

Civic Republicanism and the Intrinsic Value of Equality

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Abstract: According to Civic Republicanism, the mere fact that someone *could* arbitrarily interfere with one's life makes one unfree, even if it is known that such interference will never take place. While the view enjoys considerable intuitive support, it seems that we cannot assimilate the distinctive problems Republicanism identifies under our general concerns about the welfare of the unfree or our reasons to respect their autonomous control of their lives. I argue that the intuitions in favor of Republicanism support the intrinsic moral relevance of a third factor, namely the equality of agents' power over each other. I show how an interpretation of Civic Republicanism worries about arbitrary power as ultimately about unequal power best fits our intuitions and avoids problems faced by other attempts to explain the problematic form of arbitrariness. I also show how this version of Civic Republicanism can capture our intuitions about the importance of social equality that transcend our concerns about the just distribution of welfare and autonomy.

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1. Introduction

Civic Republicanism is, in very broad outline, the view that there is an important sense of ‘freedom’ in which one is unfree if there is someone who *could* arbitrarily interfere with one’s life, whether or not she ever will. While this view derives from the Republican tradition in political philosophy of which figures like Cicero, Locke, Rousseau, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison were members, I follow the convention of using the phrase ‘Civic Republicanism’ to denote a particular view about the nature and importance of a certain kind of freedom; a view that has received its fullest recent development in the work of Philip Pettit. Pettit (1996, 1997) convincingly argues that the Civic Republican view pre-dates a now popular view that the important kind of political freedom is freedom from actual non-interference. But it is natural to follow Pettit in introducing Civic Republicanism’s distinctive claims and motivations as a response to this view that actual non-interference is the only kind of freedom that matters in assessing social and political institutions.

Most would agree that we should try to shape our social and political institutions in such a way that they safeguard our freedom to live our lives as we wish to live them. Consider the view that this desideratum amounts to our having reason to shape institutions in such a way that they prevent our actually being interfered with by others. According to this view, one is free in the relevant sense to the extent that no one actively intervenes in one’s life in a way that constrains one’s choices, for instance by stealing one’s money, confining one physically, or threatening one with violence unless one acts in certain ways. Let us follow the standard practice of calling this view ‘Freedom as Non-Interference’. Given our epistemic limitations, we usually do not know in advance exactly which institutional arrangements and policies will minimize our being interfered with by others. But what Freedom as Non-Interference enjoins us to do under conditions of risk is to count the fact that a social arrangement has a high probability of causing or allowing us to be interfered with against it.¹ If two social arrangements are

¹ More generally, Freedom as Non-Interference would presumably have us calculate an index of expected interference, multiplying the severity of each kind of possible interference by the probability it will occur under an institutional arrangement. The idea would then be that the strength of our reasons to avoid an arrangement from considerations of freedom are proportional to its expected interference score. But it should be emphasized that Freedom as Interference’s injunctions can be incorporated by any level of risk aversion to the negatively valued outcome of interference. Pettit’s (1997, 84-91) arguments that Civic Republican concerns are needed to treat

identical in terms of the probabilities of interference they generate, Freedom as Non-Interference declares that participants are equally free under them, and that we have no reason generated by considerations of freedom to prefer one to the other.

But consider the following pair of cases:

Benevolent Master. Suppose that Mike the master owns Scott the slave in an institutional arrangement not unlike that of chattel slavery in the 18th and 19th Century United States. Mike is, however, the most benevolent of masters, and lets Scott do exactly as he pleases. Let us suppose that we (and Scott) actually know for certain that Mike will never interfere with Scott's living as he likes, so that the probability of his doing so is zero (or, if you like, vanishingly small – say on the order of 0.0001). Still, it is true that Mike owns Scott and could treat him however he wants if he were so inclined.

Freeman. Scott lives his life exactly as he does in Benevolent Master, except here Mike does not own Scott. The probability of Scott's being interfered with by Mike is again zero; the only difference is the counterfactual one that Mike could not treat Scott however he wants if he were so inclined. (Or, if you preferred vanishingly small probabilities above, suppose that in this case Mike is not so benevolent and there is a vanishingly small probability – say on the order of 0.0001 – that Mike could get away with illegally kidnapping Scott and doing whatever he wants to him in his basement).

We seem to get the intuition that in Benevolent Master, there is an important sense in which Scott is unfree, and that Scott is in any event less free in this sense when he is Mike's slave than when he is a freeman. We also seem to get the intuition that Scott's unfreedom in Benevolent Master is morally objectionable, and that we (and Mike and Scott) would have reason to change arrangements from the way they are in Benevolent Master to the way they are in Freeman. We get these intuitions, even though we bear fully in mind that there is no chance (or vanishingly little and equal chance) that Scott will ever actually be interfered with in either case, and that the only difference between these cases is the purely counterfactual one that in the first Mike could treat Scott however he wanted if he were so inclined, and in the second he could not.

These intuitions would seem to constitute evidence against Freedom as Non-Interference's claim that the only kind of freedom we should care about in social arrangements is actual non-interference, or the probability of such non-interference when making decisions under conditions of risk. They might well seem to be evidence for Civic Republicanism's claim that

worries about uncertainty appear to falsely assume that proponents of Freedom as Interference must be risk-neutral with regard to their treatment of the bad outcome of being interfered with.

there is an important kind of freedom – that Scott has as a freeman but lacks as Mike’s slave – which is a matter of being such that no one has the power to interfere with one arbitrarily. But before concluding that these intuitions support the Civic Republican view, we should consider two alternative hypotheses. A first would be that when we consider our pair of cases, we imagine Scott to live in fear of Mike’s interference when he is Mike’s slave, and to live without any such concern when he is a freeman. The sense in which we imagine Scott to be more unfree when he is Mike’s slave is simply that he lacks “freedom from fear” of Mike, or that this fear actually causes Scott to feel and act as though his choices are more constrained by the threat of Mike’s interference when he is a slave than when he is a freeman.

Let me clarify, however, that I intended the case of Benevolent Master to be such that Scott is so secure in his knowledge that Mike the benevolent master really never will intervene with him that he feels no such fear, does not in any way feel his choices constrained, and acts just as he does and with the exact same carefree state of mind that acts with when he is a freeman. But even when we bear these clarifications vividly in mind, we *still* seem to get the intuition that Scott is problematically unfree when he is Mike’s slave in a way that he is not when he is a freeman. Thus, ours *do not* merely seem to be intuitions that reflect our believing the conjunction of (1) the psychological view that beliefs that someone could interfere with one’s life are sufficient to cause fear or constrain one’s choices in the same way as beliefs that it is likely that he actually will, and (2) the normative view that this fear or constraint is a problematic form of unfreedom. It will be very important in the foregoing to distinguish this conjunction of views from the Civic Republican view that the mere fact that someone could arbitrarily interfere with one’s life by itself constitutes a problematic form of unfreedom, quite independently of whether this actually gives rise to fear or psychologically constrains the choices people make.²

A second non-Civic Republican hypothesis that might seem to fit our intuitions about the kind of freedom Scott seems to have as a freeman but lacks as Mike’s slave is that freedom in the sense we are picking up on is freedom from *anything that simply could* interfere with our living as we choose, independent of its likelihood of actually doing so. Perhaps, the idea would be, we should value not only a high probability of being able to do what we want, but also its being the case that nothing – not even things we know won’t happen – could easily interfere with our doing what we want.

But consider a third case:

² It should be noted that while Pettit (1997) does recognize the distinction between Civic Republicanism and the conjunction of (1) and (2), especially in his response to Paley’s second objection on p.73-74, he seems in other places to come dangerously close to conflating Civic Republicanism with (1)&(2), especially in the third chapter of the book in which he discusses why we should care about freedom in the Civic Republican sense.

