content and then turning to its holders, forums, triggering conditions and nature.

#### *3.1. Content*

The limits of rights infringement and other state-led interventions have led us to introduce discursive engagement with the unreasonable. Although Rawlsian political liberals have discussed it before, they have generally focused on an avenue for engagement that we intend to sideline. Specifically, they have argued that consensus over reasonable political notions can be built through conversations starting with *deeper and more comprehensive* (generally religious

or metaphysical) ideas, from which to draw implications for the political realm. Matthew Clayton and David Stevens focus on the specific case of the religious unreasonable who reject the basic tenets of liberalism based on their interpretation of their faith. They suggest that reasonable citizens from the same broad community of faith as the unreasonable should convince them that ‘their religious views are mistaken as religious views’,<sup>47</sup> and then draw a connection between the doctrinally correct views and the acceptance of public reason. Even if he discusses more generally how consensus can be built around reasonable conceptions of liberal justice, Paul Weithman also imagines conversations occurring within different religious or otherwise comprehensive communities. His main example is that of Catholics showing to their coreligionists that the principled acceptance of toleration most neatly fits with the acceptance of Catholic theological arguments.<sup>48</sup>

We wish to move away from Weithman-like strategies in determining the content of DP. At least as a general rule, when citizens press UUPCDs on their political views, they should keep the discussion as close as possible to the political domain. They should generally avoid attacking unreasonable beliefs by showing how complex connections can be built between, on the one hand, religious, moral or otherwise comprehensive doctrines and, on the other hand, reasonable political ideas.

The reason we propose this is not that we take civility to forbid appeals to one’s comprehensive doctrine during containment. Our introduction reconstructed how narrowly Rawls constrains the conditions under which the duty of civility bars citizens from arguing for conclusions for which they do not have any public reason. As will be explained in section 3.2, DP requires engagement with the unreasonable in informal venues that simply fall outside the public forums where public reason applies. Rather, reliance on deep religious or otherwise comprehensive ideas to build consensus around political notions is simply unsuitable for the specific unreasonable persons we are concerned with, those who hold *partially comprehensive doctrines*. Indeed, it may well be that Weithman-like strategies are perfectly fitting for other types of unreasonable persons.

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<sup>47</sup> Matthew Clayton and David Stevens, ‘When God Commands Disobedience: Political Liberalism and Unreasonable Religions’, *Res Publica*, 20 (2014), 65–84, at p. 79.

<sup>48</sup> Paul Weithman, *Rawls, Political Liberalism and Reasonable Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 70-74. See also Jonathan Quong, *Liberalism without Perfection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 241-242.

As explained in section 1, the majority of the followers of RWP seem attracted to its political message without seeing any particular connection between it and the disparate comprehensive views they endorse. An argument starting from religious or otherwise comprehensive doctrines and then trying to establish a connection with reasonable political conclusions would struggle to capture the interest of these unreasonable persons or anyway would find it extremely difficult to connect to how they form their political beliefs.

For example, citizens embracing the message of the Front National might not conceive of themselves as enemies of liberalism, but we saw that effectively, their political views are in tension with fundamental political liberal ideas like that of all persons as free and equal. A reasonable person might want to press a supporter of the Front National by trying to establish a close fit between the basic political ideas of political liberalism and deeper commitments from a comprehensive platform. However, arguments of this sort fail to connect with the way many RWP supporters form their political views. Although focusing on the message conveyed by thin-centred ideologies, not the thinking of their adherents, Freeden stresses that ‘many chains of ideas one would normally expect to find stretching from the general and abstract to the concrete and practical [...] are simply absent’.<sup>49</sup>

In sum, the space for arguments working at the level of deep comprehensive ideas and correcting unreasonable political beliefs that do not fit with them is virtually closed. To contain UUPCDs, something else should be introduced to fill the space left vacant by such an engagement strategy. We propose that this space should be filled by (some forms of) rhetoric.

