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Republican Equality

Philip Pettit has argued that political liberty is nondomination.¹ People are free, according to his republican conception, when no one has the capacity to interfere arbitrarily with them. Pettit has also argued that the main alternative to republican freedom, the liberal ideal of freedom as noninterference, does not properly ground concern for securing distributive justice or alleviating the effects of poverty.² Not so, Pettit argues, for the republican ideal. It “requires a much more substantial commitment to redistribution.”³ Similarly, John Alexander has argued that a theory that features the republican ideal of freedom as nondomination can generate “a more radical ideal of social justice.”⁴

I argue that these claims are mistaken. The main idea is that policies promoting freedom as nondomination do not require addressing inequality per se. It is poverty that compromises citizens’ freedom as nondomination, not inequality. My argument for this comes by way of presenting a republican scheme for economic justice, an account of the support a commitment to promoting freedom as nondomination provides for redistributive policies aimed at addressing the moral problems raised by poverty. These are problems associated with people not having *enough*.⁵ In section 1, I rehearse Pettit’s doubts about the liberal conception of freedom as noninterference, and his arguments concerning the promise of republicanism, in relation to the issue of distributive justice. I begin presenting the alternative republican scheme of distributive justice in section 2. This presentation draws out the affinity that some, including Pettit, have noticed between the republican ideal and Amartya Sen’s capabilities approach to distributive justice. Section 3 presents the argument that the relevant affinity actually works against the idea that republicanism

¹Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

²Philip Pettit, “Republican Political Theory,” in Marc Fleurbaey, Maurice Salles, and John A. Weymark (eds.), *Justice, Political Liberalism, and Utilitarianism: Themes from Harsanyi and Rawls* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 389–410.

³*Ibid.*, p. 402.

⁴John M. Alexander, *Capabilities and Social Justice* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 149.

⁵See, e.g., Harry Frankfurt, “Equality as a Moral Ideal,” *Ethics* 98 (1987): 21–43.

supports a more demanding redistributive scheme than the alternative liberal ideal of liberty as noninterference, and replies to a series of objections to my more modest interpretation of republican commitments. I conclude in section 4.

1. Pettit's Concern and the Promise of Republicanism

Pettit is concerned about the practical policy implications of the liberal conception of freedom. If noninterference were the only ideal serving as the guiding principle for a society's basic institutions, or the standard with which to evaluate public policies, then the effect would be "not to require much in the way of distribution: not to require much in the way of what we intuitively describe as distributive justice."⁶ The reason is that, given that redistributive policies will always require government interference, for example, in taxing citizens, whether this interference will be ultimately justified by the liberal ideal of freedom depends on how much the redistributive policies reduce interference in society overall.⁷ There is, then, a presumption against redistribution within the liberal view that follows from its more general presumption against interference.

Generally, though, it would be difficult to establish that redistributive policies have the effect of reducing overall interference in a society, and we should be skeptical about claims that they do. Thinking that they have such an effect would require thinking that those who are economically advantaged relative to others will regularly use their economic advantages to interfere with them. Moreover, it would require supposing that they could regularly get away with utilizing their economic advantages in this way and that redistributive policies are the best way to prevent these interferences. But, as Pettit writes, "it is always going to be possible for the [liberal] to argue that as long as we do not think of the relatively advantaged as downright malicious, we must expect them not to be generally disposed to harm the disadvantaged and not to be generally in need of curtailment by the redistributive state."⁸

In fact, within one branch of liberal thought, libertarianism, proponents typically argue that so long as the relatively advantaged don't harm others or otherwise violate their freedom-as-noninterference, they don't do anything that the state should restrain as a matter of justice. Also, in cases in which the relatively advantaged do need to be restrained, it is

⁶Pettit, "Republican Political Theory," p. 403.

⁷Pettit is assuming here that like his preferred ideal, noninterference is a goal rather than a constraint.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 402. Pettit endorses this response: "it is a mistake to demonize the relatively advantaged and see them always as potential offenders" (p. 403).

always open for the liberal to argue that the best way of doing this is by way of a policy that does not redistribute any wealth. The liberal view of freedom acknowledges that it would be legitimate to interfere with the advantaged in order to prevent their interfering with the disadvantaged. But the appropriate interference the state undertakes may be to directly prevent whatever harmful or exploitative behavior the advantaged are perpetrating upon the disadvantaged rather than to redistribute wealth.

