UDK: 172.13
https://doi.org/10.2298/FID2001012B
Review Essay
Received: 14.09.2019. Accepted: 26.10.2019.

PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY
VOL. 31, NO. 1, 001–138

Elvio Baccarini

# PUBLIC REASON AND RELIABILITY DEMOCRACY

**ABSTRACT**
The article starts with a sketch of Prijić Samaržija's hybrid theory. After that, it provides an overview of the virtue epistemology theory, to which she attributes a relevant influence on her own position, as well as that of reliability democracy which constitutes her view about democratic legitimacy. Secondly, her proposal is discussed and confronted with a slightly amended version of the leading liberal democratic theory of democratic legitimacy, formulated and defended by John Rawls.

**KEYWORDS**
Expertism, Prijić Samaržija, public reason, social epistemology, Rawls

It is an enormous pleasure to discuss Snježana Prijić Samaržija's book that offers a deep and thoughtful contribution to (one of) the actual problems of legitimacy of democracy.

The era of fake news and pseudoscience is visible and in front of us all. Disinformation comes from authoritative sources, and not only from those outside the mainstream (which does not mean that the latter do not possess strong influence). As we can read in *The Washington Post* in an article that shows data updated on October 9th, 2019, the President of the USA, Donald Trump, has misinformed the public 13,435 times, at the 993rd day of his presidency.[1] I skip on details that regard cases of pseudoscientific misinformation, health, etc.

Such misinformation represents a serious trouble for the legitimacy of democratic decision-making. Apart from misinformation, there is a problem of the competence of citizens to express their will and influence public decisions on matters that require high level of expertise, like climate changes, vaccination, etc. The question is: how can we ensure legitimacy of democracy, as well as its efficiency, when citizens have insufficient competence, and, further, they are

1 (*The Washington Post*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/10/14/president-trump-has-made-false-or-misleading-claims-over-days/). *The Guardian* speaks about analogous behaviour of the UK PM, Boris Johnson (*The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/nov/18/boris-johnson-lying-media)

Elvio Baccarini: Professor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka; ebaccarini@ffri.hr.

This work has been fully supported by the University of Rijeka under the project number uniri-human-18-151, *Democracy: Human Rights, and Intellectual Virtues*. I am very much grateful to the participants to the summer school *Equality and Citizenship*, held in Rijeka on July 13th-17th, and in particular to Snježana Prijić Samaržija for her patient and careful comments.

under the pressure of misinformation? It seems that after almost 150 years we are still in troubles that J.S. Mill denounced at the dawn of democracy in his *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861/1977). Such are the risks of absence of knowledge and competence as threats to democratic decisions.

Snježana Prijić Samaržija is concerned with this issue. Specifically, the problem she deals with is: how is it possible to respect equal rights and warrant the epistemic quality of public decisions at the same time? Her hybrid conception is based on a balance between epistemic and political values (Prijić Samaržija 2018). I welcome this proposal as one of the contributions which enriches the range of reflections about the proper balance between operationalization of equality in the process of political decisions (democracy), other political values (basic rights, liberties and opportunities), and epistemic values.

In the present paper, I start with a sketch of Prijić Samaržija's hybrid theory. After that, I present an overview of the virtue epistemology theory, to which she attributes a relevant influence on her own position, as well as that of reliability democracy which constitutes her view about democratic legitimacy. These are the elements of her book that are in the focus of my analysis.

Secondly, I comment on her proposal, and confront it with an interpretation of the leading liberal democratic theory of democratic legitimacy, formulated and defended by John Rawls (Rawls 2005). Specifically, I put forward a slightly amended Rawlsian proposal.

By employing Rawls's theoretical framework, I change the focus of the discussion, in order to highlight cases when it can be legitimate to enforce truth, while Rawls's primary attention was on situations where this is not legitimate. Rawls has explained which conditions determine when it is not legitimate to enforce truth. My focus is on showing that in his terms, there are cases when such conditions are not present and, consequently, it can be legitimate to enforce truth.

I put in relation the Rawlsian theory of legitimacy of public decisions with virtue epistemology (Prijić Samaržija 2018: 65–69; Zagzebski 1996; 1998; 2003). In my view, virtue epistemology represents a complement of Rawls's proposal, although he did not refer to it.

