

SYMPOSIUM
REPUBLICANISM BETWEEN JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY



REPUBLICANISM AND STABILITY

BY
NATHAN BURROUGHS

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Nathan Burroughs

A key theme of the classical republican tradition is the problem of regime stability: whether a just government is capable of surviving across generations in the face of internal tumult and external aggression. Ancient and early modern writers gave considerable attention to the features required to sustain a popular regime, highlighting the importance of a virtuous, active citizenry dedicated to the common good, and the material conditions necessary to limit class conflict and cultivate civic virtue. Despite the profound changes over the last several centuries, whether democratic regimes are sustainable over time remains an open question.

In this work I build on the classical tradition and the contributions of more recent authors¹ to develop an account of stability that challenges two prominent forms of contemporary republicanism: the neo-Roman republicanism of Pettit,² and liberal republicanism based on interpretations of the late Rawls.³

¹ R. Dagger, *Civic Virtues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997); I. Honohan, *Civic Republicanism* (London: Routledge 2002). J. McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006).

² P. Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997).

³ A. Francisco, "A Republican Interpretation of the Late Rawls," *Journal of Political Philosophy* Vol. 14, n. 3 (2006): pp. 270-288; J. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge: Belknap Press (2000); A. Thomas, *Value and Context* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 2006).

I

Stability in the Republican Tradition

In what has become a vast secondary literature, a number of different themes have been proposed as representing the key feature of republicanism, including liberty as non-domination, political participation, civic virtue, and the mixed regime. The distinctiveness of republicanism from liberalism has also been a subject of considerable debate. Republicanism itself has been distinguished between a more perfectionist conception influenced by Aristotle,⁴ and a realist republicanism informed by Machiavelli.⁵

In this paper I focus on one strand of republican thinking that cuts across these categories: the problem of stability. The difficulty of preserving a popular government has long concerned political theorists, but writers in the republican tradition have written most extensively on the problem of regime stability. I focus on two republican thinkers representing quite different brands of republicanism: Aristotle and Machiavelli. Despite their differences, they share a very similar view about the qualities that promote the durability of a free state.

My aim is not to identify the “real” republicanism or give an authoritative interpretation Aristotle, Machiavelli, or other republican writers. My purpose is to explain how particular strands of thought among republican authors can be synthesized into a concern of contemporary importance: how democratic regimes can preserve their democratic character. The goal is to lay out a plausible argument inspired by this tradition, rather than

⁴ M. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1982); R. Dagger, *Civic Virtues*.

⁵ Q. Skinner, “Machiavelli on the Maintenance of Liberty,” *Political Science* Vol. 18, n. 2 (1984): pp. 3-15. P. Pettit, *Republicanism*.

determine through detailed exegesis what Aristotle or Machiavelli might suggest. Just as contemporary neo-Aristoteleans have abandoned Aristotle's sexism and ethnocentrism, or neo-Machiavellians have rejected militarism, I believe that the republican tradition *as a whole* can be used to develop a serious challenge to modern democratic theory.

In Aristotle's *Politics*⁶, political stability is about more than maintaining order, but preserving a "correct" regime characterized by the rule of law and governance on behalf of the common good. These are distinguished from deviant regimes where the rulers act primarily in their own interest. According to Aristotle, the two most common types of corrupt regimes are oligarchies and democracies. In each the ruling element adheres to a flawed conception of justice: wealth for oligarchies and free birth in democracies.

Conflicts over political justice are strongly influenced by economic circumstances. In Aristotle's theory material conditions have a profound effect on the political psychology of individuals and the political sociology of communities. He argues that great wealth encourages the vices of factionalism, arrogance, and an inability to be ruled by others, while poverty results in servility and an inability to rule oneself or others. Because they both suffer from extremes of wealth, having either too much or too little, both the rich and the poor lack the cooperative virtues necessary for good citizenship. The empirical conditions of states shape the

⁶ Aristotle, *The Politics*, translated by Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1984). In interpreting Aristotle's views I follow Coby, Kraut, and Cherry, among others. P. Coby, "Aristotle's Three Cities and the Problem of Faction," *Journal of Politics* Vol. 50, n. 4 (1988): pp. 896-919; R. Kraut, *Aristotle: Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002); K. Cherry, "The Problem of Polity: Political Participation and Aristotle's Best Regime," *Journal of Politics* Vol. 71, n. 4 (2009): pp. 1406-1421.

nature of the citizenry and limit the possibilities for a just political order. Great inequality and changes in the relative importance of economic classes are among the chief causes of instability. Aristotle also implies that the behavior and size of economic groups contributes to the role they play in political life, but that wealthy are always critical. When dominant they compete with one another, and in a democracy they may subvert the state in an effort to preserve their wealth or enhance their political status.

Aristotle argues that a large and self-sufficient middle class provides the best chance for a durable and reasonably just regime likely to be found in the real world. Cities which are more just will also be more stable. Extending his usual practice in ethics to the design of states, Aristotle praises the mean against the deviant extremes. Citizens of the middling type are less prone to faction and more capable of ruling and being ruled in turn. If they don't possess the full range of virtues found in the best regime, they at least are capable of exercising the virtues of good citizenship. Aristotle also advocates for a system of common education that fosters these civic virtues. Finally, Aristotle's polity gives scope for influence by the free born, wealthy, and the virtuous elite within political institutions with a mixed regime that blend elements of oligarchic and democratic constitutions. While high offices are generally held by the well-born, the citizenry as a whole holds sway in the assembly, juries, and elections.

Aristotle suggests political stability is always advanced by public-spiritedness and moderate laws. Even deviant regimes benefit from temperate behavior by its rulers and serving the common good rather than indulging in domination, while oligarchies and democracies are made more stable by adding features more like the other. An educational system that inculcates moderation and basic virtues appears to buttress nearly any sort of regime.

With respect to the sources of political instability, the Machiavelli⁷ of the *Discourses* has much in common with Aristotle. Like Aristotle, he argues that “the great” in society are prone to ambition and conspiracies, and that while material equality makes for free governments, great inequality makes it difficult to sustain republics. The nobility are contrasted with the people, who possess considerable political wisdom and desire only not to be dominated. Machiavelli highlights the danger of corruption, which is contrasted with patriotism, devotion to the common good, law-abidingness, and activity in public life. Citizens that are “accustomed to servitude” or concerned solely with wealth or their private affairs will find it difficult to preserve their freedom.

Machiavelli differs from Aristotle in some of his solutions to instability. Although he adopts many of the features of the mixed regime of shared powers, he emphasizes conflict rather than consensus. Citing the Roman Republic, he notes that it was the disputes between the Plebs and the Patricians that led to the creation of the Tribune and other means of checking aristocratic power. According to the interpretation of Brudney⁸ and Skinner⁹, rather than avoiding political conflict, Machiavelli advises that republics should institutionalize them by creating specifically class-specific institutions and relying on the self-interest of classes to preserve public liberty. Even more than Aristotle, Machiavelli emphasizes the essential mutability of political order—wars, economic change, personalities, and even trivial events all threaten to undermine regimes. Well-ordered

⁷ N. Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses* (Modern Library College Edition 1960).