Pettit concludes from these considerations that “the maximal equal distribution of freedom as noninterference would leave a lot to be desired in regard to distribution: it would fall short, under most conceptions, of achieving distributive justice.”⁹ The maximal equal distribution of freedom as noninterference is compatible with stark inequalities in income and wealth. The promise offered by the maximal equal distribution of freedom as nondomination is that it provides justification for a posture that is, according to Pettit, “socially more radical.”¹⁰ It gives expression to “more demanding aspirations” with respect to redistribution than the liberal ideal of freedom as noninterference.¹¹

Why does he think so? Pettit’s view is that while we should be skeptical that redistributive policies will have the effect of reducing overall interference in a society, we have good reason to believe that policies aimed at reducing inequalities will have the effect of reducing overall *domination* in a society. There are two important ideas in Pettit’s republican ideal of freedom as nondomination. The first is that not all interference reduces a person’s freedom. Only arbitrary interference, interference that disregards certain interests of the person who is interfered with, does. The second is that not only arbitrary interference reduces a person’s freedom. A situation in which someone has the capacity to interfere arbitrarily does, too. According to Pettit, this means that nondomination does not fit neatly as either a strictly negative or strictly positive conception of liberty.¹² It is a negative conception inasmuch as it requires merely the absence of domination. It is a positive conception inasmuch as the absence of domination requires more than the absence of interference; it requires the *resilient* absence of interference or the absence of the power to interfere on an arbitrary basis. This requirement is consistent with, and depending on circumstances could entail, certain nonarbitrary interferences to promote freedom.

Republican equality primarily requires that everyone have a fundamentally equal political status as free citizens, which is constituted by the ideal of nondomination. It is what everyone owes to each other in the

⁹Ibid., p. 402.

¹⁰Pettit, *Republicanism*, p. 149.

¹¹Pettit, “Republican Political Theory,” p. 408.

¹²Pettit, *Republicanism*, p. 51.

political realm and it is to be guaranteed by the state. Republican institutional design aims to minimize instances in which someone is vulnerable to the arbitrary whims of others, whether or not they actually interfere. The republican ideal is not a distributive principle, nor is it preoccupied with altering the distribution of goods in a society. Rather, it is concerned with the existence in social relations of unchecked discretionary power, which induces dependency and the inability simply to pursue one's own projects and interests without the fear that others could interfere if they happen to disapprove. Since, however, there is an important economic aspect relevant to promoting this freedom, it does suggest a principle of distribution. A distribution is required that ensures no one possesses the capacity to interfere arbitrarily with anyone.

A republican theory of distributive justice begins with an account of the effects of poverty on people's republican freedom. Poverty induces vulnerability and makes domination by others likely, and this makes it a special concern to advocates of republicanism. More specifically, the state must make provision for citizens who are very poor if we are to plausibly claim that everyone's political freedom is being secured or promoted. The most straightforward reason it must is that people who are very poor are vulnerable to dependence, intimidation, and domination by others. Less advantaged citizens are left vulnerable to the arbitrary valuations and fluctuations of the market, which, in turn, leave them vulnerable to the arbitrary will of others.¹³ In such circumstances, in order to

¹³An anonymous referee makes the point that perhaps all market actors are in this position, because all market competition is a form of interference. For example, according to Pettit (*Republicanism*, p. 54), "I interfere with you if I destroy your custom by deliberately undercutting your prices." In that case, a commitment to nondomination may have radical implications beyond the issue of redistribution. But Pettit has also suggested that unless there are "great differences of bargaining power" (p. 205), this form of market competition doesn't by itself compromise anyone's freedom. In "Freedom in the Market" (*Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 5 (2006): 131-49), he argues that a variety of market practices are not freedom-compromising, because competitive activity is more like a natural impediment, and so not arbitrary. This is a vexed issue. Gerald Gaus ("Backwards Into the Future: Neo-Republicanism as a Post-Socialist Critique of Market Society," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 20 (2003): 59-91) has argued that republicans are committed to a basic presumption against market relations because any asymmetries in bargaining power in exchanges would be a form of domination. In the event, Gaus thinks republicanism is more radical than Pettit is willing to admit. How radical? As I write this, NBA players and team owners are deadlocked over which side will do slightly better in a near 50-50 split of \$4 billion in annual league revenues. If Gaus is right, then Pettit should think that the side that holds out longer and secures those extra millions of dollars has a negative effect on the other's freedom as nondomination. Yet Guido Pincione ("The Constitution of Nondomination," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 28 (2011): 261-89) argues that "procedural constitutional guarantees of market freedoms" are the best way of protecting people from domination. My argument in section 3 primarily addresses the issue of redistribution, but it also has implications for this more general one.

avoid physical privation, they may find it necessary to be mindful of the repercussions they could suffer if their choices strayed from what these others expected of them. They may, therefore, compensate for this uncertainty and insecurity by engaging in strategies designed to keep others from interfering with them. They could not with any great degree of disregard for the wishes and expectations of others simply make their own independent choices. The very poor, if they hope to avoid many of the harmful effects of poverty, are then forced to choose between bending to the wishes and expectations of others, thereby ensuring their good will, or becoming subject to more direct pressure if they do not.