Despite the remarkable merits of Prijić Samaržija's, book, I argue for the superiority of this Rawlsian conception of legitimacy on the basis of two merits: (i) a better distinction between cases where it is well founded to enforce policies by appeal to truth, or to the best (victorious) justificatory reasons, and the cases where we must recognize and manage a condition of persistent reasonable pluralism, as well as (ii) a more coherent relation with virtue epistemology.

1. As Prijić Samaržija points out, public decisions must be assessed through moral and political values (fairness, equality, etc.), as well as epistemic virtues (Prijić Samaržija 2018: 69–73; 90–95). "Just like abstract epistemic assessments cannot address all important aspects of social practice or decisions, isolated ethical and political evaluation are an equally inappropriate exclusive criterion for their acceptance or rejection" (ibid: 70). Thus, she offers a hybrid theory of justification the legitimacy of public decisions.

Let us see an illustration that explains Prijić Samaržija's thesis. Imagine that there are people far more skilled than others to find proper answers to public issues, for example, because they have better education. It would be epistemologically justified to attribute to them the exclusive legitimacy of making public decisions on these public issues. However, let us assume that such a practice would cement a strongly non egalitarian social hierarchy. Then, we would have, on the other side, political reasons to establish a more egalitarian process of public decision-making. In Prijić Samaržija's view, the two sets of evaluative standards must be balanced.

The moral and political side of the hybrid assessment of public decisions is represented by values and ideals, like respect of equality of citizens. This is visible, for example, in Prijić Samaržija's discussion of Miranda Fricker's theory about epistemic injustice (ibid: 72–81), and other discussions as well (ibid: 81–84). I focus, now, on the explanation of epistemological assessment of public decisions. What concepts and criteria can be employed in such assessment? Importantly, when Prijić Samaržija describes virtue epistemology, she indicates several epistemic values.

She emphasises that "although epistemic value is generally understood as epistemic success and expressed in terms of truth, it can also subsume the concepts of epistemic responsibility, consciousness, problem solving, empirical adequacy, understanding and like" (ibid: 73).

Here, Prijić Samaržija relates her view to virtue epistemology, which represents one of the basic inspirations of her theory. Virtue epistemology extends classical concerns of epistemology from traditionally central themes, like truth and justification, to the virtues of the epistemic agent. "An epistemic or intellectual virtue is the property of an epistemic agent that supports their intellectual growth and fulfilment, or that simply defines them as virtuous epistemic agent" (ibid: 66).

Virtue epistemology places its focus on whether the agent develops understanding, and not mere knowledge, whether she is epistemically responsible, i.e. makes careful observations and valid inferences, analyses evidence and a variety of hypotheses (ibid: 66), is ready to exchange ideas, to deal with their own fallibility, to cultivate intellectual humility, etc. (ibid: 68). Prijić Samaržija does not diminish the importance of truth. As she says just a few sentences after the previous quotation, the epistemically virtuous agent is praised because she has a greater chance to produce true outcomes. "For instance, an innately curious scientist aware of his own fallibility and the possible influence of his preconceptions on future research seems to approach his epistemic task of research with responsibility, and thus has a greater chance of producing true outcomes" (ibid: 69). However, the epistemic agent is praised even if she does not achieve the goal of truth. "Virtue epistemology thus provides an optimal normative framework for discussing the topics of social epistemology inasmuch as it allows us to attribute cognitive successes or failures to individuals, groups or institutions - even when it would be dubious or downright impossible to assess their agency in terms of truth" (ibid: 69). Thus, virtue epistemology "renders

possible to praise the epistemic attitude [of epistemic agents] applauding their epistemic caution and conscientiousness even if it is not possible to assess their final judgment as either true or false" (ibid: 68). Importantly, Prijić Samaržija here admits the possibility that we are not able to assess persons' judgments as true or false, but we can, nonetheless, praise them.

A specific merit of such an epistemological approach is that it is well suited to combine moral and epistemological considerations in order to assess agents' virtue (ibid: 69), and this is, in fact, the path Prijić Samaržija coherently follows in her hybrid proposal. However, in my view, in her theory of democratic legitimacy, she does not fully coherently follow the potentialities of virtue epistemology for founding a theory of democratic legitimacy and does not attribute a proper normative role to reasonable pluralism. Instead, in her democratic conception, she focuses exclusively on the epistemic value of truth.

