



The Order of Public Reason: A Theory of Freedom and Morality in a Diverse and Bounded World

By Gerald Gaus

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In this innovative and important work, Gerald Gaus advances a revised, and more realistic, account of public reason liberalism, showing how, in the midst of fundamental disagreement about values and moral beliefs, we can achieve a moral and political order that treats all as free and equal moral persons. The first part of this work analyzes social morality as a system of authoritative moral rules. Drawing on an earlier generation of moral philosophers such as Kurt Baier and Peter Strawson as well as current work in the social sciences, Gaus argues that our social morality is an evolved social fact, which is the necessary foundation of a mutually beneficial social order. The second part considers how this system of social moral authority can be justified to all moral persons. Drawing on the tools of game theory, social choice theory, experimental psychology, and evolutionary theory, Gaus shows how a free society can secure a moral equilibrium that is endorsed by all, and how a just state respects, and develops, such an equilibrium.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The Order of Public Reason is one of the most ambitious and accomplished works in moral philosophy of the first decade of the new century. Gaus's command of the relevant literature in philosophy, economics, psychology, and elsewhere is daunting, and his ability to orchestrate a sustained argument leading from foundational postulates of the logic of practical reason to prescriptions for effective politics is altogether masterful."

Loren Lomasky, University of Virginia

"Gerald Gaus has written a refreshingly ambitious book that is both analytically rigorous and conscientiously engaged with the history of political philosophy. Drawing upon considerations from economics, psychology, evolutionary theory, social epistemology, and meta-ethics, Gaus advances an original view of the moral principles that provide the groundwork for a liberal society. He then endeavors to show that these basic principles can be justified to all, despite the enduring moral disagreements that are inevitable among free persons. Tightly argued and elegantly written, *The Order of Public Reason* will launch a new round of debates over liberalism. Readers will find ample occasion for disagreement with Gaus, but no one will emerge from these pages without having learned a great deal. With this book, Gerald Gaus makes a profound contribution not only to political theory, but to philosophy as such."

Robert Talisse, Vanderbilt University

"Much of the best contemporary work in moral theory falls in two hitherto separate camps, a Kantian camp that seeks to derive a universal morality via rational deliberation and a Humean camp that seeks to account for moral norms as the product of cultural evolution. In *The Order of Public Reason*, Gerald Gaus argues forcefully that moral philosophers need to draw inspiration from both Hume and Kant. Gaus integrates large parts of the recent rational deliberation and evolutionary traditions in ethics, demonstrating that one can both explain social morality as an evolved equilibrium and justify this equilibrium as a system of norms a community of free and equal persons can endorse. Gaus has given us a pioneering study that incorporates an extraordinary range of works of moral philosophers both in and out of current fashion together with the most important relevant tools from the social sciences. *The Order of Public Reason* is vintage Gaus."

Peter Vanderschraaf, University of California, Merced

"Gaus's book is highly complex and stimulating, covering a daunting range of topics. It provides, I believe, the most complete and rigorous defense of classical liberalism available to date, and will certainly spark an industry of debate, elaboration, and discussion. It deserves to do so. I have been able to touch on only a small number of the interesting topics in the book and to note only a few of my disagreements. I learned from nearly every page. It would be an excellent book to anchor a graduate seminar in moral or political philosophy ..."

Notre Dame Philosophical Review

"Gaus' work carries the discussion of public reason to a philosophical depth it has not reached since Rawls's work on the subject."

Paul Weithman, Public Affairs Quarterly

"With typical insight, eloquence, and accessibility, Gaus innovatively and productively engages one of the most fundamental and difficult dilemmas confronting contemporary philosophers and societies. *The Order of*

Public Reason is a brilliant treatise that will surely serve as a fundamental resource for all serious future debate and scholarship concerning the idea and practice of social morality."

Shaun P. Young, Political Studies Review

"Gerald Gaus' *The Order of Public Reason: A Theory of Freedom and Morality in a Diverse and Bounded World* is a big book in its title and its length and much more importantly in its intellectual ambition, breadth, complexity, and power. Gaus draws upon an extensive knowledge of recent and not so recent moral and political philosophy, game theory, moral psychology, experimental economics, experimental philosophy, and evolutionary theory."

Criminal Law and Philosophy

About the Author

Gerald Gaus is currently the James E. Rogers Professor of Philosophy at the University of Arizona. He was previously Professor of Philosophy and Political Economy at Tulane University. He is the author of a number of books, including *On Philosophy, Politics, and Economics* (2008), *Contemporary Theories of Liberalism* (2003) and *Justificatory Liberalism* (1996). He has been an editor of the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* and was a founding editor of *Politics, Philosophy & Economics*. His essay 'On Justifying the Moral Rights of the Moderns' won the 2009 American Philosophical Association's Kavka Award.

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