For example, suppose that someone cannot provide for many of her more basic needs, or lacks an adequate education, or, because of her limited employment prospects, is exposed to her current employer's illicit treatment. In any of these cases others are in a position to take advantage. Even if they refrain from interfering, they still occupy a position of relative power with respect to her and can make use of it to effectively control the choices she makes.¹⁴ Because of her uncertain situation, she must be unduly attentive to the ways these others would react to the choices she would make. Or suppose that she is in a position of not being able to cover medical expenses should some emergency arise, or cover legal expenses in the event that she was charged with a crime or found it necessary to defend her interests in court. These types of emergencies would raise the likelihood of similar forms of arbitrary interference. She would be, in these circumstances, dependent on others and, therefore, unlikely to resist or report interference by others. And even if no medical or legal emergency arises, her being in that position of not being able to cover them should they do so exposes her to insecurity and domination by others. She may, therefore, find it wise to toady to the expectations and wishes of those on whom she would have to depend in the event that such an emergency did arise.

Consider, for example, an unskilled worker who countenances sexual harassment at her job because all other alternatives are so much worse. She is probably dominated in this sense. Yet she could avoid this vulnerability were she entitled to the provision of certain necessary requirements in the form of resources or capabilities in the event that she was unemployed. In that case she would be free of her dependence on her employer, enjoying relative security so that turning down unwelcome advances and reporting the harassment, and perhaps leaving to seek other employment, is a less risky and prohibitive option. More generally, she would enjoy economic independence in the sense that she need not de-

¹⁴See Pettit, *Republicanism*, pp. 85-87, and Stuart White, *The Civic Minimum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 47.

pend upon the beneficence of others or engage in strategies of subservience in order to secure that beneficence. She would not be vulnerable to domination.

If people are entitled to freedom as nondomination, then they are entitled to the provision of the necessary requirements to avoid or escape the capacity of others to interfere with them arbitrarily.¹⁵ This allows the state to interfere with people, say, by taxing them to fund various redistributive schemes, but not arbitrarily. A republican proposal along these lines permits the state to interfere with people for the sake of promoting freedom as nondomination. According to republicans, such interference does not have the effect of reducing political liberty; it establishes it. A commitment to nondomination leads to a commitment to redistributive policies aiming at economic independence.¹⁶

Yet even if this argument from vulnerability and dependence is fairly convincing, it greatly underdetermines the redistributive policies or policy goals aimed at eliminating the situations of vulnerability that would be justified. On the one hand, as I have been emphasizing in this section, Pettit often highlights in his comparison with the liberal conception of freedom as noninterference the idea that republicans will “be more radical in relation to social policy.”¹⁷ They will be more radical because their goal that no one be dominated by others suggests to them a reason to address inequalities in power and, therefore, wealth. After all, even if we shouldn’t generally view the wealthy as *disposed* to interfere with the disadvantaged, they still *could* use their resources to interfere with them. Therefore, this argument goes, the disadvantaged are vulnerable to domination by the relatively wealthy. On the other hand, Pettit is also often quite cautious in how he presents the redistributive policy initiatives of a republican regime. For example, he claims that such a regime can achieve its goal of securing the nondomination of its citizens “without necessarily having to embrace a material egalitarianism.”¹⁸ The relevant notion of economic independence, according to Pettit, is having “the wherewithal to operate normally and properly in your society without

¹⁵Pettit often suggests that they are entitled to more substantial provisions than the basic requirements (e.g., “Republican Political Theory,” p. 408). That they are so entitled, however, doesn’t necessarily mean that they will get them. It depends, Pettit argues, on feasibility constraints (*Republicanism*, p. 160). (More on this below in section 2.) Also, see Frank Lovett, “Domination and Distributive Justice,” *The Journal of Politics* 71 (2009): 817–30. Lovett argues for an unconditional basic income to address the vulnerability to domination of the less advantaged, but that it should be set as high as possible relative to feasibility constraints.

¹⁶Pettit, *Republicanism*, p. 159.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 149. And on the same page: “Their first inclination is going to be politically more optimistic and socially more radical.”

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 113.

having to beg or borrow from others, and without having to depend on their beneficence,” which he understands in terms of Amartya Sen’s account of having “the basic capabilities that are required for functioning in the local culture.”¹⁹ In the next section, I take up the apparent tension between the radical aspirations of republican distributive justice and the way this gets implemented as a more cautious set of redistributive policies. Two things are particularly important in this: first, understanding Pettit’s insistence that he is a consequentialist who thinks that political regimes should *maximize* nondomination;²⁰ and second, understanding the affinity that Pettit draws between his republican equality and Sen’s capabilities approach.

2. Nondomination and the Decisiveness of Individual Preferences

Pettit is committed to conceiving nondomination in a consequentialist or teleological light.²¹ Certain institutions, rules, and policies tend to do better than others when it comes to furthering the freedom-as-nondomination goal. This matter of institutional design is complicated by a tradeoff Pettit notices between furthering the intensity of nondomination enjoyed by people and furthering the extent of undominated choices they can make. The level of intensity of nondomination someone enjoys is measured by approximating how difficult it would be for another to interfere with her, or to what degree, or how arbitrarily. The extent of nondomination someone enjoys is measured by approximating the range of undominated choices a person could make, or undominated activities a person could pursue. This means that the republican goal can be promoted by increasing the intensity of nondomination by making people more insulated from domination and by broadening the range of people’s choices in which they are not subject to domination.