Prijić Samaržija builds her democratic conception on Alvin Goldman's veritism (ibid: 199–218). This is a social epistemological conception which evaluates institutions on the basis of their epistemological reliability, i.e. their capacity to generate true beliefs (ibid: 201). This is the final criterion for the epistemological assessment of institutions. Thus, some criteria, like consensus of epistemic agents, or employment of expertise, are recommendable only if they are truth-conducive (ibid: 204). In fact, Prijić Samaržija positively assesses both consensus as well as expertise: discursive conciliations and confidence in experts are the most promising existing candidates for the status of reliable procedures that generate epistemically valuable beliefs (ibid: 204). The institutional paradigmatic model of epistemic virtue is represented by scientific institutions, that, despite various forms of criticism, are still the best that we have for the goal of producing truth-conducive beliefs and theories (ibid: 203). In the political domain, the discussion results in the formulation of a hybrid theory that founds a democratic conception which places great importance on epistemic reliability and properly balances the epistemic values and political values (instantiated through the respect of equal rights) without an a priori advantaged position of any of them, while affirming the role of experts in the decisional procedure. This is reliability democracy. "Proponents of reliability democracy assume the stance that the qualities of democratic systems shouldn't only be defended in terms of equal rights, but also in the context of their ability to generate epistemically valuable political decisions" (ibid: 207). An implication of the role of experts may be that public decisions can be legitimate, even when ordinary citizens are not aware of their justification (ibid: 213–214). If I interpret Prijić Samaržija correctly, an additional condition is that some citizens are not only unaware of the justification, but it is also not accessible to them. This is, for example, the case of public policies, like those that regard vaccination or climate changes, which are justified on the basis of reasons that require a high level of expertise (but Prijić Samaržija does not attribute the status of experts only to natural scientists, because she speaks about experts in politics, as well) (ibid: 218, 238). However, following Thomas Christiano (Christiano 2012), Prijić Samaržija affirms that a strong externality

of justification is not a necessary consequence of the role of experts. Citizens and politicians trust experts on the basis of reasons that confirm the positive epistemological role of their expertise (Prijić Samaržija 2018: 215–216). Thus, she says: "the internalist approach I am proposing stresses that it is necessary for citizens and policy-makers to understand why it is rational to bestow reliance and trust to expertise and reliable democratic procedures (ibid: 216). For the legitimacy of political decisions, it is not needed that citizens can access the complex justification behind them. It is sufficient that citizens have evidence of the reliability of procedures that experts follow.

At this point, I remark the crucial divergence between Prijić Samaržija's proposal and a great deal of contemporary political philosophical discussions on legitimacy. The divergence does not consist in employment of epistemological criteria as part of the conception of legitimacy (as I show below, epistemological considerations are part of, for example, the Rawlsian conception of legitimacy). Instead, it stems from the limits of the appeal to truth, as well as the focus on reasonable pluralism. This is, in my view, a surprising outcome, because it seems to me that, in this way, Prijić Samaržija renounces to attribute the proper role to her adherence to virtue epistemology that represents a strong resource to explain and ascribe legitimacy to reasonable pluralism.

The strong role of truth in the conception of legitimacy is affirmed, for example, when Prijić Samaržija discusses theories in the epistemology of disagreement. She criticizes the view that recognizes a persistent condition of reasonable disagreement, i.e. a situation where we persistently cannot adjudicate between competing positions and we declare several of them as legitimate expressions of reasonable pluralism. "While the pluralism of standpoints and the concept of reasonable disagreement can initially seem like the right candidate for a socially desirable and politically correct approach, this attitude is untenable because it ultimately generates a defeatist stance about the redundancy of insisting on true solutions – rendering it ineffective in solving problems and making decisions" (ibid: 227).

Truth is thus in Prijić Samaržija's view a necessary component of legitimacy that has to be balanced with political values constituted by equal rights in order to achieve the final legitimacy of decisions. Truth is also a needed criterion for resolution of disagreement, in cases where we have to reach a decision. Merely surrendering to the pluralism of reasonable disagreement is not an option under real life pressure. Therefore, Prijić Samaržija says that "maintaining a reasonable disagreement can be a solution in the abstract domain of philosophical discussions, but not in urgent situations of climate intervention, judicial decision-making, economic rescues and bankruptcies" (ibid: 231). In such conditions, we must do cognitively better. Cognitive agents do not need to remain anchored to the beliefs they have in disagreement with others. By doing better we overcome such beliefs and, thus, disagreement (ibid: 234–235).