Rhetoric is speech that aims to persuade and needs, therefore, to be tailored to a specific audience.<sup>50</sup> Carving out a role for rhetoric within DP does not necessarily mean accepting techniques that might be persuasive but entail an intentional violation of the rules of correct reasoning—techniques Rawls seems to reduce the whole of rhetoric to and is rightly sceptical about.<sup>51</sup> There is a huge space between, on the one hand, arguments that correct a demonstrably false factual statement or a mistake in formal reasoning, and, on the other hand, speech that intentionally employs fallacies in the form of an argument, such as denial of the antecedent, to persuade. This ‘middle space of speech’ includes rhetorical speech that aims to

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<sup>49</sup> Freeden, ‘Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology?’, p. 750.

<sup>50</sup> Bryan Garsten, *Saving Persuasion: A Defense of Rhetoric and Judgment* (Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 220.

effect a change in one's interlocutors when there is room for it—when, as with the unaware unreasonable, there are still several common political assumptions and a partially shared political vocabulary that can be used as footholds for persuasion. This is what should be given a central role in the fulfilment of DP.

To be sure, the possibility of outright correction would sometimes be available to the reasonable citizens exercising DP. For example, while engaging with the political views of an RWP supporter, a reasonable person might be able to falsify key claims by pointing to a factual mistake. Also, she might be able to identify counterexamples to a generalisation made by her interlocutor. Reasonable citizens should certainly use these arguments, but they should also be open to the rich middle space of persuasive speech that we discussed above. Let us now give some examples of speech falling in that space.

We borrow a first set of rhetorical devices from Jane Mansbridge's famous analysis of everyday political talk. Mansbridge describes how ordinary citizens call partners, friends and colleagues terms like 'male chauvinist' in an attempt to change their beliefs and behaviours. These powerful terms indicate a kind of person one's interlocutors do not want to be and be seen as. Mansbridge describes them as shorthand for claims about the injustice of certain ideas and behaviours, but a fully explicit description of such claims and, even more so, of their justification does not come naturally in everyday exchanges.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, in using these terms, persons do not violate any formal rule of logic, although they do not fully explicate the arguments that justify their use. This is why the appeal to terms like 'male chauvinist' squarely falls in the middle space of speech.

Empirically, Mansbridge finds the use of these terms effective in shifting ideas and behaviour.<sup>53</sup> In engaging with an RWP supporter, a promising charge that reasonable citizens can direct at her is that her beliefs about, say, the status of Muslims and Roma minorities in society make her a 'racist' or a 'fascist'. In certain European countries, the epithet of 'fascist' would be particularly closely tailored to certain audiences, providing precious shared ground between them and their reasonable interlocutors. In Italy, for instance, the fascist/antifascist

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<sup>52</sup> Jane Mansbridge, 'Everyday Talk in the Deliberative System', *Deliberative Politics: Essays on Democracy and Disagreement*, ed. by Stephen Macedo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 211-238; and Jane Mansbridge and Katherine Flaster, 'The Cultural Politics of Everyday Discourse: The Case of "Male Chauvinist"', *Critical Sociology*, 33 (2007), 627-660.

<sup>53</sup> Mansbridge, 'Everyday Talk in the Deliberative System', p. 219.

divide has historically been an important component of many persons' identities, which is often handed down from generation to generation. Imagine an encounter between Francesca, an Italian reasonable citizen, and Marco, a supporter of Lega Nord. Francesca knows that, perhaps because of his family background, Marco strongly identifies with the antifascist camp. Here it would make particular sense for Francesca to insist that Lega Nord's unreasonable views resonate with key tenets of fascism and, therefore, turn its supporters into the kind of persons *he* very emphatically does not want to be.

A second example of rhetorical devices is reasoning from analogy. As mentioned in section 1, many right-wing populist parties fight to impose severe limits, if not bans, on the construction of Islamic public places of worship. For example, Lega Nord campaigned in 2015 to stop the construction of new mosques in Milan.<sup>54</sup> While continuing her discussion with Marco, Francesca could use analogies to reduce the appeal Lega Nord gains by proposing these sorts of policies. A parallel could be drawn with a country like Saudi Arabia, where Christians are forbidden to publicly practice their religion. Here Francesca could press Marco by saying that if he thinks Saudi Arabia should be condemned, he should also decry Lega Nord.