These two dimensions of freedom figure into Pettit’s distinction between ways in which a person’s freedom can be compromised and ways in which a person’s freedom can be conditioned.²² Freedom is compromised when someone is subject to domination. If the effect of some policy is to reduce domination, which is the only freedom-compromising factor, then the policy has increased both the intensity and extent of nondomination. Where various limitations, such as physical handicaps, make certain choices or actions out of reach for people, their freedom to pursue them is conditioned. If the effect of some policy is to expand the

¹⁹Ibid., p. 158.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 99 ff.

²¹Ibid., p. 97.

²²Ibid., p. 75.

range of choices for such a person, nullifying some of the effects of a handicap, then the policy has increased the extent of nondomination. This is because, other things being equal, people are freer in the relevant sense when their ability to make undominated choices is extended to heretofore inaccessible areas at some given level of intensity. At the same time, nonarbitrary interferences legitimately codified in law are freedom-conditioning, and not freedom-compromising, factors.

The distinction between these two dimensions of republican freedom helps Pettit to establish a priority rule within his general consequentialist framework: first address cases in which domination compromises people's freedom generally, then cases in which various limitations condition people's freedom in some respect or other. He writes:

The aim assigned to the state will be to do all it can to increase the intensity with which people enjoy non-domination and then, having achieved that goal, to look to the permissive and expansive means whereby it may increase the extent of undominated choice.²³

Pettit's commitment to maximizing nondomination implies that everyone's enjoyment of nondomination should be equally intense and that no inegalitarian initiatives are likely to result in a net increase in the intensity or extent of nondomination. The reason is that freedom as nondomination would not likely be maximized where it was distributed unequally. Policy initiatives that would lead to an unequal distribution of nondomination, where some would be at the mercy of others, would be implemented by a government that has become an agent of domination. We cannot say the same thing about some simply having a more extensive range of options than others. Pettit writes:

[A] republican regime which seeks to maximize non-domination is bound to avoid initiatives that leave the intensity of non-domination unequal, but no such stricture applies to its leaving the extent of non-domination—in effect, leaving material resources—unequal. Without necessarily having to embrace a material egalitarianism, then, republican consequentialism is required to support what we can describe as structural egalitarianism. [However,] There may be many reasons why republicanism should seek to reduce material inequalities.²⁴

It is in this sense that Pettit's republicanism is an egalitarian ideal, but it is a sense that does not have the advertised radical policy implications.

There is another side to this question. In section 1 I noted Pettit's endorsement of Sen's capabilities approach for securing the level of socioeconomic independence necessary for avoiding domination. His endorsement, moreover, is not just at the level of policy prescription, but derives from an affinity between their views concerning freedom. For

²³*Ibid.*, p. 106.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 113.

Sen, public entitlement benefits are justified in terms of enhancing “people’s real freedom,” their effective freedom to achieve well-being, or, more technically, capability for functioning.²⁵ A person’s well-being, according to Sen, is principally a matter of the functioning, the “beings and doings,” she actually achieves.²⁶ A person’s capabilities are represented by an n-tuple, where n is very high, of possible functioning, ranging from life expectancy and morbidity, friendship and satisfying work, and happiness and self-respect.²⁷ A person’s capabilities represent “the various combinations of functioning (beings and doings) that the person can achieve” and reflect “the person’s freedom to lead one type of life or another ... [or] to choose from possible livings.”²⁸ A person’s well-being, then, is primarily a matter of the vector of functioning actually achieved. Her freedom to achieve well-being, or her capability for functioning, is represented by the set of n-tuples (the combinations of beings and doings) lying within her reach. Sen offers the capabilities distributendum as the best currency for an egalitarian distributive principle. In assessments of justice, social welfare, and poverty, we should judge people equally well off if, and only if, they have the same capabilities for functioning.

Sen seems to have hit upon the capabilities idea in his early work on social choice. There he emphasized the importance of what he then called indirect liberty, which an agent realizes when things turn out as she would have chosen in a counterfactual circumstance.²⁹ She could be free in this sense even if she lacks direct control over the choice. All that is relevant to a person’s indirect liberty is that some outcome is overdetermined by the individual’s disposition to choose it in the counterfactual circumstance in which she has control over it. For Sen, the relevant sense of capability for functioning merely requires that an agent’s preferences be decisive over an outcome. Sen came to worry in later work that in cases in which people have adapted their preferences to their circumstances, it would be their circumstances rather than their preferences that were decisive over the outcome and, therefore, they would not enjoy the relevant sort of liberty. Dickens’s Tiny Tim is easily satisfied.³⁰ Such an agreeable boy, he doesn’t even need a wheelchair to be satisfied. But his unassuming nature should not be what makes the difference between whether or not he receives one. Similarly, it would make good

²⁵ Amartya Sen, *Inequality Reexamined* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 66.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁹ Amartya Sen, “Liberty and Social Choice,” *Journal of Philosophy* 80 (1983): 5-28.