2. The focus of my analysis of Prijić Samaržija's theses is on her insufficient attribution of importance to reasonable pluralism in public issues. Although

she is aware of the possibility of reasonable disagreement, in my view, her flaw is represented by a too optimistic view about the possibility to overcome it. In the same way as political philosophical theorists that she criticizes (I focus on the Rawlsian theory) I do not deny in an absolute sense the possibility to overcome reasonable disagreement, nor do I assume a view which is "blind to central epistemic values" (ibid: 240). As I show below, epistemic values are important in the Rawlsian view (although not sufficiently discussed and elaborated in detail). In the Rawlsian conception of legitimacy, it is important to appeal to the epistemic authority of some cognitive agents, as well as of their beliefs and research methods. But, in some cases, even responsible and well-intentioned epistemic agents cannot overcome their disagreements. Such persistent reasonable disagreements are visible in general questions, like general moral doctrines (virtue theories, deontological theories and utilitarianism), theories of social justice (egalitarian liberalism, libertarianism, etc.), and particular moral disputes (abortion, physician assisted suicide, questions of enhancement, etc.). In such cases the appeal to truth is of no immediate help in assessing the legitimacy of public decisions. It is of no help to appeal to experts as well, because leading experts disagree. Thus, ordinary citizens can reasonably disagree about attribution of reliability to them (remember that in Prijić Samaržija's view ordinary citizens' attribution matters for the legitimacy of public decisions as well). The recommendation to do better is certainly welcome in prospective. But in the present, we must deal with reasonable pluralism about many issues. When in ethics and politics we will have a Newton, we will attribute legitimacy to public decisions differently. Until then, we cannot pretend that we have overcome, or are close to overcoming in the near future, reasonable pluralism. With this, I do not deny that there can be reasonable pluralism in sciences, inclusive of natural sciences, as well. I only assume that they have better resources and less burdens and challenges in overcoming disagreement, and there are paradigmatic cases of this happening.

3. In virtue of its proper consideration of reasonable pluralism, the Rawlsian proposal (slightly reshaped here in comparison to Rawls's original formulation), represents, in my view, the best balancing of epistemic and political values. This is not a view shared by Prijić Samaržija. She says that "for Rawls, the acts of engaging public [reason], postulating widely acceptable reasons and conducing rational debates in a plural society are primarily oriented towards political goals such as the formulation and maintenance of a just society (all participants *functionally* partake in the debate as equals) irrespective of the epistemic goals of achieving true or high-quality decision" (ibid: 170). Rawls is indeed primarily concerned with the questions of justice and legitimacy, and not with truth. However, his discussion of legitimacy of public decisions is inspired by conditions of persistent reasonable pluralism and it is not deprived of respect for epistemic values. On the contrary, epistemic considerations are part of what establishes legitimacy. Namely, a legitimate society is a society ruled by reasonable principles of justice (dissenting from Rawls, I add various

kinds of evaluative standards to principles of justice). Reasonable principles of justice are those that we can justify to reasonable persons (thus, what matters for legitimacy is not mere consensus among actual real-life citizens, but consensus among their reasonable idealised versions). Reasonable persons are defined through political, as well as epistemic values. I skip on the description of moral and political components of reasonableness (which are, at least broadly speaking, shared by Prijić Samaržija), and I focus on the epistemic ones.

We see a part of the epistemic component of reasonableness in Rawls's list of valid public reasons, which does not only include political values. Among valid public reasons are "the methods and conclusions of science when those are not controversial" (Rawls 2005: 224). To put it in Prijić Samaržija's scheme, this warrants the expertist side of the conception of public justification. Where we have clearly identifiable experts, as well as conclusions shared by them, as it paradigmatically happens in natural sciences, we have valid public reasons which are epistemologically validated.

An important epistemic component of Rawls's theory of legitimacy is represented by the ideas of burdens of judgment and reasonable pluralism. Burdens of judgment are described by Rawls as difficulties that we encounter "in the correct (and conscientious) exercise of our powers of reason and judgment in the ordinary course of political life," (ibid: 56). On some issues, because of burdens of judgment, disagreement can be persistent, even though agents properly employ their epistemic capacities. Thus, we have reasonable pluralism (ibid: 54–58). This is the result of disagreement among agents who cannot arrive at consensus on some matters, not because of their faults, but because of burdens of judgment.