Potential Invalid. Just as in Freeman, suppose that Scott has no master and happily lives his life doing as he pleases. However, unlike in Freeman, in this case Scott has a physical condition that could cause him to contract a severe respiratory disease if he were exposed to a certain gas. Were Scott to contract this disease, he would be restricted to a respiratory machine, unable to go out and do the many things he would like to do, and he would have had to struggle physically just to stay alive. Luckily we know there is no chance of Scott's actually being exposed to the gas that would cause him to contract the disease (or only a vanishingly small probability – on the order of 0.0001).

We seem to get the intuition that in this case Scott is just as free as he is in Scott the Freeman. The bare fact that he *could* be struck down by a respiratory disease that we know he will not be struck down by is irrelevant to how free he is. Moreover, given that we know that his physical condition will not cause him to contract the disease, it seems crazy to worry about Scott's condition or try to change it simply because the condition could cause the disease were he to be exposed to a gas that he never will be exposed to.

Our intuitions about Potential Invalid suggest that our intuitions about Scott's unfreedom when the slave of Mike the benevolent master really are being driven by the fact that Scott is subject to Mike's arbitrary power, rather than just any kind of condition that could (but won't actually) take away his ability to live as he chooses. We seem, then, to have intuitive support of three kinds for the Civic Republican view that the mere fact that someone could arbitrarily interfere with one's life makes one objectionably unfree. The view would capture our direct intuitions about Scott's problematic unfreedom in Benevolent Master and his lack of such unfreedom in Potential Invalid. It would also seem to capture what Peter Unger (1990, 1996) would call our "second order" intuitions that there is in fact a relevant difference in value between Scott's condition as the slave of Mike the benevolent master on the one hand and his condition as a freeman, but no such relevant difference between his being or not being a merely potential invalid. Finally, there seems to be direct intuitive support for the Civic Republican view. Being subject to the arbitrary will of another, or as Pettit (1996, 586) puts it having to "live at the mercy of that person" really does just seem to constitute an objectionable form of unfreedom, even if we know that the other person will never interfere with us.

As well supported by intuition as the Civic Republican view might be, there can seem to be something of a puzzle about why exactly we should care about the kind of freedom Civic Republicanism identifies. The view, after all, is telling us to worry about the fact that someone could do something that we know she will never do. While this does intuitively seem to be different from worrying about merely possible diseases (as in Potential Invalid), might not

reflection reveal that this is just an illusion, and that both worries are equally irrational? Why aren't the worries Civic Republicanism countenances just further instances of irrational worries about bad things that could happen but we know never will?

In fact, as I will attempt to show in the next section, two of our most familiar sets of reasons to care about freedom do not seem to support a concern for freedom in the Civic Republican sense. One set of reasons we should care about freedom is constituted by the various ways in which agents' abilities to do various things make them better off. Another set of reasons to care about freedom are constituted by our reasons to respect agents' autonomy by allowing them to live their lives as they choose and by promoting their rational projects. But all of these reasons standardly pertain to making sure that agents are actually able to do things, and thus do not seem to countenance worries about the fact that something *could* take away their abilities if we know that it is not going to do so.

I will argue that in order to see why we should care about Civic Republican freedom, we need to look to a different set of reasons. But to see what these are, we need to better understand what freedom in the Civic Republican sense amounts to. In Section 3 of this paper I will argue that Civic Republican concerns about arbitrary power are best understood as instances of a general concern about unequal power relations, and that we should interpret Civic Republican freedom as a condition in which others have no more power over one than one has over them. In Section 4 I will show how our Civic Republican intuitions support the view that equal power relations are intrinsically valuable, but also how the intrinsic value of equality can bolster our Civic Republican intuitions. I conclude in Section 5 with a brief discussion of how the independence of Civic Republicanism's concerns about equal power from general concerns about welfare and personal autonomy should perhaps influence our thinking about economic exploitation and dependence.

2. Reasons to Promote Freedom

2.1. Instrumental Effects on Welfare

Perhaps the most intuitively obvious reason to shape our institutions and policies so as to promote freedom is that we are better off when we are free. There are many ways in which agents' abilities to live their lives as they choose, with as few constraints on their choices as other desiderata will allow, are a means of improving their welfare. As John Stuart Mill (1859) observed, and we are constantly (if not so relevantly) reminded by the rhetoric of every election cycle, individuals often have the best information about what will make themselves and their loved ones best off, and they are often most highly motivated to act on this information to the

betterment of these parties. And as Adam Smith (1776) observed, and economists after him have continued to investigate in detail, against the right institutional background, individuals' pursuits of their interests and those of their loved ones effectively pools distributed information and incentives to yield the efficient production of what is most wanted and the efficient distribution of goods to those who want them most. The strength of these results should not be exaggerated – imperfections in competition, information, the relationship between need and ability to pay, and the relationship between market price and social cost put limits on the extent to which the workings of markets will lead to the best outcomes all by themselves. But Friedrich Hayek's (1945) point about the unparalleled ability of markets to coordinate decentralized information in real time seems to stand, and to suggest that core economic freedoms have an irreplaceable role to play in making us better off, no matter how much we should restrict economic choices around the edges in the interests of fixing markets' shortcomings.

Of course, not only economic freedoms have important instrumental value. Freedom of conscience, expression, and speech, or abilities to think, inquire, and communicate as one pleases make possible many of the most intrinsically valuable intellectual and artistic endeavors in which we can engage. These freedoms make it possible for communities of investigators to generate intrinsically valuable knowledge and to make discoveries that make life better for everyone. While I hope the foregoing serves to remind us of some of the main ways in which freedom is a means to making us better off, it is by no means exhaustive.

These instrumental effects of freedom on welfare would seem to give us reason to care about freedom conceived of as actual non-interference. The less others actively prevent us from making well informed choices on behalf of ourselves and our loved ones, the less others interfere with our efficient market behavior, and the less others prevent us from thinking, inquiring, and communicating as we sees fit, the better off we will be. But it should be obvious that freedom's effects on welfare do not give us reason to care *only* about freedom conceived of as actual non-interference. All of one's information and determination to help oneself and one's loved ones will profit them precious little if one lacks the skills, education, heath, or other assets and opportunities needed to earn a decent living. One can gain more from the efficient workings of markets the more assets and wealth one can take to them. The benefits each and all of us reap from creative and intellectual activity depend not only on its freedom from active intrusion, but upon the quality of the resources of the inquirers, including their education, social capitol, time, and opportunity to pursue their objects of study.

The kind of freedom that contributes instrumentally to welfare thus extends beyond freedom from interference to what is often called "real" or "effective" freedom - namely the effective abilities or capabilities we have to do the various things we value. These effective

abilities actually subsume both our freedom from active interference by others and factors besides being left alone that enable us to do what we want. At the same time, I think that concerns about the instrumental effects of effective freedom on welfare can explain how it could be rational, when all else is held equal, to worry (at least somewhat) more about our not interfering with peoples' lives than with our helping to provide them with the other ingredients of effective freedom. If there is in general an important moral distinction between doing and allowing harm, it will quite naturally extend to the doings and allowings of harm that result from interfering with or failing to enhance someone's abilities to do various things.

But it should be stressed that the credibility of a doing-allowing asymmetry between infringing upon and failing to promote effective freedom does not support an absolute constraint against ever infringing at all. In the case of harms more generally, if the only way to save a life is to prick someone's finger, I venture that you would know what to do. It should also be stressed that a doing-allowing distinction would in no way undermine the existence of significant duties to prevent harm by positively promoting effective freedom.³ Finally, it should be stressed that a doing-allowing asymmetry only creates stronger reasons not to interfere with effective freedom when all else is held equal, and all else rarely is held equal. If considerations of just distribution entitle someone to a resource, there will be especially weighty reasons to provide it, and if someone owes a resource to someone else, the especially stringent reasons against harming will not count against certain of the harms that result from its redistribution.