³⁰ See G.A. Cohen, “Equality of What? On Welfare, Goods, and Capabilities,” in Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (eds.), *The Quality of Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 17.

sense for a prisoner to develop a cheery disposition in her circumstances and perhaps a preference for small, enclosed spaces to boot, but her doing so would not make her free. Therefore, a person's preference is decisive over two outcomes, say, her being released from prison or being behind bars, only if her ability to get the outcome she prefers is independent of the actual content of her preference. It is a preference that is decisive, independently of its content.³¹ If someone prefers to be released from prison in a choice between being released and being behind bars, but she only gets what she prefers if she prefers to be behind bars, then her preference is not decisive independently of its content. Similarly, if Tiny Tim prefers to sit on the floor and play in a choice between sitting on the floor and moving around in a wheelchair, but he only gets what he prefers if he prefers the former, then he isn't free in Sen's sense of enjoying content-independent decisive preference.

Pettit agrees, but argues that there is another aspect of decisive preference important for freedom. Imagine that your preferences routinely conflict with those of someone who is in a position to exercise arbitrary power over you. She has the capacity to interfere with you in ways that prevent your preferred outcomes from being realized. You might recognize this vulnerability and think to protect yourself from it by engaging in strategies designed to secure her good will and beneficence towards you. You flatter her or appease her preferences, effectively changing your own to adapt with hers, or possibly cash in on her good will in order to change her preferences to adapt with yours. As a result, you can engage in various activities depending on your preference for them, but only insofar as you can secure the other person's good will and beneficence. Without it, your preferences fail to be decisive.

This is an argument for the importance of decisive preferences being independent of anyone's favor, which can arbitrarily be granted or withdrawn at the whim of the giver. We shouldn't say that a person's preference is decisive if her preference for fasting would lead to her fasting, but had her preference been for eating, it would not have led to her eating. In such a case her preference is not decisive, independently of content. Similarly, we shouldn't say that a person's preference is suitably decisive if her preference for eating or fasting would lead to either eating or fasting only if she had somehow secured the favor or good will of some powerfully situated person or persons. Having decisive preference in both of these two senses is important for her *real* freedom. Lacking it, according to Pettit,

is quite consistent with the person's living in a position of total subjugation to another, [her preferred choice] being available just so far as the other happens to be a kindly or

³¹Philip Pettit, "Capability and Freedom: A Defence of Sen," *Economics and Philosophy* 17 (2001): 1-20.

gullible or evadable master. Let the master withdraw favour on a capricious basis, or let the agent become more careless or less competent in retaining that favour, and the decisiveness of the preference is immediately undermined. This sort of fragility is too great, I suggest, to allow us to think of favour-dependently decisive preference as sufficient for freedom.³²

A person whose preferences are realized, even routinely realized, but whose preferences are not decisive independently of the content of those preferences and independently of having secured another's favor, lacks a relevant form of independence necessary for republican freedom. This is true whether or not anyone is actually interfering with her, because even if no one is, her dependence on the favor of another in having her preferences realized makes her situation too contingent and fragile to account for what people take to be important about being free. Providing capability for functioning to citizens in poverty is the best way to overcome their vulnerability to domination and promote their freedom. Improved capabilities reduce domination by others who would otherwise be in a position to take advantage of their relative positions of power. They provide vulnerable citizens with insulation from the capacity of others to interfere arbitrarily with them, thereby increasing their freedom. They improve the position of the less well off relative to others so that they can enjoy independence from others in acting on their preferences. Their preferences can be decisive independently of the content of those preferences and independently of having secured anyone else's favor.

Alexander suggests that taking on these aspects of Pettit's republicanism supplements Sen's capabilities approach in a way that answers various criticisms "over the lack of radicalism in the capability approach."³³ For example, Alexander notes that state policies fail to address feminist concerns about power if they only improve women's capabilities; they must "simultaneously ensur[e] that the enjoyment of these capabilities is not dependent on the favour and the goodwill of others."³⁴ Similarly, according to A.K. Bagchi, problems associated with the use of sweatshop labor "escape Sen's critical scrutiny except insofar as they might have a direct impact on [the worker's] health or the health and education of her children" because Sen's approach fails to attend to the underlying workplace power asymmetries.³⁵ Alexander agrees, "because without directly addressing the power relationships in the household, workplaces and society at large, it might be difficult to counteract deeply embedded capability inequalities."³⁶ The upshot of these arguments is that the republican

³²Ibid., p. 7.

³³Alexander, *Capabilities and Social Justice*, p. 168.

³⁴Ibid., p. 169.

³⁵A.K. Bagchi, "Freedom and Development as End of Alienation?" *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 9, 2000, p. 4418.

³⁶Alexander, *Capabilities and Social Justice*, p. 169.

goal supports a more demanding redistributive mandate, a radical sort of Senian capabilities approach. Not only will there be a motivation to improve the capabilities of less advantaged citizens, but also to identify and eliminate conditions that give rise to opportunities to exercise arbitrary power over the less fortunate.