The concept of burdens of judgment can be taken as the negative side of the epistemic part of description of reasonable agents. It indicates that epistemic imperfection is not necessarily the fault of epistemic agents. Specifically, in Rawls's terms, this is not the fault of reasonable persons. This negative side can be complemented by a positive side, by description of epistemic merits of reasonable persons. This complement can be provided by virtue epistemology not included explicitly in the original Rawls's proposal.

As we have seen, virtue epistemology extends considerations from those primarily oriented to beliefs, like truth or justification, to those oriented to agents (Prijić Samaržija 2018: 66; Zagzebski 1996; 1998; 2003). Thus, epistemically virtuous agents are those that we praise for their epistemic merits, even if they do not reach the truth (but they have virtues that tend to lead to truth). In coherence with Rawls's theory, we can qualify such agents as reasonable agents, and attribute to them a moral status which puts an obligation on others that they justify public decisions to them. Thus, in Rawls's view, a political decision (in the proper domain) is legitimate when it is justified through reasons for which we can reasonably expect that they will be endorsed by reasonable agents, those that endorse certain political values and express epistemic virtue. This is a strong constraint on democratic decisions. Basically, legitimacy is disconnected from the acceptance of real-life agents and is instead related to

the acceptance of properly idealized agents. It is possible that the majority of citizens accept a decision, but that it is, nonetheless, not legitimate, and, then, for example, it can be legitimately overruled by the Supreme Court.

In what follows I remark the main advantages of the Rawlsian conception of legitimacy, over Prijić Samaržija's proposal.

4. Firstly, the Rawlsian conception properly highlights the distinction between the space of reasonable pluralism and the space that is not characterized by reasonable pluralism. It seriously takes in consideration the fact of persistent reasonable pluralism, and it makes a proper political use of this fact and this demarcation. Secondly, it can make a more coherent use of the resources of virtue epistemology than Prijić Samaržija.

I share Prijić Samaržija's fear of ignorance in politics, as well as of the violent implications that it may have (Prijić Samaržija 2018: 11). Relativization of truth and of epistemic values is a dangerous possible source of harms. This is why I warmly welcome her engagement in favour of democratic decision-making respectful of epistemic values. However, I remark a parallel fear, the one related to political processes that are inspired by alleged epistemic superiority and possession of truth in conditions of persistent reasonable pluralism. This worry represents the focus of public reason theorists, like John Rawls, and is also well represented by Gerald Gaus (1996; 2011).

He explains the deleterious effects of enforcing policies justified through alleged epistemic superiority and possession of truth in conditions of reasonable pluralism. In such situations, each individual pressures for the enforcement of her view about truth, or at least wants to be able to disrespect prescriptions that are enforced and she sees as wrong. "This was precisely Kant's understanding of the state of nature, where each claims the right to do what seems just and good to him, entirely independently of the opinion of others" (Gaus 2014: 569).

The important teaching is, as Gaus says, that enforcing truth in conditions of reasonable pluralism is enforcing only alleged truth with disruptive effects for social cooperation and reduction of society to a condition corresponding to the state of nature. Social harmony is lost, inimical relations in society are favoured, the door of repression and disrespect of citizens' rights and liberties is opened. Further, the status that reasonable agents (that are qualified in this way because of their political and epistemic virtues) deserve is neglected, because decisions are merely enforced over them by appeal to alleged truth, bypassing their merits and, importantly for the present discussion, the epistemic virtues values that they achieve.

However, there is a difference between attributing a decisive role for defining legitimacy to reasonable pluralism and attributing such a role to mere pluralism. We must not accept all beliefs as equally valid, and dismissing experts is not reasonable. Reasonable disagreement is not always present. The Rawlsian theory of legitimacy of public decisions distinguishes among conditions of reasonable pluralism and those where it is not present.

Reasonable pluralism might not be present for two reasons. On the one hand, there can be a possible decision that is supported by the best available reasons, and that is accessible to each reasonable agent. Refusing such a decision is simply unreasonable. Reasonable pluralism is fully excluded and in such a case it is legitimate to enforce such a decision. An example is represented by social issues that can be resolved on the basis of scientific evidence. Imagine that an issue is whether there is an obligation to vaccinate children, and the public dispute concerns whether vaccines are beneficial or harmful. We do not have reasonable pluralism here, because we have methods and conclusions of science which resolve the issue, as Rawls says when he attributes to these the status of valid public reasons. Obviously, the justificatory reasons are not directly available to each reasonable person but all of them have accessible reasons for establishing the reliability of scientists and scientific institutions, as Prijić Samaržija points out (2018: 215–216).