Analogies fall within the middle space of speech because it is extremely hard to conclusively establish whether each and every relevant feature obtains to a sufficiently similar degree in the compared cases, therefore ensuring that the analogy is perfect. For instance, it is difficult to work out, especially during everyday interactions, whether the presence in Milan of a few prayer rooms inside Islamic cultural centres, although inadequate to the overall Muslim population and certainly not equivalent to a mosque, makes a decisive difference.

Support to the idea that reasoning from analogy can be persuasive is given by George Lakoff's groundbreaking work in cognitive science, which demonstrates that human thinking is to a large extent analogical. According to Lakoff, human beings very often solve a problem by thinking of it in terms of another, as with his famous example of two competing models of fatherhood steering political debates in the US.<sup>55</sup> Reasoning from analogy thus promises to be

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<sup>54</sup> Sergio Rame, 'Salvini Dice "No" alla Moschea', January 10, 2015, <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/milano/salvini-dice-no-moschea-ci-sono-milioni-islamici-pronti-1081552.html> (last accessed May 5, 2017).

<sup>55</sup> George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, second edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

persuasive because it connects with the ways human beings commonly form and revise their ideas.

Appeal to trusted authorities provides a third example of rhetorical strategies. Proponents of deliberative rhetoric such as Simone Chambers and Bryan Garsten argue that in complex societies, citizens cannot be expected to judge by themselves all aspects of important political questions. Thus, citizens often need to rely on the opinions of speakers whom they trust to be authorities on the matter at hand. From a deliberative perspective, trust in authorities is not problematic insofar as citizens have no reason to believe that such authorities lack integrity or are otherwise unreliable.<sup>56</sup>

The pope is looked up to by many Catholics when it comes to political values. Therefore, he provides a good example of trusted authority that reasonable citizens living in Catholic countries can invoke while challenging the political views of RWP supporters. Consider again the case of Francesca, who is now pressing Marco on his belief that Muslims cannot possibly function as equal citizens. She knows Marco is Catholic. Hence, among other things, Francesca could suggest that because Pope Francis stresses the commonalities between Islam and Christianity and urges interfaith dialogue, Marco should reconsider his belief in the incompatibility between Islam and the fulfilment of one's obligations of citizenship in a country, like Italy, with a Catholic majority.<sup>57</sup>

Because of the theoretical nature of this paper, we cannot *guarantee* that the exercise of DP would reverse the spread of RWP. However, there is room for a reasonable hope that it would help, because our proposed strategies seem particularly *apt* to move the majority of RWP followers, who display unreasonableness of the unaware type.

If Marco consciously embraced a fascist ideology, calling him a 'fascist' or a 'racist' would do nothing to shake him, and he would likely be unmoved by analogies with blatant violations of liberal rights. However, the unaware unreasonable do not regard themselves as enemies of

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<sup>56</sup> Simone Chambers, 'Rhetoric and the Public Sphere: Has Deliberative Democracy Abandoned Mass Democracy?', *Political Theory*, 37 (2009), 323–350, at p. 340; and Bryan Garsten, 'The Rhetoric Revival in Political Theory', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 14 (2011), 164–174.

<sup>57</sup> Pope Francis expressed his views on Islam in his *Evangelii Gaudium* and in numerous public statements, which were criticised by the leaders of Lega Nord. See Stephanie Kirchgaessner, 'Rightwing Northern League Makes Gains in Italian Elections', *The Guardian*, June 1, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/01/northern-league-gains-italian-elections-matteo-salvini> (last accessed May 5, 2017).

liberalism—in fact, they often think of themselves as its guardians. Therefore, they still share with reasonable citizens a set of terms, trusted authorities and analogies that reasonable citizens can draw on in their attempts at persuasion. Regarding epithets, we have already seen how RWP supporters do not generally want to be identified with fascists or other right-wing extremists.<sup>58</sup> To mention another example, an American reasonable citizen can plausibly try to put pressure on her unaware unreasonable friend who supports Trump by comparing Trump's intention to deport all undocumented immigrants with, say, the Trail of Tears in the 1830s, when the federal government forcibly removed Native American peoples from their homeland to an area west of the Mississippi. Such an analogy is apt because both the reasonable citizen and her unreasonable friend are still likely to believe that that was an outrageous event in American history.