According to these arguments, then, republicanism *tilts* towards more demanding and radical positions. In the case of redistributive policies, the concern in republicanism with unchecked power to interfere, even in the absence of interference, favors the equality of capabilities as an ideal since inequalities create opportunities for domination. However, consequentialist republicans acknowledge that attempts to advance nondomination by way of egalitarian-minded redistributive policies could turn out very badly in terms of people's republican freedom. This recognition induces some restraint. They will recommend that the state provide more-than-basic capabilities to less advantaged citizens when, and only when, encoding the policies will not compromise anyone's freedom by, for example, making use of arbitrary powers. They would rectify instances in which people's freedom is compromised and inequalities persist in the intensity of their nondomination before they would address instances in which opportunities for exercising undominated choices are restricted or conditioned by natural or institutional forces. This acknowledgment doesn't diminish the republican aspiration to redistribute equally the burdens that condition people's choices. The relative demandingness of the republican ideal in practice, though, is an empirical question depending on contingent factors that affect the feasibility of equalizing capabilities without compromising anyone's nondomination. In the next section, I present some reasons for thinking that even this more balanced approach overreaches relative to the republican ideal.

3. Nondomination and a Principled Basic Minimum

Are more radical egalitarian proposals recommended by a commitment to advancing the republican ideal, to promote citizens' freedom? The answer adduced in the previous section was that relatively demanding and radical republican aspirations are constrained by empirical and contingent circumstances. I argue that this answer overstates the egalitarian tilt in republicanism. Republican commitments better support a sufficiency aim in distributive policy: provide a basic set of capabilities sufficient to protect citizens from the need to alter their preferences and plans in order to avoid another's interference. The main objection is that this distributive principle appears to be an uncomfortable match with the idea that Pettit is a consequentialist who thinks that political regimes should *maximize* nondomination. I address this objection by providing reasons

for thinking that Pettit underestimates the practical problems with redistributive policies more ambitious than this and that republicanism's commitment to this basic minimum doesn't *just* reflect recognition of contingent and empirical constraints.

Consider this passage from John Locke, which presents a considerably less demanding account of distributive justice:

God hath not left one man so to the mercy of another, that he may starve him if he please: God the Lord and Father of all, has given no one of his Children such a Property, in his particular Portion of the things of this World, but that he has given his needy Brother a Right to the Surplusage of his Goods; so that it cannot justly be denyed him, when his pressing Wants call for it ... As *Justice* gives every Man a Title to the product of his honest Industry, and the fair Acquisitions of his Ancestors descended to him; so *Charity* gives every Man a Title to so much out of another's Plenty, as will keep him from extream want, where he has no means to subsist otherwise; and a Man can no more justly make use of another's necessity, to force him to become his Vassal, by with-holding that Relief.³⁷

Locke here provides some guidelines in meting out basic provisions, which I believe are well-matched with the republican argument from vulnerability and dependence.³⁸

First, the passage suggests that citizens who claim this entitlement justifiably have “no means to subsist otherwise,” having fairly well exhausted their own attempts to provide for themselves. Second, justifiable claims can only be made, Locke says, against “another's Plenty.” Redistributive schemes that place too much pressure on individuals who are compelled to contribute find no support. Finally, and most importantly, Locke conditions the provision of aid on the “extream want” of individuals. In circumstances of extreme want, citizens would find themselves at “the Mercy of another.” This suggests that the entitlement justified by the republican ideal is the provision of some specification of the basic capabilities, rather than the sort of functioning that occupies the high-dimension capability space.³⁹ The level of provision to beneficiaries that

³⁷John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1690] 1988), p. 170.

³⁸Locke might seem like an odd figure to reference here, as he is usually considered a natural-rights liberal. But there is a lively debate between republicans and liberals about who gets to claim Locke for their side. For an overview and interesting take on this question, see Horatio Spector, “Four Conceptions of Freedom,” *Political Theory* 38 (2010): 780-808.

³⁹It would take more space than I have here to develop a specific account of the material threshold necessary to secure political freedom. Is merely avoiding extreme exigency sufficient for the sort of independence required by the republican ideal, as Locke seems to suggest, or should the basic capabilities necessary for this amount to a different mix of social welfare protections? It seems to me that we would need to know a lot more about a particular society to make such determinations. The argument of this section is that only a set of basic capabilities can be justified by the republican ideal, and this does not depend on social and political contingencies alone; however, the specific account of the basic

is justified is the level at which no one has the capacity to interfere with them arbitrarily. Providing more than would secure such independence would certainly promote the beneficiaries' capabilities, their real or effective freedom to achieve well-being, since more valued beings and doings would be open to them. But none of this does anything to open up choices where they had previously been subject to domination. The less demanding proposal already stipulates that people are due the absence of domination. Republican equality supports the idea that people should be guaranteed the social and economic conditions of their freedom as nondomination. A commitment to promoting this kind of independence obligates the state to provide the very poor with a set of capabilities sufficient for functioning along base-level dimensions. These are crucially important capabilities dealing with a person's basic needs. The proposal is grounded in insulating people from situations in which they are subject or vulnerable to the capacity of others to interfere with them arbitrarily. Support that is necessary to insulate them from this is to be administered in the fashion of a right, rather than as largesse that can be arbitrarily withdrawn, but nothing more than the basic needs count as entitlements within the republican scheme.⁴⁰

