



Republicanism

Introduction to Political Theory
Department of Political Economy
King's College London



I. Citizenship and the Common Good

II. Aristocratic or Plebian Republicanism?

III. Freedom as Non-Domination

Citizenship and the Common Good

Liberalism: Defense of *private liberty* and the *right to be left alone*

Republicans: But what about the *common good*? About *citizenship*? About our *duties and obligations*?

Citizenship and the Common Good

Broad tradition of political thought that focuses on *free citizenship as a status* and the importance of living in a *free state* governed by democratic institutions and a virtuous citizenry

Citizenship and the Common Good

Three Moments

1. Athens and Rome
2. Renaissance Italy (especially Florence)
3. American and British revolutions

Citizenship and the Common Good

Citizenship

Freedom means being a *citizen* with equal legal and political standing, as opposed to a slave

Citizenship and the Common Good

The Common Good

Sustaining freedom requires citizens to *act virtuously* and *be committed to the common good*

Citizenship and the Common Good

Public and Private Power

Any situation where *one individual wields uncontrolled power over another is objectionable*, even if it is a private actor (say a boss, or a husband)

Citizenship and the Common Good

Liberal Worries About Republicanism

1. Requires cultural homogeneity for there to be a common good
2. Valorizes participation in politics above other reasonable activities
3. Only works at small scale





Aristocratic or Plebian Republicanism?

Plebian Republicanism

The many (poor) and the few (wealthy)
have fundamentally opposed interests

Need to empower the many and include
them in government so as to check the
few.

Aristocratic or Plebian Republicanism?

“if we examine the aims which the nobles and the commons respectively set before them, we shall find in the former a great desire to dominate, in the latter merely a desire not to be dominated over, and hence a greater attachment to freedom, since they have less to gain than the others by destroying it. Wherefore, when the commons are put forward as the defenders of liberty, they may be expected to take better care of it, and, as they have no desire to tamper with it themselves, to be less apt to suffer others to do so.”

Machiavelli I.V

Aristocratic or Plebian Republicanism?

Aristocratic Republicanism

All members of a society have the same interest in realizing the common good

Need to empower those who are *best able to perceive the common good*.

Aristocratic or Plebian Republicanism?

“to refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations. Under such a regulation, it may well happen that the public voice, pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by the people themselves, convened for the purpose.” Federalists No. 10

Freedom as Non-Domination

Neo-Republicanism: Update republican tradition to deal with these concerns

Central idea: Freedom as non-domination

Like liberal freedom, a *negative ideal*, but captures best of republican tradition

Freedom as Non-Domination

“On the traditional or classical republican view...freedom consists not in the absence of interference, but rather in the absence of subjection to any individual or body that operates like a master.”

Lovett and Pettit, 14

Freedom as Non-Domination

The Benevolent Slave Master

Consider two individuals

Same available choices

One is *enslaved*, but their master reliably allows them a broad range of choices

Freedom as Non-Domination

Does it make sense to speak of those two individuals as *equally free*?

According to Berlin's freedom as non-interference: yes!

But that seems wrong

Freedom as Non-Domination

Freedom as Non-Domination

Your choices must be *robust* over
alternative worlds

Robust: You can make that choice even in
possible worlds where other people
choose or act differently

Freedom as Non-Domination

Arbitrary Power

Emphasis on *possible worlds* focuses us
on *arbitrary power*

Does anyone have the *capacity* to
interfere in your choices, even if they
usually do not?

Freedom as Non-Domination

<i>Non-Frustration</i>	<i>Non-Interference</i>	<i>Non-Domination</i>
Choice you desire	Multiple relevant choices	Multiple relevant choices
In this world	In this world	In relevant possible worlds