A final observation is needed to dispel the impression that DP requires unilateral communication. DP does not simply entail a duty to talk to unreasonable persons but also presupposes *a duty to listen* to them. Listening to the unreasonable is not simply instrumentally important to win their trust and gain the knowledge necessary to persuade them. It is also intrinsically valuable because, to avoid manipulation, rhetoric should imply some degree of reciprocity. In Anthony Laden's words, trying to rhetorically move someone should also involve 'a willingness to be moved, and thus an expression of a commitment to find common ground together'.<sup>59</sup> With RWP supporters, willingness to be moved does not mean openness to become unreasonable and, say, agree on the unequal status of Muslim citizens. However, it implies a readiness to discover that some of the background concerns of unreasonable persons may be worth endorsing. For instance, reasonable citizens should be open to recognising that, in contrast to what they might have previously thought, some followers of RWP convincingly highlight how current growing economic inequalities and high rates of unemployment within liberal democracies are unjust, and governments should do more to address them. Consequently, reasonable citizens should be ready to consider whether to revise their own political views, although remaining within the range of reasonable conceptions of justice.

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<sup>58</sup> Albertazzi and McDonnell, 'Introduction: The Sceptre and the Spectre', pp. 3–4.

<sup>59</sup> Anthony Simon Laden, 'Constructivism as Rhetoric', *A Companion to Rawls*, ed. by Jon Mandle and David Reidy (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), pp. 59–72, at p. 66.

### 3.2. *Duty Holders and Forums*

Given the central function assigned to rhetoric, it should be *citizens at large* who discharge DP. As mentioned, for rhetoric to be effective, attempts at persuasion should be based on distinctive knowledge of one's interlocutors. Therefore, assigning DP to every reasonable citizen is necessary to ensure there will be duty holders with the right sort of knowledge about enough individuals supporting RWP.

Placing DP on citizens at large has the additional advantage of involving as many reasonable persons as possible from the network of each supporter of RWP. If DP is fulfilled, the unreasonable are likely to be confronted in different occasions over time by different reasonable acquaintances. They might well reexamine their unreasonable political views precisely because not one, but a few dear persons have criticised them. Also, different reasonable acquaintances of an RWP supporter are likely to challenge her beliefs from different angles, maximising the chances that the right buttons will be pushed and her views will be shifted towards greater reasonableness. In other words, the thought is not that Marco will embrace reasonableness simply as a result of a single encounter with Francesca. A shift in Marco's political ideas seems more likely after multiple encounters with different reasonable persons.

Following from our discussion of duty holders, DP should be discharged in what Rawls would call '*nonpublic*' forums, where citizens have the opportunity to come across RWP supporters with whom they have some connection and, therefore, about whom they have the personal knowledge that boosts persuasion. These forums include physical meeting places like pubs, family get-togethers and workplace gatherings. Also, they include virtual spaces like Facebook, where a citizen can see comments supporting right-wing populist ideas that her friends have posted on their pages. In virtual and physical forums alike, DP requires that citizens be ready to react to these sorts of comments when voiced by persons they know, press these persons on such comments, and try to shift their views towards greater reasonableness. Nonpublic forums are particularly fitting also because they are places where reasonable citizens can spot early signs of their friends' transition into unaware unreasonableness and, thus, put pressure on them at a stage when pressure promises to be most effective.