⁸ K. Brudney, “Machiavelli on Social Class and Class Conflict,” *Political Theory* Vol. 12, n. 4 (1984): pp. 507-519.

⁹ Q. Skinner, “Machiavelli on the Maintenance of Liberty.”

republics require more than good laws and institutions to survive; they also require a good deal of luck.

Republicans like Cicero, Harrington, and Tocqueville also address the themes of popular participation in government, civic virtue, checking the wealthy elite, and the material prerequisites for a republican regime. Although there are significant differences among them, all note the importance of a public-spirited citizenry and the cultivating a concern for the common good¹⁰. Although contemporary democratic theorists echo many of these themes, their relation to the maintenance of a popular regime has received less emphasis. It is commonly held that republics require civic virtue, broad-based participation, a recognition of common obligations and interdependence, and that these psychological components are often fragile. However, these features are not generally incorporated into an overarching theory of stability.

Three contemporary theorists who give considerable attention to the prerequisites of a democratic regime are Honohan, Dagger, and McCormick. Dagger¹¹ argues that civic virtue is critical to the democratic project. Citizens should recognize their interdependence as members of a joint political community. He views a republic as an “assurance game” based on conditional altruism and widespread public trust, relying on public education to inculcate these attitudes. Dagger criticizes the “market model” of democratic citizenship, characterized by individual atomism and self-interest (i.e. corruption). Markets have a tendency to dominate politics, with the wealthy holding outsized influence.

¹⁰ See I. Honohan, *Civic Republicanism*, for an excellent review.

¹¹ R. Dagger, *Civic Virtues*; R. Dagger, “Neo-Republicanism and the Civic Economy,” *Politics, Philosophy, and Economics* Vol. 5, n. 2 (2006): pp. 151-173; R. Dagger, “Citizenship as Fairness: John Rawls’ Conception of Civic Virtue,” in J. Mandle and D. Reidy (eds.), *A Companion to Rawls*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2013) pp. 297-311.

He also calls for a “republican political economy” with widespread property-holding, limits on inequality of wealth, and a decent social minimum.

In synthesizing republican theory, Honohan¹² also emphasizes interdependence and the common good. Her list of civic virtues includes self-restraint, awareness, deliberative engagement, and solidarity. Following Machiavelli, Honohans claims that political participation is a precondition for achieving other goods. She is keenly aware of the fragility of public interest: corruption is an acute problem existing within individual persons as they weigh private interests against the public good. Honohan views equality in public deliberations the main avenue for citizen engagement and an essential component of a just regime. Political equality is partly based on rough economic equality; she argues that a degree of economic equality and individual self-sufficiency is necessary for the fraternity, independence, and political obligation necessary to sustain a republic.

McCormick¹³ adopts an explicitly Machiavellian framework for his political theory. In a populist interpretation of Machiavelli, McCormick places the control of the wealthy elite as a central aim of a democratic regime. He criticizes much contemporary (and republican) theory for focusing too much on controlling elected officials while ignoring the pervasive political influence of the wealthy. He also notes Machiavelli’s statements about the virtues of the people: their greater ability to identify the true public good, and capacity for making good decisions. McCormick believes that Pettit’s theory in particular is blind to the way in which appeals to

¹² I. Honohan, *Civic Republicanism*.

¹³ J. McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy*; J. McCormick, “Republicanism and Democracy,” in A. Niederberger and P. Schink (eds.), *Republican Democracy: Liberty, Law, and Politics* (Edinburgh University Press 2013), pp. 89-127. See also J. Maynor, *Republicanism in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity 2003).

the common good can conceal class domination. He argues that democratic regimes should institutionalize class conflict, adopting mechanisms like lotteries and a version of the Roman tribunate.

II

The Problem of the Wealthy

These elements of republican thought can be synthesized into a general account of stability suited to a modern, pluralistic society and consistent with a commitment to democracy. Stability in modern democratic states cannot simply be a question of preserving order, which can be accomplished through fear or manipulation. Instead, democratic stability is understood as the durability of the basic, essential features of a popular regime across time; one based on publicity and legitimacy. A stable democratic regime enjoys widespread, voluntary adherence to its institutions and the principles and norms which animate those institutions. To be stable a democracy must continue to exhibit essential characteristics like protection of individual liberties and scope for participation in policymaking by all citizens. It cannot be a democracy in name only. It must also be a “correct” regime in the Aristotelian sense, serving the common interest rather than that of any one class, while also maintaining the rule of law.

Threats to a democracy’s stability include external domination (through conquest or hegemony), civil conflict (intensifying rivalries among groups within society that can lead to civil war), usurpation (one group or individual seizing power), and perversion (retaining its formal democratic institutions but in reality being an oligarchy or tyranny). These dangers can be linked: for example, a bitter rivalry between groups may result in the establishment of a tyranny.

Each of these dangers are influenced by the political character of the citizenry. States with citizens willing to betray their state to a foreigner for personal or political gain, or who are unwilling to risk their lives in its defense, will more easily fall prey to conquerors. Citizens who view each other as enemies, holding group loyalties paramount, are more likely to engage in internal conflict, the subversion of the rule of law, and perhaps civil war. A passive citizenry will be more easily manipulated, or fail to stop some would-be tyrant, as would citizens embroiled in bitter internecine disputes. Or, focusing on their private affairs, they might let the regime slip incrementally into another form as a wealthy elite or powerful executive gradually consolidates power.

Much current literature involves the risks of general disengagement, or of the “motivation problem”—that the modern liberal regime may be unable to generate sufficient commitment compared with religious, racial, ethnic, and other group identities.¹⁴ From this perspective, civil conflict between rival groups appears to be the key danger facing democratic republics. By contrast, the long period since the last war between great powers, and the apparent entrenchment of democratic institutions, suggests that external domination and usurpation are lesser concerns, at least in wealthy countries.

Contemporary republican thinkers have generally focused on the attitudes and behavior of the people as a whole. However, Aristotle and Machiavelli placed at least equal priority on the character of society’s leaders, and particularly of the wealthy few. Republics have endured when this class is possessed by a sense of noblesse oblige, desire for external glory, or a healthy respect for commoners’ ability to rebel. Under such conditions they are more

¹⁴ M. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*; A. Thomas, *Value and Context*; C. Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1995).

likely to accept sharing power—or at least engage in less gross oppression.