On the other hand, there are reasons that are conclusively defeated through reasons accessible to each reasonable person, like the thesis about the link between vaccination and autism (NHS, https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/mmr-vaccine/ , accessed on December 28th, 2019). They cannot constitute public reasons and therefore proposals justified through them are legitimately dismissed as unreasonable. Such reasons cannot defeat proposals justified through valid public reasons, but reasonable pluralism can remain. This is not visible in the previous case, that offers an either / or alternative but it is visible in other cases. For example, imagine that we have defeated a conception of the good devoted to violence, disrespect of other persons, etc. as unreasonable. We have established that such a conception of the good does enter the space of reasonable pluralism, but there can still be other conceptions of the good that remain in this space.

These are possibilities admitted by the Rawlsian theory. In such cases, enforcing truth, or the best reasons, as well as declaring some proposals ineligible, can be legitimate. There may be moral considerations in favour of abstaining from doing this, as Prijić Samaržija claims by employing her hybrid view. She does not go all the way down the path of correctness view of public legitimacy, i.e. the view that public decisions are legitimate merely if they correspond to truth or are justified through the best reasons. This view is supported by Richard Arneson, who says that "It is not wrongfully disrespectful or morally illegitimate, per se, to impose state policy on me – even a coercive state policy, for that matter – when the policy is justified and my opposition is unjustified" (Arneson 2014: 133). Even in such cases, Prijić Samaržija says that epistemic reasons must be balanced with political values represented by equal rights. In fact, Arneson thinks that the correctness theory is respectful of political values. He says that no right is denied or harmed by the enforcement of decisions supported by truth or by the best reasons. In such cases, no citizen is entitled to object. Prijić Samaržija's hybrid theory is opposed to this view of legitimacy (Prijić Samaržija 2018: 14, 93–95). In some cases, it can be legitimate to give up epistemic optimality for the sake of respect of equal rights.

I agree with balancing political and epistemic values (although I think that it deserves some further elaboration). The Rawlsian proposal, however, differs from Prijić Samaržija's for two reasons. First, the epistemic value which is part of the balancing does not necessarily have to be truth. In some cases, we do not know the truth or do not have accessible conclusive reasons that support any of the competing proposals. This is why the Rawlsian paradigm adds reasonableness (as the attribute of plural proposals in the set of eligible decisions) to truth, making these the epistemic values which have to be balanced for the legitimacy of public decisions.

Secondly, the Rawlsian paradigm also indicates epistemic reasons, and not only political and moral reasons, to deny the legitimacy of enforcing truth, which Prijić Samaržija considers legitimate. An example of this is the concept of reasonable pluralism which is explained based on the concepts of reasonable disagreement, burdens of judgment and virtue epistemology. As we see, the theory does not neglect epistemic merits. On the contrary, they are properly assessed.

In order to respect reasonable pluralism, public decisions (in Rawls's view, public decisions that regard human rights and liberties and matters of basic justice) must be justified through reasons that all reasonable citizens can accept (Rawls 2005: 137). These reasons represent the justificatory consensual basis in Rawls's theory.

At this point, a problem highlighted by Prijić Samaržija appears. Sometimes we can suspend decisions, or we can postpone them, or we can leave them to the freedom of citizens. In other cases, we need immediate public decisions. Prijić Samaržija's (at least, pro tanto, in virtue of her hybrid theory) recommendation is to do epistemically better, overcome reasonable pluralism, and enforce the decision that corresponds to truth (Prijić Samaržija 2018: 231). This sounds good, but unfortunately, in some cases doing better can still require a long time before finding answers that overcome reasonable pluralism, and therefore reasonable pluralism persists. What is the Rawlsian alternative?

