

On Being Inside Social Morality and Seeing It

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Abstract Eric Mack’s “Inside Public Reason” is thorough and fair-minded review of *The Order of Public Reason*. My deep thanks to him for his insights, as well as his judiciousness. In these remarks I cannot take up all the important matters he raises; in particular I put aside two important issues—the analysis of the political and discussion of how contingent social processes play a fundamental role in public justification (Fred D’Agostino focuses on this second feature of *The Order of Public Reason* in his “The Orders of Public Reason,” *Analytical Philosophy*, forthcoming.). I plan to take up the latter on another occasion.

Keywords Mack Eric · The Order of Public Reason · Public reason · Social morality · Moral authority · Rights · Moral rules

On Not Seeing What is in Front of Us

As Mack observes, *The Order of Public Reason* is a long book. It is long partly because, in comparison to most works in social and political philosophy, it employs a rather wide array of tools and methods to model what a free social morality would look like. However, it is also long because in an odd way its subject matter became invisible in late twentieth/early twenty-first century moral philosophy, and much of the book is devoted to trying to get us to see it again. I say “again” because earlier moral philosophers such as the Hume, Hegel, Mill,¹ and more recently Kurt Baier and P.F.

¹ Mack writes: “However, unlike Mill, Gaus thinks that we need *authoritative* (and non-political) moral rules and that such authoritative rules can be publically justified. Hence, in a departure from Mill that I do not think he notes, Gaus holds that some of what Mill called ‘moral coercion’ is publically justified.” (Mack 2013) The implication here is that Mill does not think that some moral coercion can be so justified; but recall that Mill writes: “The object of this Essay is to assert one very simple principle, as entitled to govern absolutely the dealings of society with the individual in the way of compulsion and control, whether the

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