Too often, however, the richest elements of society lack these virtues. Instead of serving the common good, Aristotle and Machiavelli believed them more likely to suborn the state, using the instruments of public power to pursue their private or class interests. In many respects the wealthy appear more vulnerable to corruption, and to a more vicious kind—using their influence to transform a mixed regime into an oligarchy. Hence a major theme in the classical republican tradition is the centrality of class politics: the permanent differences between the rich and poor, and the danger that a restive and corrupt wealthy class poses to popular government.

Preventing the domination of society by the wealthy few is a significant problem for Aristotle and Machiavelli and modern writers like McCormick. It rests on two contestable propositions: first, that the wealthy have greater capacity for influencing public affairs than other citizens; and second, that the wealthy are more prone to place private interests above the common good.

On the surface it might seem strange that in a modern democratic society with equal voting rights, wealthy citizens might possess greater political influence. Formally, equal votes means that elected representatives should have an incentive to cater to the interests of the poorer section of society, and that the elite are in danger of having their resources expropriated by an envious citizenry. However, a brief survey of actual democracies suggests that the wealthy do possess outsized political influence. Even the most egalitarian societies display strong concentrations of *wealth* even where there is considerable equality of *income*. There are a number of avenues by which the richer elements of society exert greater influence over politics. First, there is great range in the monetization of elections due to differences in campaign

finance laws. In a more deregulated system like the United States the wealthy presumably have more say in which candidates are viable. Second, the wealthy have greater leisure to pay attention to and participate in politics. They also have the resources to hire agents to further their political interests for them (rather than having to do so themselves), resulting in a skew of lobbying in favor of well-heeled groups and a proliferation of think tanks and advocacy groups championing their interests. As Mancur Olson¹⁵ argued, because there are fewer wealthy interests—with more concentrated objectives—it is easier for them to organize at the expense of the common interest of a diffuse public. Third, the formal guarantee of equal political liberty is of greater worth to those with greater resources.¹⁶ Access to the public forum through political advertising requires money to buy time on the radio, billboards, television, and the internet. Television spots on programs with the widest viewership can command far higher prices, effectively squeezing out the lesser-endowed. Fourth, consistent with Aristotle's claim, representative systems tend to result in the election of representatives who are themselves quite wealthy.¹⁷ Fifth, their greater resources allow the very wealthy to leverage their social position to bribe, intimidate, or wring concessions from political authorities. Elected officials may be promised lucrative rewards after they leave office, thus severing the link of popular accountability. Large corporations can threaten to relocate if their political demands are not met.

In sum, there is ample evidence that even in a relatively well-ordered democratic society, there are a variety of legitimate means

¹⁵ M. Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1965).

¹⁶ J. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*.

¹⁷ B. Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997). N. Carnes, *White Collar Government* (University Of Chicago Press 2013).

by which possessing great wealth gives a greater voice in public affairs. Political power may be a positional good,¹⁸ which are inherently competitive in nature and therefore vulnerable to bidding wars favoring the affluent.

The second proposition is that the wealthy are more likely to be self-interested—and hence that their greater power would be employed to the detriment of the republic. A recent theory developed by Kraus et al.¹⁹ proposes that the greater material resources and perceived social rank have significant psychological effects. Socioeconomic variation leads to major differences in the security, opportunity, constraint, and abundance individuals enjoy. Kraus et al. argue that low socioeconomic status (SES) results in a contextual, externally oriented psychology, while high SES encourages solipsistic and individualistic behavior. Because of their greater material security and opportunity to make use of their resources, the wealthy are less likely than others to exhibit compassion or empathy or to adopt communal strategies for solving problems. Citing a large empirical literature, they suggest that the affluent are more self-interested, self-absorbed, and likely to attribute social conditions to group characteristics or individual choices. Recent empirical research supporting the Kraus approach indicates that the wealthy have a more positive attitude about greed and are more likely to engage in unethical behavior;²⁰

¹⁸ F. Hirsch, *The Social Limits to Growth* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1977).

¹⁹ M. Kraus, P. Piff, R. Mendoza-Denton, M. Rheinschmidt, and D. Keltner, “Social Class, Solipsism, and Contextualism: How the Rich are Different from the Poor,” *Psychological Review* Vol. 119, n. 3 (2012): pp. 546-572.

²⁰ P. Piff, D. Stancato, S. Cote, R. Mendoza-Denton, and D. Keltner, “Higher Social Class Predicts Increased Unethical Behavior,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* Vol. 109, n. 11 (2012): pp. 4086-4091.

that high-SES individuals display higher levels of narcissism;²¹ and that personal wealth is a significant independent predictor of behavior by elected officials.²²

Rational choice theory also suggests that the wealthy may have a greater incentive to seek self-interested rewards from political engagement. As mentioned previously, Rawls and Honohan adopt a political psychology in which individuals are pulled between other-regarding and self-regarding motivations. Because the very rich have a greater capacity to exert influence, and the rewards are potentially so great (through government subsidies, favorable regulations, lower taxes, etc.), the lure of self-interest is particularly strong. According to Riker & Ordeshook's calculus of voting,²³ the probability that a person will engage in politics (vote) is equal to the expected benefits minus the expected costs, with benefits conditioned on the probability that one's personal intervention will affect the outcome. An additional "D" term signifies civic duty or the intrinsic worth of voting.

$$V = PB - C + D$$

For most people, the costs of making an informed voting decision are quite real (e.g. time, opportunity costs, acquiring sufficient information), much less volunteering, lobbying or more intense activities. Except in small communities, the probability that one's vote will determine the outcome is effectively zero, eliminating the "B" term. This formulation suggests that it is irrational to vote—and yet people do so, probably because they

²¹ P. Piff, "Wealth and the Inflated Self: Class, Entitlement, and Narcissism," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* Vol. 40, n. 1 (2014): pp. 34–43.

²² M. Kraus and B. Callaghan, "Noblesse Oblige? Social Status and Economic Inequality Maintenance Among Politicians," *PLoS ONE* Vol. 10, n. 2 (2014).

²³ W. Riker and P. Ordeshook, "A Theory of the Calculus of Voting," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 62, n. 1 (1968): pp. 25-42.

believe it is their duty to do so.²⁴ As it stands, a robust sense of civic duty is required if the citizenry is likely to participate in politics. Otherwise there is a strong possibility of general disengagement from public affairs, precisely as republicans have traditionally argued. Further, benefits can come in a variety of forms (ideological, material, group-based etc.), but I would contend that narrow, self-interested gains would likely weigh quite lightly on the average citizen because of the small chance that one's vote is decisive.

For the wealthy, however, the size of the benefits (B) is much larger, and the probability that one's actions will shape the outcome greater (P), which means that they both have a higher propensity to participate in politics (directly or through agents) and to do so on self-interested grounds.