### 3.3. Triggering Conditions and the Nature of DP

Which conditions trigger DP? This question links back to section 2, where we discussed Quong's idea that containment through rights infringement should start when the unreasonable pose a real threat to stability. That discussion suggests that DP should apply under a broader range of circumstances. However, such circumstances cannot be too broad because DP creates a new burden for citizens, and it seems unjustified to impose it when no service would be done to stability. Like Quong, we only have the space to provide a vague specification of the conditions triggering DP, to be understood primarily as the general direction that should be followed in future analyses. In this paper, we limit ourselves to suggesting that DP applies when signs arise that a process has started that *risks* leading society towards the real threat to the stability of liberal institutions mentioned by Quong. Examples of these signs might include the number of RWP supporters stably growing over a few years, and such parties becoming so accepted as respectable political players that they are asked to join coalition governments.

Finally, we discuss the nature of DP. DP must be understood as a *moral*, not a legal, duty in that the state must not enforce it by law. As with public reason, the main justification for the moral nature of DP is that its legal enforcement would violate freedom of expression.<sup>60</sup> DP should be interpreted as an imperfect duty in that DP admits exceptions that are to some extent for the duty holders to work out.<sup>61</sup> It seems excessive to require that once the triggering conditions obtain, reasonable citizens must react to *each and every* relevant unreasonable comment, at whatever personal or professional cost. That said, this discretion is not unconstrained. Surely, a reasonable citizen is morally at fault if she hardly ever engages with the RWP followers she knows. Also, it seems plausible that the more advanced the process that risks resulting in a real threat to stability, the less often citizens should make exceptions for themselves—and therefore the more often they must discharge DP. However, here we cannot provide a fully fledged account of the constraints imposed on the discretion enjoyed by duty holders.

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<sup>60</sup> Rawls, 'The Idea of Public Reason Revisited', p. 769.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas E. Hill, 'Kant on Imperfect Duty and Supererogation', *Kant-Studien*, 62 (1971), 55–76, at p. 56.

#### 4. Politicising Political Liberalism (but Not Too Much)

It is now time to consider the wider implications that DP has for political liberalism. Realist, agonist and radical-democratic theorists criticise political liberalism for its impoverished understanding of politics. These critics point out that political life extends well beyond what political liberals call ‘public forums’: politics must be practiced in places like ‘the streets, squares, church basements, and theatres of civil society’, and even at home.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, politics is inexorably conflictual, and citizens are therefore expected to actively fight for their values.<sup>63</sup> This contrasts starkly with the idea of public reason, which Rawls describes as specifying the political relation between citizens ‘at the deepest level’.<sup>64</sup> Public reason requires that citizens passively refrain from grounding fundamental political decisions solely in controversial comprehensive doctrines. Applying these critiques to RWP and building in particular on a previous analysis by Chantal Mouffe, Fabio Wolkenstein argues that political liberalism cannot do anything to face it. According to Wolkenstein, political liberalism is inherently ‘antipolitical’ because it fails to recognise that persons always start forming their political views and engaging politically out of their particular interests and identities, not the universalistic ideals of public reason.<sup>65</sup>

By (i) extending political life into discussions with friends, colleagues and relatives and (ii) asking citizens to actively promote their values, DP takes on board *some* of the insights into politics offered by the critics of political liberalism. Moreover, DP recognises that a great many persons hold exclusionary views, and it engages with them where they are, in the hope of progressively pushing them closer to reasonableness. Consequently, if political liberalism incorporates DP, it also appears to offer a reply to Wolkenstein’s specific concern.

Given that DP makes political liberalism a less naïve interlocutor for its critics, political liberals should welcome it. However, they might also worry that by introducing DP, we effectively move beyond political liberalism. This is a legitimate concern because realists,

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<sup>62</sup> Iris M. Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 168.

<sup>63</sup> Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics* (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 126–160; Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, second edition (London-New York: Verso, 2005), pp. 41–59; Marc Stears and Mathew Humphrey, ‘Public Reason and Political Action: Justifying Citizen Behavior in Actually Existing Democracies’, *The Review of Politics*, 74 (2012), 285–306.

<sup>64</sup> Rawls, ‘The Idea of Public Reason Revisited’, p. 766.