This republican argument for basic capabilities should seem a little odd to republican theorists with consequentialist commitments. It would be a much better fit with a sort of republican deontology. On a consequentialist approach, according to Pettit, "the proper way to respond to any values recognized is to promote them; that is, in every choice set to select the option with prognoses that mean it is the best gamble with those values."⁴¹ Suppose that we agree with Pettit that the appropriate way to acknowledge the importance of nondomination is to maximize it. In that case, why should advocates of republican redistribution settle for an approach that focuses on basic capabilities and disregard inequalities above the minimum threshold?

capabilities that is justified may so depend. For example, it may be that whether the protections afforded by freedom of contract are sufficient to protect employees from vulnerability to arbitrary firings, or employees need the added legal protection of due process, depends on, among other things, how many alternative employment options they have. Thanks to an anonymous referee for prompting this clarification.

⁴⁰This suggests reasons for being dissatisfied with strategies for dealing with poverty that rely exclusively on private charities, and especially individual private charity. However, government welfare caseworkers are also sometimes able to wield a great deal of arbitrary power in conferring benefits. Recipients may be wise to pander to administrators to ensure a favorable result. There have been cases of workfare workers accusing their workfare supervisors of sexual harassment (e.g., *Colon v. City of New York, et al.*, 01 Civil 8787). Also, every year there are numerous welfare recipients who file charges because they allege that their benefits were discontinued without due process.

⁴¹Philip Pettit, "Consequentialism," in Peter Singer (ed.), *A Companion to Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), chap. 19, p. 233.

There are at least three considerations. The first is a technical, pragmatic one. More ambitious versions of the capabilities approach impose very great informational requirements.⁴² They would require extensive information about the capabilities of each person. This is so demanding as to make the view impractical. Consider a young financial accounts executive who decided to forgo a graduate degree and a research and teaching career in philosophy in order to be able to afford to marry his girlfriend. Consider the information we would need in order to know what sorts of functioning lie within his capability set. First, we would need to know what functioning would have issued from his choice of the other career path. We would also need some report about the functioning that would have issued from paths that were within his capability set, but not even ever contemplated. Perhaps he has buried somewhere in him the native talent to be the next American Idol, or the intuition and keen powers of observation and analysis to be an FBI agent, or fifteen other things. The lives of all of these paths are very different along dimensions that are aspects of his functioning. The information required for making judgments about whether his capability set is better or worse than, or equal to, someone else's simply isn't accessible. Unfortunately, that is the kind of information necessary in order to take into account individual diversity as seriously as Sen commits himself to doing in his proposal, and to determine whether the agent's preferences in career path are decisive independently of the content of those preferences and independently of having secured anyone else's favor. In other words, governments really don't know how to redistribute resources and burdens in a way that will generate equal capabilities or maximally extensive undominated choices.⁴³ The only way to handle this information problem would be to abstract from some of the diversity that Sen is avowedly concerned with and make interpersonal comparisons regarding capabilities in a lower-dimensional space—the capability space of the least common requirements. That would allow us to focus on specifying a minimally acceptable threshold of human capabilities. Republicans should settle for this.

Second, while poverty does expose citizens to domination, certain public policies and political decision-making procedures might do so, as well. Interference required to fund redistributive policies must be non-arbitrary in the sense that they are subject to constraints designed to pre-

⁴²Richard J. Arneson, "Equality," in Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit (eds.), *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), chap. 25, p. 495.

⁴³Pettit writes (*Republicanism*, p. 161): "In order for the state to provide one person with extra resources, and thereby to extend their undominated choices, it must deprive another person of those resources, and must thereby reduce the extent of that person's undominated choices. There is no reason to think that the transfer will make for a gain."

vent the state's interference with citizens at will. Such constraints, according to Pettit, require "that the power be exercised in a way that tracks, not the power-holder's personal welfare or world-view, but rather the welfare and world-view of the public."⁴⁴ He goes on to argue that an appropriate test for this is whether the interest is "sectional or factional in character."⁴⁵ And, determining whether an interest or reason is sectional or factional is a matter of public reason and deliberation: "people may speak for themselves and for the groups to which they belong. Every interest and every idea that guides the action of a state must be open to challenge ... and where there is dissent, then appropriate remedies must be taken."⁴⁶ This suggests a presumption against interference in the republican approach that must be overcome by establishing that it accords with public reason.⁴⁷ Of course, this, by itself, is not a reason to think that the provision of more-than-basic capabilities in a redistributive scheme is always ruled out, since, in certain cases, the presumption against it might be met. As Pettit writes, "if it is a matter of general assumption that the state should do whatever is needed to ensure [non-domination] in the community, then a transfer of resources that is essential to that goal can be justified to the rich on the basis of an interest they share."⁴⁸ Perhaps there are cases in which policies that aim at higher-level capabilities can be justified in terms of interests shared by the rich. However, one of the conclusions of section 1 above was that the fundamental sense in which republicanism espouses an egalitarian goal is that it seeks, in the first instance, equal intensity in people's enjoyment of nondomination. The presumption is not met when a policy reduces the intensity of someone's freedom. When pursuing strategies intending to promote the republican ideal beyond the basic capabilities, it is necessary to be mindful of doubts about how much the state can do to address inequalities above the threshold level of basic capabilities without compromising for some everyone's shared interest in nondomination.⁴⁹