The instrumental effect of freedom on welfare should thus be a familiar reason to care about effective freedom, and, to the extent that a doing-allowing asymmetry is credible, to worry about actual non-interference in particular. But it should be clear that to the extent that freedom is valuable as a means of making us better off, it is freedom understood as a state of our actually being able to live as we choose in the absence of actual constraints on what we can choose – and in fact our actually doing those things that we have unconstrained preferences to do. This means that the mere fact that there is someone who simply *could*, but in fact will not, constrain our choices can do nothing to inhibit our being made well off in these ways. Thus, unlike effective freedom in general or freedom from non-interference in particular, freedom in the distinctive Civic Republican sense looks useless as a means of making us better off.

Of course, if our believing that someone could interfere with us made us fearful or caused us to act other than we would if we thought there was no such person, this knowledge might make us worse off. But as we saw above, Civic Republicanism does not simply contend that beliefs about the possibility of interference give rise to the same problematic constraints on

³ Perhaps the problem with some Libertarians is just that they have gone absolutist about our reasons not to inflict harm and denied all duties to aid in an attempt to unify all morality under the maxim of "do no harm."

choices as actual interference. The fact that the possibility of interference gives rise to such constraints gives us no more reason to worry about this mere possibility than would a similar psychological relationship between the possibility that one will contract a disease and one's paranoid fears that one will give us reason to worry about the mere possibility of contracting the disease. Instrumental effects on welfare thus seem to give us no serious reason to care about freedom in the Civic Republican sense, and certainly no reason to care about it above and beyond our having reason to care about our actual abilities to do various things.

2.2. Constitutive Effects on Welfare

A slightly less obvious, but perhaps quite important reason we may have to shape our institutions and policies so as to promote freedom is that our being free is intrinsically good for us. The idea here would be that freedom not only causes other states of affairs that constitute welfare improvements (e.g. those in which we actually live longer, are healthier, are happier, know more, accomplish more, etc.), but itself constitutes a way in which we are better off quite independently of its effects. The idea that freedom can make an intrinsic difference to welfare has received important recent attention in discussions of Amartya Sen's Capabilities Approach to the object of distributive justice (See e.g. Sen 1980, 1992, 1993). Sen's idea may primarily be that distributive justice concerns levels of effective freedom rather than levels of welfare as such, but an important collateral idea has been that capabilities to do things can contribute to our welfare quite apart from their effects on our actually doing them (and also quite apart from their effects on subjective experience).

To see how it might be plausible to suppose that freedom makes an intrinsic difference to welfare, consider the following case:

Contented Disabled. Suppose this time that Scott has a disability that prevents him from walking. Scott does, however, have a very cheerful disposition, and has come to be quite contented with the life he leads. A simple procedure is available that will enable Scott to walk again. But it turns out that Scott is so contented with his life that, should his ability to walk be restored, he will never actually use this ability to walk about.

We might seem to get the intuition that even though Scott will never actually use the ability to walk, the restoration of his ability to do so would make him better off. The intuition here seems to be that Scott's merely having the option to walk improves his lot, even if it he turns out never to exercise this option. This effect does not simply seem due to our imagining that Scott *feels* more liberated or otherwise better about his condition after his ability to walk is restored. Our intuition that the ability to walk improves Scott's life seems to remain even if we stipulate that

the already cheerful Scott in no way feels even better about his newly acquired ability. Indeed, our intuition seems to remain even after we stipulate that Scott does not know that a new ability has been acquired – suppose the restoration happened via a mix-up, or Scott was so busy living his contented life as before that he forgets the restoration ever took place.

If the bare fact of freedom is intrinsically beneficial in this kind of way, then it might look as though unfreedom in the Civic Republican sense could be bad. “Look,” the Civic Republican might argue, “if someone is able to prevent you from doing what you want, then you’re not really able to do what you want, and as we have seen this very fact makes you worse off.” But this overlooks the fact that one person’s having the ability to ϕ is consistent with another person’s having the ability to prevent her from ϕ -ing. This is true for the same reason that in general one’s having the ability to ϕ is consistent with there being something with a disposition the manifestation of which would prevent one from ϕ -ing, so long as the manifestation of the disposition is a sufficiently remote possibility. Return to the case of Scott the potential invalid discussed in Section I. Suppose that, in this case, Scott does not actually leave his house. Still, we would surely want to say that Scott has the ability to leave his house, even though a certain gas - to which he will never be exposed - has a disposition to demobilize him.

To illustrate what is going on, consider the following toy semantics for ascribing to an agent the ability to do something: ‘S is able to ϕ ’ is true iff S would ϕ if S wanted to. This semantics has many shortcomings, but I think that any adequate semantics will closely track counterfactuals like this, and the general point I want to make with the toy semantics will be preserved. Turn now to a simple possible worlds semantics for counterfactuals. *Possible worlds* are complete ways things might have been, and the *actual world* is the complete way things actually are. A possible world’s *closeness* to the actual world is the degree to which that way things could have been resemble the way things actually are. Such resemblances are constituted by the extent to the possible world is governed by the same laws as the actual world and the extent to which the same particular matters of fact obtain in the possible world as obtain in the actual world (Lewis 1973). What the simple possible worlds semantics for counterfactuals says is that ‘C would have happened if A had happened’ is true iff all of the closest possible worlds in which A happens are worlds in which C happens.

We can use a standard diagram to graphically display these truth conditions for counterfactuals. In figure 1 the ‘@’ sign represents the actual world, and we imagine the points in the space around the actual world to represent other possible worlds (this space of all possible worlds is standardly called ‘logical space’). The concentric rings around the actual world represent degrees of closeness – the farther away a ring is from the actual world, the less the

possible worlds within that ring resemble the actual world. The region of space designated as belonging to a proposition thus represents all of the possible worlds in which it is true. So in figure 1 the blue region represents all of the possible worlds in which C happens, and the blue region within the third ring represents the closest possible worlds in which C happens.

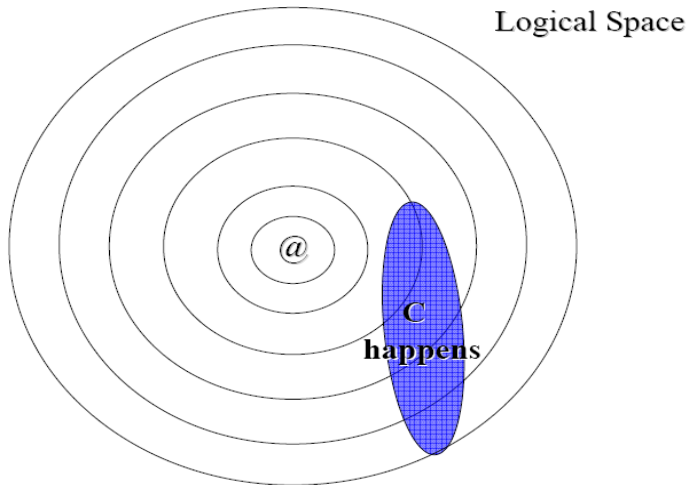


Figure 1. The proposition that *C happens* in logical space.

Figure 2 displays a configuration of logical space in which the counterfactual *C would have happened if A had happened* is true. The blue region again corresponds to the possible worlds in which C happens and the red region corresponds to the possible worlds in which A happens. We can observe that all of the closest possible worlds in which A happens (those in the third ring) are worlds in which C happens, so the counterfactual is true.