<sup>65</sup> Wolkenstein, ‘What Can We Hold against Populism?’, pp. 114–115. See also Chantal Mouffe, ‘The End of Politics and the Challenge of Right-Wing Populism’, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. by Francisco Panizza (London-New York: Verso, 2005), pp. 50–71.

agonists and radical democrats build upon their rich account of politics to challenge the very tenability of political liberalism and, in particular, of public reason, which is the key to Rawls's solution to the problems of legitimacy and stability. We now prove the compatibility between DP and political liberalism by showing that DP is still consistent with (i) Rawlsian public reason, (ii) civility more in general, (iii) the kind of respect citizens owe to each other, and (iv) the typically liberal unwillingness to demand too much from citizens. The discussion of the compatibility of DP and political liberalism will also complete the justification of DP, which section 2 could only develop up to a point.

Unlike agonist, realist and radical-democratic critiques of political liberalism, DP leaves public reason unscathed in all its traditional forums. To repeat, Rawls believes that public reason, which essentially regulates the exercise of the state's coercive power, only constrains common citizens when they vote or participate in electoral campaigns. 'Its limits do not apply to our personal deliberations and reflections about political questions, or to the reasoning about them by members of associations'—in other words, to the 'background culture' of society.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, DP is not a substitute for, and does not interfere with, the duty of civility to provide public reasons in public forums. We simply argue that, under certain circumstances and in forums other than those of public reason, citizens should also discharge a brand-new duty regulating their interactions.

The duty to honour public reason is the dimension of civility that Rawls focuses on the most, but he also mentions two others. According to him, being civil also means displaying 'a willingness to listen to others and a fairmindedness in deciding when accommodations to their views should reasonably be made'.<sup>67</sup> DP satisfies these requirements, which seem meant to apply also beyond public reason's forums, therefore demonstrating that it does not involve uncivil pressure on any dimension of Rawlsian civility. As explained in section 3.1, DP involves both a duty to listen and an openness to be persuaded by other citizens' political views while remaining within the range of reasonable political conceptions.

Even moving beyond civility as explicitly discussed by Rawls, and turning to the spirit animating Rawls's account, there is room to argue that such spirit is similar to the one characterising DP. Rawls's account is discussed as a typical example of a specific kind of

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<sup>66</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 215. See also Rawls, 'The Idea of Public Reason Revisited', pp. 767-768.

<sup>67</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 217.

civility. Michael Meyer calls it 'liberal' civility and describes it as applying to 'conditions of severe disagreement', where its primary goal is to avoid the worst outcome—'especially but not only the (violent) end of civil dialogue'.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, Cheshire Calhoun depicts Rawls-like 'political' civility as striving to ensure that 'dialogue among those who disagree will continue rather than break down'.<sup>69</sup>

The goal of preventing a terrible political outcome (instability) by keeping dialogue going also characterises DP in its focus on UUPCDs, who still share some discursive ground with reasonable citizens. Moreover, DP is characterised by the rejection of violence in discourse. We surely do not propose 'intimidation, harassment and coercion', classed by Calhoun as uncivil, as part of DP, and we have even excluded the manipulative use of logical fallacies.<sup>70</sup> In sum, DP, which section 2 introduced as distinct from civility and justified in parallel with it, is compatible with both the letter and the spirit of Rawls's account of civility.

Next, one might argue that DP is inconsistent with political liberalism because it is disrespectful towards the unreasonable. Some commentators suggest that Rawls's scepticism towards rhetoric is grounded on the idea that rhetoric violates the respect owed to persons.<sup>71</sup> According to them, Rawls endorses a critique of rhetoric that can be traced back to Immanuel Kant. As explained by Garsten, the Kantian worry is that if influenced by rhetoric, persons fall under the sway of someone else, rather than being guided by their own reason. In other words, rhetoric 'moves us, instead of convincing us to move ourselves'.<sup>72</sup>

Although this critique is sound when directed against manipulative rhetoric, it forgets that other forms of rhetoric incorporate respect for persons. As Garsten argues, persuasion 'is worthwhile because it requires us to pay attention to our fellow citizens and to display a certain respect for their points of view and their judgments. The effort to persuade requires us to engage with others wherever they stand and to begin our argument there'.<sup>73</sup> Persuasion

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<sup>68</sup> Michael Meyer, 'Liberal Civility and the Civility of Etiquette: Public Ideals and Personal Lives', *Social Theory and Practice*, 26 (2000), 69-84, at p. 76.