In such cases, the Rawlsian view attributes legitimacy to choosing through a fair procedure among proposals that are in a set of eligible decisions (proposals in the space of reasonable pluralism). This view is respectful of epistemic considerations in a balanced way. It denies eligibility to epistemically defeated proposals, while it properly respects the plurality of reasonable proposals. The fair procedure of choice among eligible proposals is democratic and inclusive, without dangers of serious epistemic flaws. First, such dangers are already eliminated because only reasonable proposals are eligible. Second, they are excluded in virtue of a reason that Prijić Samaržija indicates when she speaks about the competence of agents. Even when the agents are not directly competent to evaluate the complex justification of proposals, citizens are competent to recognize the merits of experts (ibid: 215–216). It is thus not an easy task to exclude their participation in the final decision-making procedure. In fact, I think that there are not victorious reasons for doing this.

5. The Rawlsian conception of legitimacy is respectful, in a balanced way, of epistemological values, and offers a theory of legitimacy of public decisions that is both sensible to reasonable pluralism, as well as to conditions for overcoming it (although its focus is originally on situations of reasonable pluralism).

This conception is more in conformity with virtue epistemology, as it is described in the initial part of Prijić Samaržija's book. As we have seen above, "Virtue epistemology [...] allows us to attribute cognitive successes or failures to individuals, groups or institutions - even when it would be dubious or downright impossible to assess their agency in terms of truth" (ibid: 69). Thus, virtue epistemology represents a good model to define reasonable pluralism and eligible proposals. Reasonable pluralism is a condition where we can attribute epistemic merits to agents, even when we cannot confirm the truth of their claims.

Because of its merits in conceptualizing reasonable pluralism, in my view, virtue epistemology represents an important complement to Rawls's theory of legitimacy that properly instantiates its epistemological message in the political domain. On the other hand, the political normative implications of virtue epistemology, are somewhat lost in the final part of Prijić Samaržija's book, or at least I believe so.

## Bibliography

Arneson, R. (2014), "Political Liberalism, Religious Liberty, and Religious Establishment", in *Religion and Human Rights Discourse*, eds. Dagan, H., S. Lifshitz and Y. Z. Stern, Jerusalem: The Israel Democratic Institute, pp. 117–146.

Christiano, T. (2012), *Rational Deliberation between Experts and Citizens*, in *Deliberative Systems. Deliberative Democracy at the Large Scale*, ed. J. Parkinson and J. Mansbridge, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Gaus, G. (2014), "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. Three Agent-type Challenges to The Order of Public Reason", *Philosophical Studies* 170(3): 563–577.

—. (2011),*The Order of Public Reason. A Theory of Freedom and Morality in a Diverse and Bounded World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

—. (1996), *Justificatory Liberalism. An Essay on Epistemology and Political Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kessler, G., S. Rizzo and M. Kelly, *President Trump Has Made 13,435 False or Misleading Claims Over 993 Days*, *The Washington Post*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/10/14/president-trump-has-made-false-or-misleading-claims-over-days/, accessed on January 10th, 2020.

Mill, J. S. (1861/1977), *Considerations on Representative Government*, in *Collected Works of J.S. Mill*, *vol. XIX*, ed. J. M. Robson, Toronto and London: Toronto University Press, Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 371–577.

NHS, https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/mmr-vaccine/ , accessed on December 28th, 2019

Oborne, P. (2019), *It's not just Boris Johnson's Lying. It's that the Media let Him Get away with It*, "The Guardian", https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/nov/18/boris-johnson-lying-media , accessed on January 10th, 2020.

Prijić Samaržija, Snježana (2018), *Democracy and Truth: The Conflict between Political and Epistemic Virtues*. Milano, Udine: Mimesis International.

Rawls, J. (2005), *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Zagzebski, L. (2003), "The Search for the Source of the Epistemic Good", Metaphilosophy 34(1): 12–28.
—. (1996), *Virtues of the Mind. An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
—. (1998), "Virtue Epistemology", in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E. Craig, London: Routledge, pp. 617–621.

Elvio Bakarini

## Javni um i demokratija pouzdanosti

**Apstrakt**

Članak započinje skiciranjem hibridne teorije Prijić Samaržije. Nakon toga, nudi se pregled teorije epistemologije vrline, kojoj Prijić Samaržija pripisuje relevantan uticaj na njen vlastiti položaj, kao i one demokratije pouzdanosti koja je u temelju njenog viđenja demokratskog legitimiteta. Nadalje, njen predlog se raspravlja i suočava s donekle izmenjenom verzijom vodeće liberalne demokratske teorije demokratske legitimnosti, koju je formulisao i branio John Rawls.

**Ključne reči:** ekspertizam, Prijić Samaržija, javni um, socijalna epistemologija, Rawls