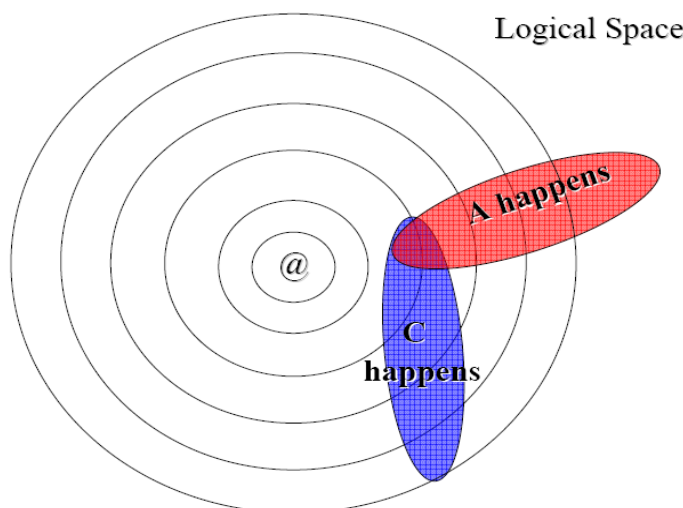


Figure 2. A configuration of logical space in which C happens in all of the closest possible worlds in which A happens.

We can now illustrate how it can be true both that one has the ability to ϕ and that there is something with a disposition to prevent one from ϕ -ing. Figure 3 depicts a configuration of logical space corresponding to a version of the Potential Invalid case. The red region corresponds to S's wanting to ϕ (where ϕ is, for instance, leaving the house), the blue region to S's succeeding in ϕ -ing, and the yellow region to S's being exposed to the gas. It is true that S is able to ϕ because all of the closest worlds in which he wants to ϕ (those in the third ring out) are worlds where he does ϕ . But it is also true that S has a disposition to be caused not to ϕ because all of the closest possible worlds in which S is exposed to the gas are worlds where he does not succeed in ϕ -ing. What allows these both to be true together is just that the closest worlds in which the disposition to prevent S from ϕ -ing is manifest – i.e. the worlds in which he is exposed to the gas – are farther away than the closest worlds in which he wants to ϕ .

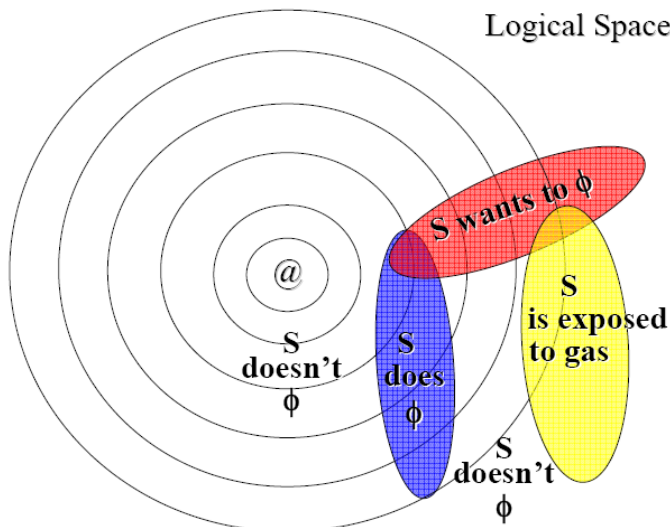


Figure 3. A configuration of logical space for Potential Invalid

But a structurally identical configuration can correspond to Benevolent Master, making for a situation in which it is simultaneously true that Scott has the ability to ϕ and Mike the benevolent master has the ability to prevent Scott from ϕ -ing. In Figure 4, the red region corresponds to Scott's wanting to ϕ , the blue region to Scott's succeeding in ϕ -ing, and the yellow region to Mike's wanting Scott not to ϕ . Because all of the closest worlds in which Scott wants to ϕ (those in the third ring) are worlds where Scott succeeds in ϕ -ing, Scott has the ability to ϕ . But all of the closest worlds in which Mike wants Scott not to ϕ are worlds where Scott does not succeed in ϕ -ing, so it is also true that Mike has the ability to prevent Scott from ϕ -ing. What enables Scott and Mike to have these abilities simultaneously is the fact that the closest world in

which Mike wants to prevent Scott from ϕ -ing are farther off than the closest worlds in which Scott wants to ϕ .

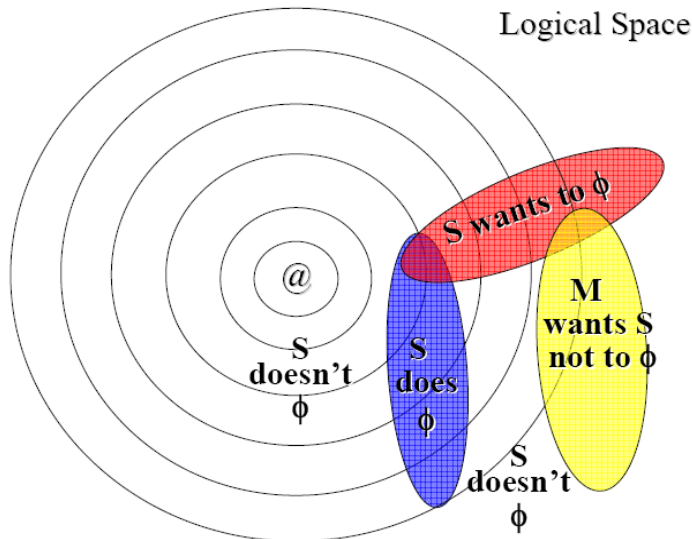


Figure 4. A configuration of logical space for Benevolent Master

It should be clear, then, that having the ability to do things is consistent with there being someone who could prevent one from doing them, so long as she in fact does so only in sufficiently distant possible worlds. As such, freedom in the Civic Republican sense *per se* is unnecessary for our possessing the ability to do what we want. The fact that abilities to do certain things are intrinsically good for us will give us reason to promote the effective freedom to do them above and beyond their instrumental importance to welfare. The constitutive contribution of such abilities to welfare will also mean that actively interfering with someone's life in a way that takes away her abilities will constitute a harm to her above and beyond the harms that are done by stripping her of the means to being well in other ways. So if there is a morally relevant distinction between doing and allowing harm, the intrinsic contribution of abilities to welfare will give us additional reason to be particularly concerned about active interventions that take them away. But because freedom in the Civic Republican sense is irrelevant to our possessing abilities to do various things above and beyond its contingently promoting effective freedom or freedom from interference, the intrinsic value of abilities gives us no reason to prize Republican freedom over and above these other kinds of freedom.

Of course, one might acknowledge that freedom in the Civic Republican sense is in itself irrelevant to our abilities to do various things, but maintain that this kind of freedom is intrinsically good for us for reasons that have nothing to do with the maintenance of these abilities. Similarly, one can cook up a special ability – say the ability to do what one wants even if others try to prevent one from doing it – which *does* require freedom in the Civic Republican

sense for one to have it, and claim that just like the ability to move about and so on, this ability is also intrinsically good for one to have. This is in fact a line that I will ultimately want to take. But in order to make this claim plausible, I think we will first need to identify something else about why freedom in the Civic Republican sense (or the ability to do what one wants despite others' wishes) is so special. Return again to the case of Potential Invalid. Scott does not seem to be made any worse off by the fact that a gas, to which he will never be exposed and to which he is exposed only in far off possible worlds, has the disposition to prevent him from doing what he wants. His mere lack of an ability to do what he wants despite being exposed to this gas does not seem to contribute much of anything to his welfare.

But if this is so, then we must ask: why would it matter any more to Scott's welfare if a *person* could prevent him from doing what he wants, if that a person will never do so and does so only in far off possible worlds? If the ability to do what one wants in the face of gasses one will never encounter doesn't matter, why should the ability to do what one wants in the face of wishes of others that will never materialize? Until these questions are answered, we seem to have no reason to think that the general intrinsic contribution of freedom to welfare gives us reason to value freedom in the Civic Republican sense. But I believe that the spoils will go to the victor – once the Civic Republican gives us independent reason to think freedom in her sense valuable, I think she will be in an excellent position to claim that it is valuable on account of its intrinsic contribution to welfare.

