

Democracy and Authenticity

Toward a Theory of Public Justification

In *Democracy and Authenticity*, Howard H. Schweber examines a basic problem for liberal democracies. When a polity is characterized by a plurality of identities and values, certain constraints apply to the reasons citizens and public officials use to justify coercive political actions. The author argues that justifications based on religious and similar doctrines are not a proper basis for government actions that affect everyone. He then develops a concept of public justification intended to guide citizens in a liberal democracy through the work of creating a form of politics that satisfies their responsibilities to one another.

Howard H. Schweber is Professor of political science and legal studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he received the William T. Kiekhoffer award for Distinguished Teaching in 2006. He is the author of *The Language of Liberal Constitutionalism* (Cambridge, 2007); *The Creation of American Common Law, 1850–1880: Technology, Politics, and the Construction of Citizenship* (Cambridge, 2004); and *Speech, Conduct and the First Amendment* (2003).

“In this sensible and carefully-reasoned book, Howard Schweber tackles the central question of liberal political theory: how to justify state action in the face of an abiding and often quite unreasonable pluralism. Schweber’s knowledge of contemporary debates is near-encyclopedic, and his dissection of the theoretical underpinnings of all major schools of deliberative democracy is compelling. His alternative of a ‘listener-centric’ theory of public justification proves a useful corrective to competing theories that end up, on closer examination, being either unduly inclusive or restrictive. In *Democracy and Authenticity*, Schweber has crafted a challenging new theory of deliberative democracy that political philosophers, constitutional scholars, and defenders of the politics of authenticity will have to take seriously.”

– Richard Boyd, Associate Professor of Government, Georgetown University; author of *Uncivil Society: The Perils of Pluralism and the Making of Modern Liberalism*

“Professor Schweber has written an exceptionally erudite study of justification in a liberal culture. His assertion that liberalism often requires a certain inauthenticity is original, fascinating, and a challenge to much contemporary orthodoxy.”

– Mark Graber, Professor of Law and Government, University of Maryland, Carey School of Law; author of *Dred Scott and the Problem of Constitutional Evil*

“Tribalism is not an arcane premodern phenomenon but rather a trait to be found in democracies as different as those of Pakistan, Israel, and the United States, notes Howard Schweber. Defending liberal concerns about the deleterious impact of tribalism on politics, Schweber treats likely critics and allies with equal seriousness as he makes the case for practices of public justification (not public reason) that are neither subjectivist nor perfectionist. Even those of us who have argued against treating justification as the essential work of political theory will be compelled to reconsider after reading this ambitious and fair-minded book.”

– Bonnie Honig, author of *Emergency Politics: Paradox, Law, Democracy*

“A fierce defense of liberalism. Schweber warns against the politics of authenticity and accommodations of pluralism that go too far.”

– Robert L. Tsai, Professor of Law, American University, and author of *Eloquence and Reason*

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