One objection might be that, although the wealthy might be self-interested, they may focus on their rivalries with other members of their own class. The general run of citizen could throw their collective political weight behind elites favoring their interests, or play them off one another. This is Madison's argument in the Federalist Papers: that the people can act as the arbiter among factions. Setting aside the difficulties of organizing "the people" (i.e. Olson's collective action problem), there is the possibility that the elite would bury their differences if a serious attempt was made to restrict their wealth. Winters²⁵ echoes Machiavelli and Aristotle in arguing that in some respects all regimes are oligarchies, with the wealthy classes in modern democracies accepting (formal) political equality in exchange for the preservation of their personal fortunes—and the threat that they would subvert the regime if that wealth was endangered.

²⁴ A. Blais and C. Achen, "Taking Civic Duty Seriously: Political Theory and Voter Turnout," unpublished manuscript (2010).

²⁵ J. A. Winters, *Oligarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2011).

Political stalemate might not be enough to prevent the concentration of wealth. In times of peace and relative political calm, there appears to be a strong tendency for wealth to become concentrated in fewer hands. The stability of the Roman Empire saw a dizzying accumulation of wealth in the senatorial class. Piketty²⁶ has argued that capitalism has a similar dynamic, one concealed in the twentieth century by the destruction of private wealth from world wars, depressions, and revolutions. He argues that without policy changes, we are likely to see a return of rentier capitalism and a stratified society. According to Hacker & Pierson²⁷ political deadlock in the U.S. and the advent of “policy drift” have resulted in the failure of government policy to keep pace with economic changes—and hence to the growth of economic inequality. The result is a feedback loop, with economic inequality leading to greater political inequality and hence to even more economic inequality.

III

Strategies for Limiting the Influence of the Wealthy

Republican thinkers have proposed several approaches for constraining the political influence of the wealthy. These fall into four distinct types:

1. *Prevention.* The most straightforward mechanism for blocking the development of oligarchy is to maintain broad economic equality, such that the wealthy are small in number and lack access to massive resources. Aristotle saw this

²⁶ T. Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2014).

²⁷ J. Hacker and P. Pierson, *Winner-Take-All Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster 2005).

primarily as a matter of good fortune, but laws could certainly facilitate it. Examples include wealth and inheritance taxes and bans on primogeniture and entail. Property-owning democracy and anti-trust and anti-monopoly legislation are modern examples.

2. *Institutionalization.* The modern “mixed regime” differs greatly from its historical forebears, which were structured to explicitly represent the interests of different economic classes. For example the Tribune of the Plebs and the Athenian Ecclesia were both intended to serve the commons, while the Senate served the interests of the wealthy elite. Contemporary republics have multicameral institutions with a different logic, representing territories (like the U.S. Senate) or expertise (e.g. appointed judges, different term lengths). Moderns place greater reliance on electoral accountability through equal voting and regular elections. This approach has been sharply criticized by McCormick as conceding greater political weight to the wealthy.

3. *Insulation.* This approach places legal and institutional limits on the conversion of wealth into political power. It is the most popular approach in the modern period, leading to campaign finance laws, regulation of the media, and restrictions on lobbying. This strategy has the most limited pedigree in the republican tradition, being akin to laws such as public audits, formally equal access to all offices, the elimination of class-dominated social institutions such as the traditional Athenian tribes by Cleisthenes, or the shifting of legislative power from the Centuriate to the Plebian Assembly in Rome.

4. *Representation*. Often linked to the Institutionalization strategy²⁸, representation attempts to ensure that political institutions include members from a broad cross-section of society to ensure descriptive representation, and hence to prevent the wealthier segments of society from monopolizing public office. Traditionally this was accomplished by two means. The first are direct popular assemblies such as the Athenian Ecclesia, in which all citizens were encouraged to participate. The second is the use of sortition, with representatives selected by lot, resulting in a legislature containing more middle and lower-class individuals than the elite backgrounds found in contemporary assemblies. These methods have generally fallen out of favor over the last several centuries, with some exceptions. The use of multi-member districts and proportional representation increase the probability that a wider range of opinions will be represented in the halls of government, while in the U.S. electoral districts must be drawn so as to ensure the representation of certain minorities. However, these mechanisms focus on representing ethnic rather than economic diversity. No modern democracy secures descriptive legislative representation of the poor and middle classes. A second modern version is the referendum, where laws are directly voted on by the people. However, like elections, referenda may also be disproportionately influenced by a wealthy elite.

Underlying each of these approaches is an attempt to ensure equality in public deliberations—a more substantive goal than formal political equality. The insulation, representation, and

²⁸ Technically there is nothing to prevent elites in support of the poor from representing them in contestatory institutions—those institutions are characterized by an active defense of popular interests, rather than the general population actually participating in policymaking.

institutionalization strategies limit the ability of privileged interests from using public institutions to private advantage by restricting their ability to convert material into political advantage (insulation), creating populist political institutions that expressing the will of the commons (institutionalization), and ensuring that public offices are solely populated by the elite (representation). All three are essentially reactive, seeking to constrain the influence of the wealthy on public affairs. The prevention strategy is far more aggressive in trying to prevent the emergence (or weaken) a large, entrenched, wealthy class.

Insulation is one of the more popular means of promoting greater political equality among egalitarian theorists, whether from the republican or other traditions.²⁹ Even thinkers that advocate for a broader distribution of wealth³⁰ justify property-owning democracy on grounds other than political equality because they believe walling off politics from money is feasible. However, there is reason to question how easy it is to limit the influence of the wealthy no matter how strict the laws are. Dagger³¹ argued that a republican political economy would require direct limits on the distribution of wealth (the prevention strategy) in part because insulating politics is so difficult. In a capitalist society there are simply too many avenues for the market to infect public discourse. The tortured history of U.S. campaign finance, and the slow retreat of social democracy in the

²⁹ H. Brighouse, “Egalitarianism and Equal Availability of Political Influence,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* Vol. 4, n. 2 (1996): pp. 118-141; T. Christiano, *The Rule of The Many: Fundamental Issues in Democratic Theory* (Boulder: Westview Press 1996); T. Christiano, *The Constitution of Equality: Democratic Authority and Its Limits* (Oxford University Press 2008).

³⁰ M. O’Neill, “Free (and Fair) Markets with Capitalism,” in Martin O’Neill and Thad Williamson, *Property-Owning Democracy: Rawls and Beyond* (Oxford: Wiley 2012) pp. 75-100.

³¹ R. Dagger, “Neo-Republicanism and the Civic Economy.”

face of neoliberalism, suggest that one way or another money will make its voice heard. Insulation may be a useful precondition for egalitarian politics, but is probably not sufficient for it.

It could be argued that the wealthy are less dangerous in modern republics because they are no longer in possession of landed estates, lacking the concentrated resource base and retainers they had in pre-capitalist eras. However, modern corporations pose a similar problem, as long-lasting institutions disposing of great financial and human resources. Corporations are generally managed and run by the wealthiest in society. Their hierarchical organization (especially where there are weak unions) is likely to cultivate dominating attitudes in management and subservience in labor.