<sup>69</sup> Cheshire Calhoun, 'The Virtue of Civility', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 29 (2000), 251-275, at p. 269.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>71</sup> For example, see John O'Neill, 'The Rhetoric of Deliberation: Some Problems in Kantian Theories of Deliberative Democracy', *Res Publica*, 8 (2002), 249-268, at pp. 253-254.

<sup>72</sup> Garsten, 'The Rhetoric Revival in Political Theory', p. 167.

<sup>73</sup> Garsten, *Saving Persuasion*, p. 3.

is respectful in that it ‘acknowledge[s] the particular features of individuals’<sup>74</sup>—that is, their concrete situations and distinctive ways of thinking.

Everyday political talk, analogies, and appeals to trusted authorities—rhetorical strategies we endorsed in section 3.1—are respectful precisely in this sense. By appealing to the allegiances, identities and personal histories of RWP supporters, with special but not exclusive attention to the common discursive ground with reasonable interlocutors, they start from what these individuals—in their singularity—value as important factors in forming their political views. In other words, this type of persuasive speech starts from what many RWP supporters actually rely on to guide themselves when it comes to political issues. Moreover, DP is respectful because, as seen in section 3.1, it outright rejects other forms of rhetoric that intentionally violate the rules of correct reasoning. This exclusion was grounded in the fact that although fallacious rhetorical techniques might be persuasive, they would manipulate weaknesses in the reasoning of unreasonable individuals, thereby falling short of respecting their autonomy. Finally, DP is respectful towards unreasonable persons because it presupposes a duty to listen to them and to be open to be moved by some of their concerns, thereby prescribing a *reciprocal* engagement.

Finally, DP might be regarded as too demanding for the conception of citizenship that political liberalism endorses as a liberal doctrine. Compared to traditions like civic republicanism, liberalism has been generally reluctant to heavily burden citizens qua citizens in ‘nonpublic’ life spheres, especially in terms of political participation and activism. With its emphasis on engagement, DP might seem to sit uncomfortably with such liberal (and thus political liberal) wariness. Recall, however, that DP is a moral duty, which means citizens can never be coerced into complying with it. Moreover, DP is only triggered when there are signs that a process has started that risks leading society towards a threat to stability. The very existence of triggering conditions means scenarios exist where citizens are completely free from any expectation to exert any pressure on the unreasonable. Finally, DP is an imperfect duty. Even when the triggering conditions obtain, citizens can exercise discretion over how often they discharge DP. Also, this discretion is greater the less advanced the process that is likely to lead to a threat to stability.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

These features demonstrate that DP incorporates a typically liberal concern with overdemandingness in those spheres that liberals tend to conceive as nonpublic. Also, whenever DP effectively turns out to be rather demanding, it is only for the sake of the sheer survival of liberal institutions. Obviously, liberals should deeply care about this goal, reducing the tension with political liberalism even further.

## **5. Conclusion**

Section 4 demonstrated that DP stays within the limits of political liberalism, which should be taken as excellent news by political liberals. This paper has shown that DP seems fitting for the task of reacting to the spread of UUPCDs, a threat to key values such as legitimacy and stability. Therefore, it is important that political liberals can accept DP while remaining loyal to the basic commitments of their framework.

Crucially, we have only been able to establish the fittingness of DP for the containment of UUPCDs, exemplified by the majority of the supporters of RWP, because we have highlighted that unreasonableness is more complex than generally acknowledged and interacts in unexplored ways with other Rawlsian notions, such as the distinction between partially and fully comprehensive doctrines. Further research is in order, to map the full variety of unreasonable persons and to identify the most fitting containment strategies for those who differ from the type explored in this paper.