2.3. Reasons to Respect Autonomy

A quite different set of reasons to shape institutions in such a way that they protect freedom is constituted by our reasons to respect agents' autonomous choices. To get a sense of how our reasons to allow agents to do as they wish transcend our reasons to look out for their welfare, consider the following case:

Involuntary Euthanasia. Suppose that Tara is suffering from a horrible terminal disease. Bedridden, she is constantly in excruciating pain that cannot be controlled, and it drives her so to distraction that she cannot do anything, cannot enjoy anything, and can scarcely even think or process hedonically neutral subjective experiences. If death would ever be a release for anyone, it would be a release for Tara. Still, for whatever reason, Tara wants very much not to die. When you approach Tara with the option of ending her life, say by her a morphine overdose or removing her feeding tube, she pleads with you "No, please don't kill me. Please don't give me the morphine or take my feeding tube away."

I think that we here get the strong intuition that, even though death would be a benefit to Tara, we have very weighty reasons not to kill her against her will. The principle that seems to underlie our intuition here is that agents' have the moral right to dispose of their own lives as they see fit, and that we have corresponding moral reasons to allow them to do so even when their choices are to their detriment.

These reasons to respect agents' autonomous control over their own lives give us a direct reason not to interfere with them above and beyond any harm this interference may do. Actively interfering with an agent in a way that constrains her choices about how her own life will go is the general problematic category of which involuntarily euthanizing Tara would be a stark instance. There may also be a way in which these reasons to respect agents' autonomy can generate reasons, if perhaps significantly weaker reasons, to promote effective freedom as well as to refrain from taking it away. Consider the following variant of Involuntary Euthanasia:

Involuntary Passive Euthanasia. Suppose that Tara is exactly as she was in Involuntary Euthanasia, but instead of one's approaching her with the suggestion to remove her feeding tube, one comes into her room and finds that her feeding tube has come unhooked. She is obviously distraught, for she is trying to reach the tube to reconnect it, but is unable to do so in her weakened state. She pleads with you "please, please reconnect the tube. I don't want to die."

I think that most of us get a significant intuition that we would have strong moral reason to reconnect Tara's feeding tube, even though it would be much better for her if we were to allow her to die. Surely there must be limits to the extent to which these moral reasons to help agents harm themselves exist – we seem to have rather little (if any?) reason to help an agent mutilate herself or alienate her friends or colleagues, even if for some reason she wants very much to do so and cannot do so without our help. Perhaps it is because death forecloses all of Tara's current and future choices that these otherwise weak reasons become rather salient in the case of Involuntary Passive Euthanasia.

But there may be another kind of reason to respect autonomy that would seem to give rise to more robust reasons to actively promote effective freedom. Our discussion so far has considered autonomous preferences that are presumably irrational – preferences for a life worse than death, for self-mutilation, and for the absence of personal connections. But let us look briefly at how our reasons to respect agents' *rational* preferences may outrun our reasons to look after their welfare. Consider the following case:

Kidney Donor. A father has a child who is dying of renal failure. The child is too far down on the transplant list to receive a kidney from a stranger in time, but the father is a match. Unfortunately, the child's other health complications insure that a new kidney will only extend his life by about a year, while the father's donating a kidney is expected to shorten his life by about ten years. The father comes to you and asks you to help him donate a kidney to his child (perhaps you are the only doctor who can help him, or perhaps he turns to you for help financing the operation, etc.).

In this kind of case I think we get the intuition that we have significant reason to help the father with his kidney donation, even though the donation will leave him worse off.⁴ Because the father will lose significantly more from making the donation than his child will gain by his doing so, we seem to have little reason to want the donation to take place out of our reasons to care about the welfare of both the father and the child.⁵ But because the father has special obligations to his child and reasons to care about his child, *he* has significant reasons to want and to undertake the donation, and our reasons to help him seem in part to stem from the rationality of what he is trying to do.

The general principle at work seems to be that when agents' projects are rational, respect for their autonomous control of their lives generates significant reason to help them achieve their aims. After the fashion of a morally relevant distinction between doing and allowing harms, there may be a similarly relevant distinction between thwarting and allowing the thwarting of agents' rational projects. It would be one thing to refuse the father help with his kidney donation, but we may well have even stronger reasons not to actively interfere with him so as to prevent him from donating his kidney. So we may have even stronger reasons not to actively interfere with agents' rational projects than to actively help these projects succeed. But unlike in the case of agents' irrational choices, we seem to have much more comparable reasons to help agents' realize the objects of their rational choices.

⁴ Of course, there are certain assumptions about the impact of the child's death on the father's welfare that would not make it the case that the donation makes the father off – say because the child's death would devastate him, or would be an intrinsically bad thing to happen to him. But I assume that versions of the case can be specified according to which the father is not so distraught, or the father's losses from the operation really do outweigh the intrinsic bad of losing his child, and that we will retain our intuitions about the presence of significant reasons on our part to help him.

⁵ Given certain assumptions about our reasons to prefer one distribution of welfare to another this might not be so. But to make the case as plausible as possible I think that we can add stipulations to the effect that the child has had a great life, the father hasn't had such a great life, and that the extra year of life won't benefit the child nearly so much as each of the ten additional years will benefit the father. I think that we can continue to add stipulations along these lines to the point at which we will be satisfied that our reasons to care about the welfare of the father and the child favor no donation taking place, while at the same time we get the intuition that we have significant reason to help the father make the donation.

Thus, quite in addition to considerations of welfare, reasons to respect agents' autonomy constitute reasons to shape our institutions so as to prevent their being interfered with, and - especially when we consider agents' rational choices - some additional reason to shape institutions so as to actively promote agents' effective freedom to do what they like. But the existence of these reasons to respect agents' autonomy seems to give us no reason to care about freedom in the distinctively Civic Republican sense. Causing or failing to prevent a condition that will not, but simply could in some distant possible world, prevent an agent from doing as she wishes in no way undermines her autonomy. While one may owe it to Tara to reconnect her feeding tube, one surely does not owe it to Tara to disconnect her phone just because there is a distant possible world in which it is used as a bomb to kill her. Similarly, I fail to see how we can owe it to someone to refrain from creating a gas that we *know* will never cause him to contract a debilitating illness - say because he lives on a planet outside our lightcone - but would cause him to contract such an illness were he to be exposed to it. Our direct reasons to let, and to some extent help, agents live their lives as they please simply do not extend to making sure that they can do this under contingencies that we know will never arise. Nothing here changes when the unactualized contingencies are the attempted interventions of people who can but really never will arbitrarily interfere with their lives.

3. Republican Freedom as Equal Power

If the arguments of the foregoing section are correct, then two of our most obviously important sources of reasons - general considerations of how well off institutions will make us, and considerations of how institutions will affect agents' autonomous control of their lives - support shaping our institutions so as to promote effective freedom, and perhaps to guard in particular against unfreedom in the form of active interference. But these considerations give us no reason to care about Civic Republican freedom from the mere possibility of arbitrary interference. Have we, then, no genuine reason to care about freedom in the Civic Republican sense over and above these other kinds of freedom? Might the intuitions in favor of Civic Republicanism be at last debunkable, and concern for bare possibility of interference just as irrational as concern for the bare possibility of contracting a debilitating illness in Potential Invalid?