The focus on equality in political deliberations also explains the great emphasis republicans have traditionally placed on participation:³² widespread participation is necessary to ensure political equality. Most democratic theorists embrace considerable political equality, but argue that participation should be an “option value.”³³ Citizens should have an equal opportunity to wield equal influence in public affairs (theorists differ as to what the scope of “equal influence” should be) but are not required to do so.³⁴ Every member of the community has a *right* but not necessarily an *obligation* to participate. Democratic theorists have generally accepted the importance of a division of labor in

³² L. Andronache, *Contemporary Republican Strategies for ‘Civic Virtue’ and the Notion of Political Obligation*, unpublished dissertation (2008).

³³ A. Thomas, *Value and Context*.

³⁴ J. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: a Restatement*. H. Brighouse, “Egalitarianism and Equal Availability of Political Influence;”. T. Christiano, *The Rule of The Many*; A. Thomas, *Value and Context*.

political life,³⁵ with those more interested in devoting themselves to public service being free to do so.

Republicans, however, call for equal political functioning rather than equal capability to function in politics.³⁶ The difference lies partly in other democratic theorists' conceiving of participation in public life in individual terms, rather than as a required for the proper operation of republican institutions.³⁷ If activity in public affairs is not considered a moral duty, then the greater incentives and capabilities the affluent possess will result in a political class that is not representative of the population at large, one overly sensitive to elite interests. The outcome will be a democratic republic that fails to honor a key feature of democracy—that in public affairs each citizen's voice should be given equal weight. While hypothetically sortition could maintain a division of labor between the political classes and the population at large while maintaining descriptive representation, the selection of public officials by lot has largely fallen out of favor.³⁸

The republican model for promoting equality in public deliberations also calls for a great degree of civic virtue in the common citizen. One component of "civic virtue" would be a willingness to attend to public affairs, but the republican approach calls for much more than this. A society could enjoy

³⁵ T. Christiano, *The Rule of The Many*; J. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: a Restatement*.

³⁶ D. Crocker, "Sen and Deliberative Democracy," in Alexander Kaufman (ed.) *Capabilities Equality: Basic Issues and Problems* (London: Routledge 2006) pp. 155-197.

³⁷ A. Francisco, "A Republican Interpretation of the Late Rawls."

³⁸ Objections to sortition include concerns that randomly selected officials would lack sufficient expertise, and that since they would not be eligible for re-election, they would lack public accountability. While I question whether these objections are decisive, there is as yet little groundswell among theorists or the general public to revive selection by lot.

massive and intense participation by citizens (voting, closely tracking political affairs in the press, attending protests and marches)—but purely in the pursuit of group advantage. For example, a mobilized population could define all political contests as a zero-sum contest between rival ethnic groups. Civic virtue also requires disinterestedness, with political deliberation focused on identifying the common good and respecting individual liberties and the limits of human reason. The challenge for republicans lies in determining how these attributes are to be encouraged. One possibility is a robust system of public education that cultivates civic virtues in future citizens.³⁹ The expectation that they will participate in public affairs may also motivate greater attention to politics, and growing up in a civic culture in which all engage in common endeavors may encourage the proper virtues through the development of social capital.⁴⁰ The influence of material conditions on political psychology is another factor that may encourage reasonableness among citizens, if a middle class with reasonable economic independence is indeed more likely to possess the requisite characteristics.⁴¹

It should be emphasized, however, that adequate civic virtue remains a serious problem. Public education, a broad middle class, and other devices can only encourage the right traits in

³⁹ V. Costa, *Rawls, Citizenship, and Education* (London: Routledge 2011). R. Curren, *Aristotle on the Necessity of Public Education* (London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2000).

⁴⁰ R. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster 2000); R. Dagger, *Civic Virtues*.

⁴¹ Although see White (2012), who citing Tocqueville suggests that a property-owning democracy may encourage more rather than less materially motivated self-interest. White, S. (2012). "Property-Owning Democracy and Republican Citizenship." In *Property-Owning Democracy: Rawls and Beyond*. Edited by Martin O'Neill and Thad Williamson pp. 129-146.

citizens—not guarantee them. Although civic virtue remains a precondition for a stable republic, there is no certainty that this precondition will hold across generations or in the face of crises. Further, republicanism’s contention that the wealthy are especially prone to corruption means that that every democratic regime contains within it a potentially subversive force. The ones we would most like to possess the virtues of reasonability, restraint, and a commitment to political equality are the ones least likely to do so.

In this respect the republican concern for stability recognizes the fundamental fragility of popular government. Republicanism may be understood as a challenge to the possibility of full compliance or the maintenance of favorable background conditions across generations—in other words as a challenge to the possibility of ideal theory as understood by Rawls. The stability problem identified by republicans can also be viewed as part of the process of reflective equilibrium, in which the prospects for a theory must be adjusted in light of the “basic facts of society.” A democratic theory that fails to address the problem of oligarchy—and hence the questionable durability of democracies—lack an adequate grounding in political psychology and political sociology, and should be modified accordingly.

III

Pettit’s Republicanism and Democratic Stability

Pettit’s version of republicanism is founded on the conception of liberty as non-domination, contrasted with liberty as non-interference. Non-domination involves actual and potential for constraint by either a government (*imperium*) or individuals (*dominium*). Pettit rejects positive liberty (as self-rule or autonomy), although he argues that it will be encouraged in a

republican state. Political participation is instrumental, valued not for its intrinsic worth, but because it guarantees other goods. Although Pettit makes use of the common good, it is very similar to the enlightenment idea of “enlightened self-interest,” in that a proper understanding of one’s own interest will dispose one to respecting individual liberty (as non-domination) and republican government. Pettit also describes his theory as consequentialist, designed to maximize non-domination, rather than a procedural conception akin to Rawls.

By maximizing non-domination Pettit believes he can accomplish a number of goals of egalitarian and democratic theory. He thinks that maximizing non-domination will promote status equality among citizens (using an “eyeball test”). Non-domination can also ground democracy, in that popular control of government can legitimate democracy, relying on electoral accountability of representatives, mixed powers, and contestatory institutions. The coercive power of governments are consistent with individual liberty when they track the common good of citizens, which can be approximated by republican institutions and the policy-making norms likely to be fostered by democratic processes.

