



# In Our Name: The Ethics of Democracy

*Eric Beerbohm*

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## **In Our Name: The Ethics of Democracy** Eric Beerbohm

When a government in a democracy acts in our name, are we, as citizens, responsible for those acts? What if the government commits a moral crime? The protestor's slogan--"Not in our name!"--testifies to the need to separate ourselves from the wrongs of our leaders. Yet the idea that individual citizens might bear a special responsibility for political wrongdoing is deeply puzzling for ordinary morality and leading theories of democracy. *In Our Name* explains how citizens may be morally exposed to the failures of their representatives and state institutions, and how complicity is the professional hazard of democratic citizenship. Confronting the ethical challenges that citizens are faced with in a self-governing democracy, Eric Beerbohm proposes institutional remedies for dealing with them.

Beerbohm questions prevailing theories of democracy for failing to account for our dual position as both citizens and subjects. Showing that the obligation to participate in the democratic process is even greater when we risk serving as accomplices to wrongdoing, Beerbohm argues for a distinctive division of labor between citizens and their representatives that charges lawmakers with the responsibility of incorporating their constituents' moral principles into their reasoning about policy. Grappling with the practical issues of democratic decision making, *In Our Name* engages with political science, law, and psychology to envision mechanisms for citizens seeking to avoid democratic complicity.

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