I do not believe so. While I think my previous arguments show concern for Civic Republican freedom to be unsupported by general considerations of welfare and considerations of agents' autonomy, I believe that such concern is in fact supported by a distinct normative factor. But to get at this factor, we must first clarify something about Civic Republicanism. When Civic Republicans speak of a scenario in which M can interfere arbitrarily with S's life,

they seem clearly to intend to speak of a scenario in which there is an asymmetry of power for such interference. For consider the following case of otherwise limitless power to control someone's life, indeed without any possibility of appeal or retaliation:

The Programmers. Suppose that at time t_0 , Buggy and Freddy are isolated from each other and given the following task. Each must program down to the last detail how a (nearly) omnipotent robot army will control the other person's life from t_1 until his death. Each is free to program the robot army that will control the other however he wants, including its leaving the other completely free to do whatever he wants or its whipping him when and only when he looks at a can of Diet Pepsi. After t_1 Buggy and Freddy - and the respective robot armies that control them - will be completely causally isolated from each other no matter what happens (the only causal contact Buggy and Freddy ever have over their complete life histories is to program at t_0 how each others' lives will go from t_1 onward).

While Buggy and Freddy clearly have the ability to make whatever interventions in each others' lives they want with complete impunity, it does not seem that Civic Republicans would want to describe this scenario as one in which Buggy and Freddy have "arbitrary power" over one another. More importantly, I do not think that we have intuitions to the effect that the mere fact that Buggy and Freddy can interfere in each others' lives constitutes an objectionable form of unfreedom. The Programmers scenario should seem frightening, but this is only because I have not yet told you that Buggy and Freddy both have iron-clad dispositions to program their respective robot armies never to interfere with the other person. With this stipulation added, it seems clear to me, anyway, that neither Buggy nor Freddy are unfree in the same problematic way that Scott is when Mike owns him, and that we do not have the same reasons to change Buggy and Freddy's situation as we do to change Mike and Scott's. In this respect the mere possibility of interference in The Programmers seems more akin to the *unproblematic* mere possibility of debilitation in Potential Invalid.

What distinguishes the scenario of Benevolent Master, in which we do have an intuition of a problematic form of unfreedom, from The Programmers in which we do not, is exactly that the former involves a drastic asymmetry of the power of interference with another's life, whereas the later involves a perfect parity of such power. The distinctively *problematic* sense in which Mike has arbitrary power over Scott is thus not simply that he can do what he likes to Scott with impunity, but that Scott has no comparable power over Mike. It seems, then, that our intuitions in favor of Civic Republicanism are ultimately intuitions that a certain, problematic kind of

unfreedom is constituted by some sort of *inequality* of agents' standing in regard to the power they have over each other.

This understanding of Civic Republicanism as ultimately the view that a certain problematic kind of unfreedom is constituted by unequal power relationships is not novel. Pettit seems to hint at it, especially in his description of the typical psychological recognition of the power relationship on the part of those subject to (unequal) arbitrary power:

[The fact that a power bearer could interfere arbitrarily] means that the victim of power acts in the relevant area by the leave, explicit or implicit, of the power bearer; it means that they live at the mercy of that person, that they are in the position of a dependent or debtor or something of the kind. If there is common knowledge of that implication, as there usually will be, it follows that the victim of power cannot enjoy the psychological status of an equal: they are in a position where fear and deference will be the normal order of the day, not the frankness that goes with intersubjective equality (Pettit 1996, 86).

But Elizabeth Anderson has recently been explicit about this understanding of the Civic Republican view as concerned with equal power relations:

In the classic Republican formula, to be unfree is to be subject to the arbitrary will of another. This is the state of subordination, of inequality. To cast off relations of domination is to live as a free person. Thus, the quest for freedom is the quest for a mode of relating to others in which no one is dominated, in which each adult meets every other adult member of society eye to eye, as an equal (Anderson 2008, 6).

I believe, however, that the value of this interpretation of Civic Republican freedom as identical to standing in equal power relationships with others has yet to be fully appreciated. In addition to squaring our intuitions about Benevolent Master with both Potential Invalid and The Programmers, it allows us to subsume what is problematic about certain forms of arbitrary power under the more general phenomenon of unequal power relationships. A problem for formulations of Civic Republicanism freedom exclusively in terms of the absence of *arbitrary* power is that certain instances of what it seems should be classified as unfreedom in the Civic Republican sense are constituted by subjection to power that it would be strange to call "arbitrary," as it is just as well regulated by legal and other institutional constraints as any. Here is one:

Protected Underclass. Suppose there is a country as well regulated by laws as any developed nation, but where all members of race R are, simply on account of being members of R, required by law to spend their entire lives working in forced labor camps. The arrangement is, however, quite unlike most forced labor scenarios history has seen. Members of R retain well enforced legal rights to own property and not to be assaulted; they have equal access to high quality legal representation, their complaints against camp

guards and others are taken very seriously, and they serve as equal partners on juries at the trials of those accused of infringing on the rights of members of R. Guards and other members of society consequently have very little discretion in how they treat members of race R; they are answerable for this treatment and must justify it within Rs' legal rights.

I think that we get the intuition that the members of race R are problematically unfree in the same way Scott is when the slave of Mike the benevolent master, even though it seems that no one has an *arbitrary* power of interference with the members of R. Pettit (1996, 587-588) seems to insist that in such situations there must be a legislature, or author of a tradition, or in any event someone who has the power to change the laws who counts as having arbitrary power over the members of R. But suppose the society received its laws in such a way that no one intentionally crafted their content – the society might have agreed to accept as its constitution the first coherent command spelled out by a random text generator like a thousand monkeys typing at a thousand typewriters. Suppose further that almost every member of society (including the Rs) has an almost iron-clad disposition to dismiss as silly anyone who claims that society should do other than what the monkeys typed. I think that we still get our intuitions that the members of race R are problematically unfree in the same way as Scott when he is Mike's slave.

Pettit (1997, 1999, 2001) and Richardson (2002) propose alternative accounts of what counts as “arbitrary” power, in such a way that the power wielded by guards and others over members of race R in the Protected Underclass scenario would turn out to count as “arbitrary.” While I lack the space to address these accounts in detail, I think that they all attempt to make our notion of ARBITRARINESS do more work than it really can. While there is a problematic form of hierarchical power relationship in Protected Underclass, it simply does not seem capturable by talk of ‘arbitrary power’ in any familiar sense. What seems problematic about the power hierarchy in Protected Underclass just is that non-Rs have more power over the lives of Rs than vice versa. The interpretation of Civic Republicanism as the view that an objectionable form of unfreedom is constituted by unequal power relationships can explain how Protected Underclass is problematic in the same way as Benevolent Master, while admitting that there is no arbitrary power in Protected Underclass.

At the same time, the general interpretation of Civic Republicanism as concern about unequal power relationships can explain how instances of genuinely arbitrary power, of the kind wielded by masters over slaves and many actual world camp guards over prisoners, can indeed constitute central cases of problematic unfreedom in the Civic Republican sense. In most actual world scenarios, having the ability to do whatever you want to someone with impunity will contribute to one's having a disproportionate amount of power over her. Moreover, I think that

Frank Lovett (2001) in effect suggests quite plausibly that a relaxation of regulations on M's power over S will increase M's power over S *to a greater degree* the more arbitrary M's power over S already is. For I think that the best way to interpret Lovett's factor analysis of domination is as an analysis of the various factors that give one individual power over another, according to which arbitrariness is one but by no means the only factor that contributes to such power.⁶

4. The Intrinsic Value of Equal Power Relations

If, as I have suggested, Civic Republicanism is indeed best understood as the view that an important kind of freedom is constituted by standing in equal power relationships to others, the view is very close to what Anderson (1999) calls 'Democratic Egalitarianism'. According to this view, social relationships of unequal power are intrinsically objectionable. One way Anderson, like Pettit cited above, seeks to bring out the objectionable features of unequal power relationships is by vividly painting their typical effects on behavior and subjective experience, as she does in the following passages:

While natural poverty is unfortunate, poverty induced by oppressive social relations is inherently degrading, humiliating...To get what they need to survive, the [oppressed poor] are reduced to groveling, begging for mercy before their social superiors, and bound by obligations of deference and loyalty to whoever grants them the favor of subsistence. They must live at others' beck and call, humble themselves in their presence, and live in fear of their arbitrary wrath...