How does Pettit cope with the problem of regime stability in general, and McCormick’s claim that his theory is vulnerable to elite cooption? Pettit’s notion of stability is primarily oriented towards the psychological feasibility of a given political order; the degree to which persons can be realistically expected to live up to what is expected of them by republican theory. Pettit agrees with the traditional republican claim that individuals are corruptible, but not inescapably corrupt. He concentrates on the corruptibility of officeholders and the risk of imperium, but he does discuss the beliefs of regular citizens as well. In his recent work, Pettit lays out a theory of long-term democratic stability based on

agreement about the norms governing the policymaking process as a whole (akin to Rawls' public reason), with individual or group interests holding sway with regard to particular political outcomes.⁴²

Pettit clearly recognizes the threat posed by what he calls "private lobbies" in suborning the state to private interests, identifying "elitist pressure" as a serious problem for democratic government.⁴³ Along with the usual solutions to insulate public deliberations (campaign finance and lobbying laws, publicly supported media) he suggests that the legislature should include a broad range of voices and recommends contestatory institutions like ombudsmen, but not *class-based* representation. Pettit leaves limited scope for descriptively representative political institutions, citing "citizen's juries" as a supplement to the policymaking process. To prevent imperium he relies, electoral accountability and positive social norms and "honors," and the risk of rebellion. Pettit briefly mentions that preventing excessive concentration of holdings may be necessary, but in his earlier work downplays the importance of equality in material possessions. He goes further in his 2012 work, calling for equal resources to support basic liberties and public investments in infrastructure, social insurance, and education. However, these are all in the service of equal social relations, not equalization of political functioning.

Pettit certainly doesn't ignore the problem of elite co-option, and his theory has the resources to strengthen the democratic features of his neo-republicanism without fundamentally altering it. Pettit leaves open the best means for blocking elite influence.

⁴² Pettit, P. (2012). *On the People's Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.

⁴³ Pettit 1997. Pettit, P. (2004). "The Common Good." In *Justice and Democracy: Essays for Brian Barry*. Edited by K. Dowding, R. Goodin, and C. Pateman. pp. 151-169. Cambridge University Press.

His best response might be to incorporate class-based elements in his system of countervailing institutions, an approach quite in line with traditional republican practice. He could give a stronger role for citizen's juries and other contestatory institutions selected by lot, and incorporate something like McCormick's tribunate (a panel of randomly selected citizens with the power to veto laws). A diverse legislature could also include representatives of different economic strata.

Further, by incorporating the political liberties in the list of basic liberties that must be equally resourced, Pettit's neorepublicanism can be made more economically egalitarian. Pettit argues that democratic legitimacy is based on equal availability of political influence: all citizens who wish to engage in politics should have an equal voice when they choose to do so. Although Pettit does not include the potential for political influence among the basic liberties, there are good reasons why he should do so. If material inequalities translate into political inequalities, the greater political influence of the wealthy could be minimized by limiting extremes of wealth. This approach would strip Pettit's theory of much of its sufficientarian character by increasing the social minimum required to achieve sufficiency, largely collapsing the difference between it and a more straightforwardly egalitarian approach.

The more serious difficulties for Pettit's theory are his conceptions of civic virtue⁴⁴ and political participation. Pettit's places great weight on the social norms prevalent in a neo-Roman society to restrain citizens and officeholders and inculcate identification with the political community. The norm of civility is intended to create social links with other distinct groups in society. However, a reliance on social trust would seem to

⁴⁴ See also V. Costa, "Neo-republicanism, freedom and non-domination, and citizen virtue," *Politics, Philosophy, and Economics* Vol. 8, n. 4 (2009): pp. 401-419.

conflict with the grounds of political loyalty in Pettit's model. Citizens' support of the political order is based on the recognition that it is in their personal interest to support non-domination for all. Self-interest is thus an important mediator of political identification in Pettit's theory. But what happens when calculations of self-interest are not so straightforwardly in favor of supporting non-domination—for example when one has the resources to secure non-domination for oneself or one's group while safely dominating others? Pettit also emphasizes the virtue of vigilance, which has a decidedly individualist, defensive character. Yet vigilance need not be directed solely at blocking the imperium of the state in solidarity with the general body of citizens. It can easily be directed against a rival social group in solidarity with one's own group. In short, Pettit's theory is vulnerable to the "motivation problem" that adherence to the state—and to one's fellow citizens as a whole—may be less persuasive than adherence to one's subsection of society.⁴⁵ Another problem is that society's privileged may see it in their rational self-interest to defend their class interests ahead of the community as a whole. By adopting a personalized conception of political obligation based on individual self-interest, Pettit may be *facilitating* the appetite for domination among the wealthiest citizens, especially since this class will largely populate the institutions of a representative democracy. Pettit's suggestion that a desire for honor and fear of rebellion will restrain a corrupt governing class is rather weak tea given the massive opportunities for enrichment and oppression available to the managers of the modern nation-state.

Pettit's approach to political participation is also problematic. He sharply distinguishes positive liberty, i.e. freedom as self-governance, from freedom as non-domination. Instead of

⁴⁵ C. Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*.

political participation being constitutive of freedom, Pettit calls for equal availability of political influence, treating engagement in public as an option value, not a moral obligation. For Pettit, citizens' unwillingness to participate in politics is not viewed as a serious problem:

My [political] inaction may be prompted by laziness rather than acceptance, of course, but that is my personal failure, not a failure of the system. The system may reasonably be required to provide me with the knowledge and opportunity for political action but it cannot be faulted, and cannot be held to be dominating, just because I am too lazy to be active myself.⁴⁶

What Pettit's approach neglects is the differential incentives of upper, middle, and lower class citizens to engage in public affairs. There is a presumption that involvement in politics is the product of laziness or indifference, rather than a mix of rational self-interest and civic duty. However, the greater relative influence and rewards enjoyed by the most affluent citizens gives them a far stronger incentive to participate in politics compared with other citizens, meaning that (to paraphrase E.E. Schattschneider⁴⁷) the voices heard in public deliberations will have an upper class accent. At the same time, the failure to incorporate a notion of civic duty to participate in politics will make it much *less* likely that other citizens will be politically engaged. Pettit's theory has no solution for the collective action problem of ensuring equal political functioning. Instead, many of its attributes, and in particular as its grounding of political legitimacy on individual self-interest, will likely exacerbate this problem. Pettit's republicanism therefore fails to restrain socially powerful groups

⁴⁶ J. L. Mart, and P. Pettit, *Political Philosophy in Public Life: Civic Republicanism in Zapatero's Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2010), p. 59.

⁴⁷ E.E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America* (Boston: Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1960).

from coopting public power; that *imperium* will merge with *dominium*.

IV

Rawlsian Republicanism

My understanding of the republican concern for democratic stability is closely akin to Rawls' understanding of classical republicanism:

...unless there is widespread participation in democratic politics by a vigorous and informed citizen body moved in good part by a concern for political justice and the public good, even the best designed political institutions will eventually fall into the hands of those who hunger for power and military glory, or pursue narrow class and economic interests...⁴⁸

Rawls distinguishes classical republicanism from civic humanism, which privileges political life over other forms of the good and is therefore ruled out as a comprehensive doctrine unable to serve as the basis of an overlapping consensus. Because it is not a perfectionist doctrine, Rawls believes that classical republicanism is consistent with political liberalism.⁴⁹ A vein of research has developed a republican interpretation of Rawls work, especially in *Political Liberalism* and *Justice as Fairness*. Rawls'

⁴⁸ J. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: a Restatement*, p. 144.