Freedom as Non-Domination

Domination without Interference

Can be dominated *even if the power never interferes in your choices*

Freedom as Non-Domination

Interference Without Domination

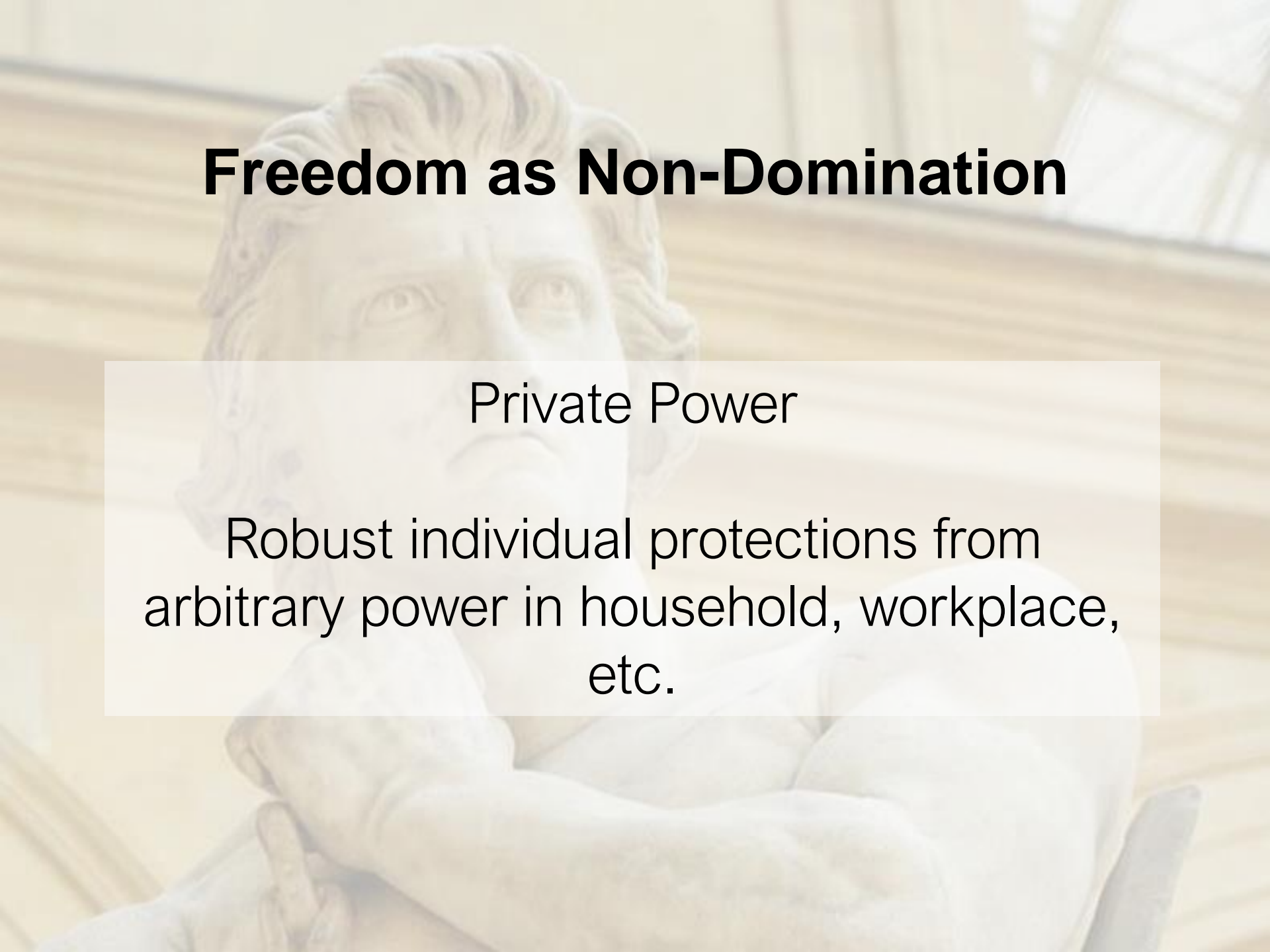
Could be interference by *non-arbitrary power* that is therefore not dominating
(i.e., if you violate the law)

Freedom as Non-Domination

Political Ideal of Freedom as Non-Domination

Live in a society where *no individual or group exercises uncontrolled power over you*


Freedom as Non-Domination



Private Power

Robust individual protections from arbitrary power in household, workplace, etc.

Freedom as Non-Domination



Public Power

System of contestatory democracy and citizen vigilance to ensure public power is non-arbitrary

Freedom as Non-Domination

Some Problems with Freedom as Non-Domination

What makes power *arbitrary*?

Uncontrolled?

But people's actions seem to have all sorts of uncontrolled effects on us

Freedom as Non-Domination

Solution: Not uncontrolled power in general, but power someone exercises over us *deliberately*

But are we dominated if, for example, the dean can change the color of flowerpots?

(example from Arnold and Harris 2017)

Freedom as Non-Domination

Solution: Not all uncontrolled power, but power that does not track the relevant or significant interests of the individual

But then are we back to the positive freedom?

Who defines the relevant interests and *how*?

Freedom as Non-Domination

Second problem: Is freedom as non-domination a “moralized” concept of freedom?

Moralized: Only identifies a reduction of freedom with *morally objectionable* restrictions

Conflates *being free* with *being subject to morally justified laws*

Freedom as Non-Domination

If we assume *deep disagreement*, then why should I view a law I disagree with as “tracking my interests” and so not a restriction on freedom?

Does neo-republicanism still assume something like *a shared common good*?

If so, is this realistic or viable given pluralism?

Freedom as Non-Domination

Is Pettit's neo-republicanism *aristocratic* or *plebian*?

Aristocratic: Emphasis on *tracking relevant interests* seems to enable elite rule so long as elites track common good

Plebian: Emphasis on *robust freedom in all domains* seems to generate critique of, i.e., workplace, gender, racial domination