Consider state C, which includes the members of an absolute monarch's court. He feeds them generously at his table, grants them lavish gifts, and offers them well-paid sinecures. Nevertheless, they live at his mercy....they are reduced to mere sycophants, bootlickers. The monarch may spare them self-abasement through his own gracious condescension. But mutual recognition of the gratuitousness of the monarch's conduct still extracts humbling deference from his dependents (Anderson 2008, 3).

As problematic as these kinds of effects on subjective experience and behavior are, I believe that the intuitions in favor of Civic Republicanism help bolster Anderson's (2008) claim that the kinds of social inequality that give rise to them are actually "objectionable in [themselves]." For our intuitions, recall, were that Scott is still problematically unfree when he

⁶ This interpretation of Lovett's analysis departs from his own official interpretation, according to which power over another individual is not the analysandum but one argument among others in the analysans (see Lovett, 106-107). But I think that what he claims is "power over another" in the analysans is not really this; as he tends to suggest on p.107-108 it is rather something more like power to do things simpliciter. Similarly, what he calls degrees of "domination" do not plausibly seem to be this when they are equalized. As we may see from our case of The Programmers, significant but equal control of one another's' lives (of the kind that is a function of resources, dependence, and whatever institutional constraints there may be) does not seem aptly described as "mutual domination," but rather "equal but significant power over one another."

is Mike's slave, *even if* Scott is so secure in his knowledge that Mike will never interfere with him that the power relationship never actually causes Scott to feel any deference or behave deferentially towards Mike. If I am correct that the kind of problematic unfreedom we are picking up on in Benevolent Master is identical to a state of others' having a disproportionate amount of power over one, ours are intuitions that this kind of inequality is problematic above and beyond any effects on behavior or subjective experience they may have.

Indeed, the phenomenon of adaptive preferences may suggest that our Civic Republican intuitions about the intrinsic objectionability of unequal social relations may apply to more than carefully constructed hypothetical cases. As Sen observes:

The most blatant forms of inequalities and exploitations survive in the world through making allies out of the deprived and the exploited. The underdog learns to bear the burden so well that he or she overlooks the burden itself. Discontent is replaced by acceptance, hopeless rebellion by conformist quiet, and – most relevantly in the present context – suffering and anger by cheerful endurance. As people learn to survive to adjust to the existing horrors by sheer necessity of uneventful survival, the horrors look less terrible in the metric of utilities [e.g. preference or subjective experiences] (Sen, 1984).

In such cases in which the powerless “learn to bear their burden so well that they overlook the burden itself,” the powerless may well have adapted their preferences in such a way that actual interference is no longer necessary to make them behave as the powerful want. The powerless may come to accept their situation in such a way that they no longer feel degraded or humiliated by it. The powerless may even have put the fact of their inferior power so out of mind that they may no longer actually feel or display anything recognizable as deference.⁷ But our intuitions are surely that these psychological adjustments in no way erase the problematic form of unfreedom or inequality that have ceased to register in the minds of the dominated. Perhaps what typically makes the experiences of humiliation and felt deference so bad is just that they are recognitions of the fact that one stands in an unequal relationship, in which another person has over one a disproportionate amount of power.

It seems, then, that there are substantial direct intuitions in favor of the view that unequal power relations are problematic, and our Civic Republican intuitions support the claim that these power relations are *intrinsically* objectionable. I also think that the intrinsic disvalue of unequal power helps us to identify a difference between Benevolent Master and Potential Invalid that is of intuitive normative relevance. This is that the bare fact that Mike could interfere with Scott in Benevolent Master constitutes an intrinsically objectionable social inequality, whereas the bare

⁷ Which might not be too difficult, at least most of the time, if the powerful tend to exert their power impersonally and from a distance, more after the fashion of emperors, monarchs, and dictators than village headmen.

fact that Scott could contract a debilitating illness constitutes no such intrinsically problematic state of affairs. This attractive explanation of the relevant difference helps bolster our Republican intuitions and secure them from being debunked as just another irrational obsession with mere possibilia. There seems, then, to be a significant degree of mutually vindictory support between our Republican intuitions about cases and our direct intuitions in favor of the principle that power inequalities are intrinsically problematic.

I have thus argued that there is significant reason to think that freedom in the Civic Republican sense amounts to the equality of power relations, and that such equality is important in itself. I believe that the intrinsic importance of this kind of social equality is what gives us reason to care about freedom in the Civic Republican sense, even though, as I argued in Section 2, concern for Civic Republican freedom is not supported by general considerations of freedom's contribution to either welfare or agents' autonomous control of their lives. But I moreover think that there is an important way in which realizing how independent concerns about Republican freedom are from general concerns about welfare and autonomy can actually help us appreciate the distinctive importance of social equality.

One might think that the kind of social equality that matters is that everyone in society is equally well off, or that everyone has equal autonomous control of her own life, or that everyone has equal effective opportunity to live her life as she wants.⁸ Some, like Anderson (1999) deny that the distribution of welfare, autonomy, and effective opportunity are legitimate institutional or policy objectives. Although I have no space to address this view in detail, I fear that the considerations alleged to support it conflate the fact that some people might feel offended by a view with evidence that bears on its truth, and conflate the outweighing of our reasons to make certain interventions with the absence of any reasons to make them. But even if we have, as I certainly think we have, reasons to shape our institutions in such a way as to achieve a just distribution of welfare, autonomy, and opportunity, the just distribution might not be an equal distribution. I think that Derek Parfit (1995) gives us excellent reason to think it is not.

As Parfit observes, one way in which we can achieve greater equality of welfare is to take welfare away from those who are already well off, without in any way improving the welfare of those who are badly off. Parfit invites us to consider a "divided world" in which group A and group B are unaware of each others' existence and have no causal contact. The people in groups A and B are equally deserving and the same in all other relevant respects. Parfit then invites us to consider two possible states of affairs:

⁸ See e.g. Nagel (1979), Sen (1980), and Arneson (1989).

(S₁) The people in both group A and group B are well off to degree X

(S₂) The people in group A are well to degree X and the people in group B are better off.

If we were to think that the kind of equality that matters in its own right is equality of welfare, we should have to think that S₁ is better in some respect than S₂. But if we bear in mind that groups A and B are completely causally isolated, it can look absurd to think we have any reason to prefer S₁ to S₂. How could the mere fact that people in group B lose welfare, while people in group A gain nothing from it, make S₁ better? Parfit calls this the ‘Leveling Down Objection’ to the view that equal welfare is intrinsically desirable.

As Parfit also observes, we certainly do seem to have intuitions to the effect that the pattern of distribution of welfare matters, and indeed that distributive concerns make some states in which there is less welfare better than some in which there is more. For instance, we might think it rational to prefer a world in which members of both group A and group B are well off to degree 145 to one in which the As are well to degree 100 and the Bs are well off to degree 200 (where As and Bs are equally numerous). But in light (*inter alia*) of the leveling down objection, Parfit argues quite plausibly that our distributive intuitions support not egalitarianism but rather the view he calls Prioritarianism, namely that benefits to people contribute more to making the world a better place the worse off these people are.