⁴⁹ Patten, Richardson, and Costa have all argued that Pettit's version of republicanism, can be assimilated into Rawls' theory. However, Pettit's focus on non-domination is distinct from the version of republicanism I have focused on in this work. T. Patten, "The Republican Critique of Liberalism," *British Journal of Political Science* Vol. 26, n. 1: pp. 25-44; H. Richardson, "Republicanism and Democratic Injustice," *Politics, Philosophy, and Economics* Vol. 5 (2006): pp. 175-200; V. Costa, "Rawls on Liberty and Domination," *Res Publica* Vol. 15 (2009): pp. 397-413.

conception of citizenship and civic virtue, the fair worth of the political liberties, his notion of political liberties and the importance of reasonability, and his advocacy of property-owning democracy are all distinctly republican themes.⁵⁰

According to Rawls, problems in his account of stability in a Theory of Justice motivated the development of political liberalism. He aims to develop principles of justice that could serve as an overlapping consensus from citizens with diverse conceptions of the personal good which would develop in a free society. Rawls' justice as fairness is also historically grounded, meant to serve as a "society as a fair system of cooperation over time, from one generation to the next."⁵¹ Rawls believes that the two principles of justice can serve as the locus of political loyalty from citizens who hold many "reasonable comprehensive doctrines." For Rawls the question of stability is whether citizens growing up in a society constructed around a given set of political principles are likely to maintain their adherence to those principles. The ideas of property owning democracy, fair worth of the political liberties, and his conception of citizenship are all in service to this overarching problem of how a regime can retain the loyalty of and cultivate the necessary political virtues in its citizens, as well as ensure that reasonably favorable background conditions are preserved. In this sense, Rawls' "political turn" could be understood as a "republican turn."

⁵⁰ N. Buttle, "Liberal Republicanism," *Politics* Vol. 17, n. 3 (1997): pp. 147-152. V. Costa, "Rawls on Liberty and Domination;" R. Dagger, "Citizenship as Fairness: John Rawls' Conception of Civic Virtue," in J. Mandle and D. Reidy (eds.), *A Companion to Rawls*; A. Francisco, "A Republican Interpretation of the Late Rawls;" H. Richardson, "Republicanism and Democratic Injustice;" A. Thomas, *Value and Context*.

⁵¹ J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press 1993), p. 15.

Rawls sees close links among guaranteeing political equality, restraining the influence of the wealthy in public deliberations, and the material conditions of a democratic society. He includes a “proviso” in the first principle of justice that only political liberties are to be guaranteed their fair worth. Given the coercive power of the state, unless political equality is maintained, all other liberties are at risk.⁵² Political equality is required because, unlike other goods, it has an intrinsically competitive aspect.⁵³ To achieve this Rawls deploys the conventional insulation strategy, with campaign finance and media access laws to prevent the well-endowed from dominating public discourse. But Rawls goes further than Pettit by advocating for a strategy of prevention as well, supporting property-owning democracy over welfare-state capitalism. Because it allows great material inequality, welfare-state capitalism will prove unable to underwrite political equality. Like other republicans⁵⁴, Rawls’ theory suggests that democratic states require a political economy that disperses holdings in order to prevent both domination in the social background⁵⁵ and preserve political equality.⁵⁶ Rawls’ position is consistent with Aristotle’s arguments for a dominant middle class and the influence of material conditions on political psychology. I differ with O’Neill,⁵⁷ who argues that Rawls erred grounding of property-owning democracy on the fair worth of the political liberties. O’Neill think that if politics were insulated from wealth,

⁵² J. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: a Restatement*, p. 51.

⁵³ V. Costa, “Rawls on Liberty and Domination.” H. Brighouse, “Political Equality and Justice as Fairness,” *Philosophical Studies* Vol. 86, n. 2 (1997): pp. 155-184.

⁵⁴ R. Dagger, “Neo-Republicanism and the Civic Economy.”

⁵⁵ V. Costa, “Rawls on Liberty and Domination.”

⁵⁶ A. Thomas, “Property-Owning Democracy, Liberal Egalitarianism, and the Idea of an Egalitarian Ethos,” in Martin O’Neill and Thad Williamson (eds.), *Property-Owning Democracy: Rawls and Beyond*, pp. 101-128.

⁵⁷ M. O’Neill, “Free (and Fair) Markets with Capitalism.”

then welfare state capitalism could accommodate substantial economic inequality. However, while insulation is a useful auxiliary to other approaches, it is hardly adequate on its own. There are simply too many means beyond campaign contributions by which great wealth can exert political influence.

Rawls therefore gives considerable scope for the republican strategies of prevention and insulation. He effectively ignores the strategies of institutionalization or representation, giving little attention to the institutional mechanisms of political authority beyond a mandate that legislators and parties should focus on the common good over narrow constituent interests, and a preference for representative systems over plebiscites. However, these features are not integral to Rawls' larger scheme, and institutions to preserve descriptive representation could be included. Specifically class-based institutions would seem to be ruled out, however.

Despite Rawls' strong commitment to political equality, he still treats it as an opportunity concept. Rawls accepts a "social division of labor" in which some persons will find greater personal goods in devoting their life to public service than others. Thomas's synthesis of Rawls and republicanism similarly guarantees the equal right to have one's voice heard in public affairs.⁵⁸ However, Rawls does have greater resources than Pettit in encouraging widespread democratic participation. He argues that citizens have a "natural duty" to support just institutions, which could be interpreted as including a civic duty to participate in public life. His conceptions of reasonability and reciprocity include a recognition that each citizen is willing to take on appropriate burdens and play their fair part in social

⁵⁸ A. Thomas, *Value and Context*.

undertakings.⁵⁹ Finally, Rawls argues in his reply to Habermas that the political liberties have great intrinsic value. Although he elsewhere gives them lesser weight than private liberties and treats them as instrumental, they remain fundamental.⁶⁰

This brings us to the role of civic virtue in Rawlsian theory. Rawls' theory of stability places tremendous importance on the character of the citizenry. A well-ordered, stable, and just society requires citizens that accept the burdens of judgment: that they accept the inevitable differences in personal convictions among free and equal persons, and that they be reasonable. The notion of reasonability is closely linked to the norm of reciprocity.⁶¹ Citizens willing to abide by the terms of social cooperation, including compromise, can conceive of the democratic state as a common project among all citizens, demonstrate civility to fellow citizens, and to recognize "civic friendship." Rawls believes that these virtues will be cultivated by educational institutions,⁶² but also by the operation of justice itself. Rawls' account of democratic stability is thus based on a citizen body which possesses political virtues, and are capable of seeing themselves *as citizens* rather than simply as agents of their own individual goods.

