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History R1B

Source Reviews for Republicanism Topics

Two topics that are intrinsically tied to the concept of republicanism are majority rule and citizenship. Major critiques of majority rule were popularized shortly after the American Revolution, both in America and in Europe, by authors such as Burke and Mill. Another topic essential to the philosophy of the republicanism is the idea of a politically active citizen who is able to participate public affairs. Two states that come up frequently in the discussion of citizenship in European republics are the Dutch Republic and the French Republic. The Dutch Republic offers interesting case studies with regards to immigration and integration of migrants into Dutch society. As products of the French Revolution, the policies of the French Republic are studied in great detail, and what citizenship meant to the French people is a difficult question to fully answer.

The concept of the tyranny of the majority was of particular importance to the Founding Fathers of America, especially to Federalists like James Madison and John Adams. Other European authors such as Edmund Burke, Alexis de Tocqueville, and John Stuart Mill wrote pieces detailing the flaws of majority rule. In Maletz's "Tocqueville's Tyranny of the Majority Reconsidered," Maletz takes a look at the some of the arguments against majority rule in Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. These include, in particular, an argument that majoritarianism stifles intellectual curiosity. In his piece, Maletz defends Tocqueville's argument that the collectivized thinking and decision making of a mob rule prevents those with the most intelligence from enacting influential changes on their own. Engster also looks at *Democracy in*

America in his “Democracy in the Balance: The Role of Statist, Liberal, and Republican Institutions in Tocqueville's Theory of Liberty,” but he instead reflects on the argument that liberty is only preserved when there is a balance of statist, liberal, and republican institutions, as a government which only utilizes one of those forms will devolve into tyranny and a democratic liberty will not exist. In Jacob’s “John Stuart Mill on the Tyranny of the Majority,” Jacob considers the role of class in Mill’s thoughts on the tyranny of the majority. He suggests that Mill operated on two different conceptions on tyranny in his works and that his earlier works, such as “Civilization” and *On Liberty*, conceived of a middle class tyranny whereas his later works, such as “Considerations on Representative Government,” assumed a lower class tyranny.

The early Dutch Republic was a favorite destination for many immigrants in the 16th and 17th centuries. In Maas’s “Immigrant integration, gender, and citizenship in the Dutch Republic,” he analyzes immigration patterns and the effects of these migrants on the urbanization of the Dutch republic. According to Maas, the creation of a modern Dutch nation-state and its “Golden Age” was heavily reliant on the integration of immigrants into the Dutch community and the changing definitions of citizenship. One case study of immigration effects on the Dutch Republic is Israel’s “Sephardic Immigration into the Dutch Republic, 1595–1672.” In it, Israel considers the economic causes and effects of the mass immigration of Sephardic Jews to the Dutch Republic at the peak of the movement. The article also focuses on the international relations of the Dutch Republic and how international politics created a sizable Dutch Jew community. Zanden and Prak’s “Towards an economic interpretation of citizenship: The Dutch Republic between medieval communes and modern nation-states” analyzes the connection between citizenship and the political economy of the Dutch Republic. They look at the

advantages and disadvantages of having a privileged citizen class and how it helped the Dutch Republic defeat the Spaniards.

Enlightenment writers such as Montesquieu and Rousseau wrote about many of the concepts that are present in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, a human rights declaration that was written during the French Revolution. This document, among other things, reflects the changing attitudes of intellectuals towards citizenship. In *The French Revolution and the meaning of citizenship*, the argument is made that modern citizenship was defined during the French Revolution. Its authors believe that there were changes to the rights and duties of the everyday citizen because of the dramatic change in government institutions among as well as other factors such as the introduction of new forms of communication and military structuring. Brubaker's "The French Revolution and the Invention of Citizenship" also seeks to explain how crucial the revolution was to the development of modern definitions of citizenship. He argues that the general membership status of a citizen was strengthened and the boundaries of membership were also strongly codified.

Another scholar who tackles the challenge of understanding the definition of citizenship during the French Revolution is Michael Rapport, who writes about the treatment of foreigners in *Nationality and Citizenship in Revolutionary France: The Treatment of Foreigners 1789-1799*. He points out that the way foreigners were supposed to be handled, according to revolutionary rhetoric, was vastly different than the way they were actually treated. Rapport first notes that the French Revolution was a cosmopolitan movement and thus those who were cosmopolitan were in some sense French patriots. Eighteenth century France was a home to many foreign nationals and what rights citizenship provided that foreigners had no access to was

unclear (in theory, they were restricted from many, but foreigners of importance to state had workarounds in place). In accordance with Enlightenment thinking, foreigners during the early part of the Revolution were given the many of the same rights that French nationals were given. Thomas Paine, an American who did not speak French, was even elected to the French National Convention. However, the indifferent attitudes towards foreign nationals in France did not last.

Soon, French opponents of the Revolution were seen as less dangerous than foreign nationals, even those who sympathized with the movement. Thomas Paine was almost executed during the Terror, and he believed that his British citizenship was the reason he was suspected of treasonous plots. He was certified an American citizen by Monroe and was not killed, but many other foreign nationals were not as lucky and the ones who were perceived to be most allied with the Girondins were killed. Rapport describes anecdotes of both important foreigners and everyday foreign nationals such as soldiers, students, and merchants earlier in the book and they help to demonstrate the true effects of the Terror on foreign victims. However, foreign status again became unimportant and the government utilized the skills of foreigners as before.

Along with historical analysis of the time period, Rapport also covers in some detail the experiences of the foreign nationals in the French Republic. He clearly defangs the argument that revolutionary policy reject all foreigners, which is a claim that is often made regarding the French Revolution. In his conclusion, he remarks that the Revolution was not able to effect massive changes to the governmental definition of citizenship with regards to foreigners and that they were still allowed to live with some of the same rights as citizens. Because of the relatively short timeframe that Rapport is analyzing, he is able to discuss the role of foreigners and citizenship in each phase of the French Revolution in great detail. He shows that the

revolutionary rhetoric that was used to form the republic was simply rhetoric and did not make much change with regards to citizenship policy.

Rapport begins to address the populace's definition of citizenship, and hints at the idea that official rhetoric was completely opposed to the popular notions of citizenship. A helpful addition to the Rapport's analysis would have been the perception of foreigners at the commoner level. To understand in more detail what a participant in one of the revolts felt about foreigners being able to control part of their government would have been a useful inclusion. He does include an anecdote about an order put out by the National Convention stating that all British and Hanoverian prisoners of war should be put to death. However, the decree was ignored by all commanders except for one, indicating that the military system thought it was ridiculous. A similar anecdote in the normal civilian sphere would help clarify popular conceptions of citizenship. It would also be interesting for there to be a broad analysis of foreigner from different nationalities in addition to the anecdotal stories of different foreigners that were included. The treatment of a British citizen as opposed to an American citizen is clearly evident in the Thomas Paine example, and more analysis on whether or not a Spanish or Austrian citizen would have been treated differently from each other would be intriguing (assuming that they would be the same in the eyes of the law).

Tyranny of the majority is a very thought-provoking topic because it rejects the sentiment that collectivized decision making creates the most fair results. Tocqueville seems fond of a meritocratic style of government, and perhaps he would be fond of Plato's philosopher-king. How an abandonment of rationality should be treated in a republic is another fascinating question that could be answered.

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