I believe that similar versions of the leveling down objection can be used to argue against egalitarianism and in favor of Prioritarianism about the distribution of agents’ autonomous control over their lives and effective opportunity to live as they want. For instance, we may simply alter Parfit’s divided world cases so that in S₁ the As and Bs both have the ability to do all and only things in capability set C, whereas in S₂ the As have capability set C but the Bs have capability set C ∪ D, where D contains some significant capabilities that C does not. It does not seem that the mere fact that the Bs have more capabilities in S₂ gives us any reason to prefer S₂ to S₁. Similarly, the mere fact that a causally isolated A lacks the ability to φ in no way seems to weaken one’s reasons not to interfere with a B’s autonomous decision to φ. But we do presumably think it a priority to get opportunities to those who are most deprived of them, and there will be cases in which doing so will be worth depriving those with more opportunities of some of theirs.

It seems, then, that we do not have reason to level down any of welfare, capabilities, or agents’ autonomous control of their lives, and to that extent we should not be strict egalitarians about the distribution of these things. But Republicanism supports, I think plausibly, the thought that there is something we should still be strict egalitarians about, namely agents’ power over each other. The idea here is not merely that Republicanism supports the highly plausible claim

that we have reason to take power away from the powerful if that is the only way to decrease the power imbalance between them and the powerless. This is usually a means of simultaneously *both* decreasing the power the powerful have over the powerless *and* increasing the power the powerless have over the powerful. I do not simply mean that *these* kinds of changes are good in a respect. Let M and S be in a relationship in which M has more power over S than S has over M. What I claim is that it is plausible to think, as Republicanism understood as egalitarianism about power relationships entails, that simply decreasing M's freedom from S's power over him is in a respect good, *even if this in no way decreases the power M has over S*.

Return to our case of The Programmers, in which Bugsy and Freddy at t_0 have vast but equal power over each other in the form of complete control of the robot armies that will be able to control every aspect of their lives from t_1 onward. Consider now an alteration of this case in which Bugsy no longer has the ability to program the robot army that may control Freddy, but Freddy retains his power to program the army that may control Bugsy in any way he likes. It seems to me, at least, that this state of affairs is manifestly worse in a respect than the original scenario of The Programmers. For in the altered case, Bugsy now seems intuitively to be completely subjugated by Freddy, or "at Freddy's mercy," in much the same problematic way Scott is subjugated and at Mike's mercy in Benevolent Master. Although Freddy has the same power over Bugsy in the original case of The Programmers, the mere fact that Bugsy has the same power over Freddy seems to remove this intuitively problematic appearance of subjugation.

Another way in which Civic Republicanism helps to make sense of our intuitions about equality's importance is that the kind of equality it identifies as intrinsically important can only exist between people in some kind of social relation. Or it does so long as we construe causal contact between beings as sufficient for a "social relation" between them. Parfit (1995) observes that one might try to defend egalitarianism about welfare from his leveling down objection by:

- (1) noting that it is more plausible to think that we should level down welfare (or anyway resources) between members of the same society, and
- (2) claiming that equality of welfare is important between people in the same society but not between people like the As and Bs who live in different societies.

But Parfit points out that it is hard to see why equality of welfare between co-socials should matter *intrinsically*, but similar equalities between others should be irrelevant. Parfit observes that inequalities (most plausibly, I think, of *resources*) between co-socials "can produce conflict, or envy, or put some people in the power of others" in a way inequalities between those of different societies cannot, giving the former kind of equality less desirable *typical effects* than the

latter. But the egalitarian claim that the former inequality is while the latter is not intrinsically bad seems, while coherent, quite implausible.

While I certainly find Parfit's argument against the claim in (2) compelling, I think it is worth asking what genuinely accounts for our intuitions in (1) concerning the extent to which within-group resource inequalities really matter more. There certainly seem to be many cases in which it is drastically more important to increase the resources of a society's poor than to maintain those of its rich – or perhaps even good in a respect to level down resources – where the inequalities brew no social conflict. It also seems hard to treat irrational feelings of envy on the part of the poor as a serious reason to prefer states in which resources are distributed more equally. But as D'Arms and Jacobson (2006) have plausibly contended, it is fitting to envy someone only if there really is a relative difference between one's possessions and hers that makes one worse off. So unless we have independent reasons to think it particularly bad for a society's poor to have less than it's rich, the envy of the poor seems to do little to make the inequality worse.

The only factor left that Parfit suggests may make inequalities worse among socially connected individuals is exactly that such resource inequalities would put the poor in the power of the rich. Civic Republicanism's ability to vindicate the intrinsic relevance of this factor enables the view to capture our intuitions about the greater importance of resource equality between individuals in causal contact with each other. Also, a plausible way in which unequal power relationships are intrinsically bad is that they are intrinsically bad for those with less power – not because they lack any general abilities, or because of their unpleasant subjective experiences, but simply because they are in an inferior social position. Recalling D'Arms and Jacobson's fittingness condition on envy, we can see that this might go some way to showing how envying those with more resources in one's own society can be appropriate, whereas envying those outside it makes less sense.

5. Rethinking Exploitation and Dependence

I think that it is difficult for some of us who have a certain background in economics to take seriously much of the talk that goes on about economic exploitation and economic dependence. We have no (non-aesthetic) qualms when exploitation talk is about situations in which there are genuine informational asymmetries or violently coercive acts. We similarly have no qualms when talk of economic dependence is about people who have a diminished ability to earn a living, like the very young, the disabled, the elderly, and those barred from employment by unjust laws and social conventions. What we have problems with is, for instance, complaints

about the exploitation of export processing workers in developing countries who come from the countryside knowing what to expect, or who can at least exit the industry without much cost. We similarly have problems with complaints that rural families who sell their farms, as happens in the standard course of agricultural development, have sadly lost their economic independence.

It takes no controversial assumptions about the nature of welfare and choice to believe that these workers and families make the economic decisions they do because they improve their lives. With increased real income also comes increased opportunities and effective freedoms, and movement away from self contained rural communities frees individuals from various traditionally imposed constraints on choice.⁹ Also, the complaints about lost independence I have in mind are often made about families who have in fact reduced their exposure to acute malnutrition and illness. When welfare, personal autonomy, and indeed security from disaster are improved in these ways, it is difficult to understand the legitimacy of complaints about exploitation and dependence.

I continue to believe that we are justified in being skeptical of these complaints. Too often they are advanced in ignorance, or in the grip of false economic theory, or indeed as cover for defending the privileges of the somewhat poor from the needs of the desperately poor. But I believe that the evidence in favor of Civic Republicanism, when we interpret it as I have argued we should interpret it, gives us reason not to dismiss these complaints out of hand. This evidence suggests that unequal power relations are intrinsically bad; that their badness need not trace to generally deleterious effects on welfare or agents' autonomous control of their lives. So long as we continue to look only at the welfare and autonomy of those alleged to be exploited, we may see nothing but improvement, and thus fail to see how anything could be amiss. But if I am right that we should not care about equal power relations, or freedom in the Civic Republican sense, simply because of its affects on welfare and autonomy, our exclusive focus on these obviously important factors may blind us to something else of importance. What we may have missed is the intrinsic importance of being such that no one exercises disproportionate power over one, and this is a respect in which things *may* be worse for those who take up export processing work or sell their farms.

I stress 'may', because in many scenarios those who are alleged to have become exploited or dependent have actually decreased the extent to which they are dominated. This is surely the case with many women who use export processing work to drastically decrease their dependence on others. We would also do well to remember that while equal power relationships may be one thing that is important, they are not the only thing. Significant welfare and autonomy gains that come at the price of some increases in the extent to which one is dominated

⁹ See e.g. Sen (1999), Sachs (2005).

may very well be worthwhile. But there are reasons to think that the importance of equal power relations cannot be outweighed by merely trivial gains in welfare or autonomous control. If Pettit (1997) is right, many people have given up a great deal of personal welfare and autonomy to free themselves from domination in the course of struggles like the American Revolution, and I venture to say that they were not irrational.

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