If this conception of citizenship is viable, then Rawls will have gone a good way towards encouraging sufficient public-spirited participation to check the influence of the wealthy elite in public deliberations. The question is whether this very strong

⁵⁹ R. Dagger, "Citizenship as Fairness: John Rawls' Conception of Civic Virtue," in J. Mandle and D. Reidy (eds.), *A Companion to Rawls*.

⁶⁰ A. Francisco, "A Republican Interpretation of the Late Rawls."

⁶¹ Rasmussen, D. (2004). "Defending Reasonability." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 30(5-6): 525-540. R. Dagger, "Citizenship as Fairness: John Rawls' Conception of Civic Virtue," in J. Mandle and D. Reidy (eds.), *A Companion to Rawls*.

⁶² Costa 2011, R. Dagger, "Citizenship as Fairness: John Rawls' Conception of Civic Virtue," in J. Mandle and D. Reidy (eds.), *A Companion to Rawls*.

conception of citizenship coheres with Rawls' reliance on electoral democracy or voluntarist approach to political participation.

V

Republicanism, Instrumental, and Perfectionist

Although Rawls' advocacy of property-owning democracy and conception of civic virtue provide a stronger base for equality in public deliberations, he shares with Pettit a voluntarist approach to political participation, a reliance on electoral accountability, and a neglect of class-based institutions that would restrict the political influence of the wealthy. This may have to do with their common commitment to an instrumental approach to political liberty.

Although Rawls never uses the term, the liberal republican and neo-Roman republican approaches both understand political participation as an option value. What both theorists overlook is that elections are an aristocratic device - most of those elected to office are quite affluent.⁶³ If not supplemented by descriptive or class-based political institutions, there is a serious risk of distortions in agenda-setting and lawmaking. Further, a reliance on electoral accountability requires a very active and informed citizenry, which is made suspect if political participation is not viewed as a duty.

I am not entirely clear why Rawls and Pettit adopt a voluntaristic conception of political liberty. If the question is whether everyone should run for office, then they might be

⁶³ B. Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*; J. McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy*; J. McCormick, "Republicanism and Democracy," in A. Niederberger and P. Schink (eds.), *Republican Democracy: Liberty, Law, and Politics*.

arguing that not everybody wants to devote their lives to politics. But this assumes that public service should be a lifetime profession: rotation in office or sortition could permit short-term commitments to public service. Concerns about quality of decision-making by typical citizens may be unfounded⁶⁴. On the other hand, if we are considering citizen engagement in the broader sense (attendance to public affairs, voting, etc.), then I question why as a general rule political participation cannot be treated as an affirmative duty. Such an approach would appear to jibe better with Rawls' notion of the citizen, and both thinkers' concern for political equality.

Of course, Rawls' approach is not strictly instrumental, especially in comparison with Pettit. Strengthening the place of civic virtue in Rawls' or Pettit's theory can partly address the motivation problem in those theories, but in doing so they significantly narrow the differences not just between each other but also with more perfectionist theories of republicanism. Perfectionist republicans highlight the intrinsic worth of political participation, grounding both involvement in public life (public liberty) and individual freedom (individual liberty) on the principle of autonomy.⁶⁵ A full synthesis between these approaches would be ruled out by Rawls since a full commitment to autonomy would constitute a comprehensive doctrine. However, one could instead treat the goods of public life as a *partially* comprehensive good—as a “module” in which political virtues are seen as a necessary adjunct to the pursuit of individual goods. Rather than treating public life and the as the *highest* good,

⁶⁴ T. Beierle, (2002) “The Quality of Stakeholder-Based Decisions,” *Risk Analysis* Vol. 22, n. 4 (2002): pp. 739-749.

⁶⁵ R. Dagger, *Civic Virtues*; A. Francisco, “A Republican Interpretation of the Late Rawls;” I. Honohan, *Civic Republicanism*. Also L. Andronache, *Contemporary Republican Strategies for ‘Civic Virtue’ and the Notion of Political Obligation*.

it would be treated as a necessary good—one limited to a specific sphere and constrained by a commitment to individual liberty. I do not have space to address this possibility in detail, but it might be a promising avenue for constructing a more broadly-based republicanism, integrating the neo-Roman, liberal, and perfectionist versions.

However, all of these theories still retain certain vulnerabilities from the point of view of democratic stability. First, the reliance of modern republicans of all stripes⁶⁶ on civil society to promote equality in public deliberations is problematic. The affluent sectors of society tend to exert greater influence in civil society in the absence of formal the legal barriers we often see in politics. Non-profit institutions of civil society such as churches, foundations, and charities are all quite reliant on the donations of wealthy subscribers to function. Even if this were not the case, the tremendous resources and coercive legal powers of the state make it essential that lawmaking proceed on the basis of political equality. It is because of the great powers of the state that it is so necessary to establish equality in formal political deliberations. The limited attention contemporary democratic theory gives to checking the ability of the wealthy elite to monopolize public office would (I believe) inspire sharp criticisms from republicanism's intellectual forebears.

The second problem is that both the instrumental and intrinsic approaches to political involvement fail to present a compelling reason why citizens are individually obligated to engage in politics with a view to the common good. Saying that all citizens must be

⁶⁶ L. Andronache *Contemporary Republican Strategies for 'Civic Virtue' and the Notion of Political Obligation*; P. Pettit, *Republicanism*; A. Thomas, "Property-Owning Democracy, Liberal Egalitarianism, and the Idea of an Egalitarian Ethos," in Martin O'Neill and Thad Williamson (eds.), *Property-Owning Democracy: Rawls and Beyond*.

reasonable or reciprocal presumes that they view the other members of the state as partners in a common enterprise. But it is precisely this perspective that Machiavelli and Aristotle saw as difficult to sustain. It is quite natural for persons to think first of their own good, and then of their family and friends, and last of all to the fellow resident of a state comprising millions. As with the difficulty in developing a compelling theory of political obligation to obey the law, theories of civic duty lack a persuasive account of why individuals are obligated to help make the laws in accordance with just principles.

And this is doubly true of the wealthiest segments of society, who do not experience the shared vulnerability that is one of the strongest props of civic friendship. If I as an individual have the resources to further my own good, why should I consider those who cannot as worthy of the same voice in our common affairs? It may be useful to recall that modern democratic theory is exactly that—*democratic* theory. As Aristotle noted, there is a quite different notion of political justice that does not view all persons as worthy of equal respect, one strongly encouraged by the possession of great wealth. Classical republican theory viewed just governments as quite delicate because of the fragility of the socioeconomic and psychological structures supporting them. They defined a problem and laid out general strategies for coping with it, but there was always an awareness that political stability relied in part on fortune: the acquiescence of the elite, favorable economic trends, and social harmony. Aristotle and Machiavelli's systems of shared power carried within them the potential for escalating class conflict, and the possibility that the most powerful members of society would one day reject democratic pretensions.

Michigan State University

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