These first two considerations are pragmatic reasons to disavow more radical, egalitarian policies. I have noted a number of places where Pettit acknowledges such reasons and they do not, by themselves, present problems for his moderate approach towards implementing what he sees as a

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 56.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷For the connection between nondomination and the rule of public reason, see Cillian McBride, "Reason, Representation, and Participation," *Res Publica* 13 (2007): 171-89.

⁴⁸Pettit, "Republican Political Theory," p. 404.

⁴⁹To sound a related note, very often state interference is at least one reason why individuals find it difficult to meet their basic needs. Policies that have this effect would be eliminated in the ideal republic.

fairly radical and demanding normative aspiration.⁵⁰ The third consideration, then, is an attempt to establish that inequalities above the minimum threshold are not necessarily situations that call out for redress, sometimes even apart from practical and empirical considerations, from the point of view of republican freedom. That is, republicanism's rejection of material egalitarianism is not responsive to empirical constraints alone. Should the republican ideal of freedom require more than the basic capabilities? No. First, consider Pettit's claim:

notwithstanding the need to rely on empirical assumptions in the development of policy ... it is clear that a person can have sufficient capabilities not to be exposed to domination—it is clear that they can have the basic capabilities required—without necessarily having the same resources as others. I do not have to be as wealthy as you, my employer, in order to be wealthy enough—and assured of being wealthy enough—not to put up with any petty, arbitrary interference.⁵¹

The capabilities relevant to functioning as an independent citizen insulated from domination, where such freedom is ensured, do not include all functioning or all levels of functioning. If “the goal which we set for ourselves in espousing the republican ideal of freedom is the promotion of equally intense non-domination,”⁵² we should aim to eliminate the vulnerability to predation and intimidation that is typically associated with living in poverty. But eliminating this vulnerability, even to a level equal to that enjoyed by citizens who are very well off, doesn't require more ambitious levels of capability provision. For example, there is an enormous difference between my decidedly middle-class resources and those of some super-rich mogul. I don't require additional resources to avoid being subject to the domination of the super-rich. I don't require their level of capability functioning in order to be wealthy enough to be secure against the capacity of them to interfere with me arbitrarily. The same holds even with sub-middle-class citizens who are guaranteed the capabilities for functioning at the basic minimum.

One problem with this argument is that, according to Pettit, the intensity of nondomination is both “a function of the powers that enable the person to resist or deter arbitrary interference by others” and “of the powers at the disposal of those others, for, depending on the nature and size of the powers of others, what their own powers enable them to achieve in the way of resistance and deterrence will vary.”⁵³ If this is right, the only important measure of the intensity of someone's non-

⁵⁰I detected little recognition of these practical and empirical considerations that constrain the pursuit of the republican ideal in Alexander's argument.

⁵¹Pettit, *Republicanism*, p. 161.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 113.

domination is that of her relative power differential, or her “power-ratio in the society as a whole.”⁵⁴ If wealth is a source of power, then this perhaps means I was wrong to conclude that there is nothing about the wealth differential between myself and the mogul that is cause for worry about my freedom. Perhaps my indifference to the situation in which the mogul has so much more than me is simply foolish because her much greater wealth actually does put her in a position to interfere with me on an arbitrary basis.

I suspect that this objection relies on an overly tight connection between wealth and power. I suppose I could imagine myself in certain circumstances being somewhat tempted to cede some degree of decisiveness over my preferences in choosing and conform to what others want me to do, and this could have something to do with their position or wealth relative to mine, but my decision to do this would be calculated to secure some perceived benefit, one that I am not entitled to as a matter of justice and is legitimately at the other’s discretion. I need not, however, make this decision in order to protect myself from potential interference. For example, I may enjoy being in the company of very wealthy people and so try to act in ways that would help secure myself an invitation to the mogul’s country estate for a weekend getaway. I am not dominated. That’s well and good for me, someone may respond, but it could be that while I may have sufficient resources to deter or resist unwanted attention from the mogul, someone closer to the edges of exigency (but who is still able to exercise the basic capabilities) might not. Perhaps such a person doesn’t even have sufficient resources to deter or resist interference that might come from someone with resources as modest as mine. But the same response applies here: people who are less well off may decide to surrender some of their power over their actions to others in order to secure a benefit, but this doesn’t amount to domination unless they have to surrender this control in order to avoid or deter arbitrary interference; it doesn’t if they’re motivated to surrender it in order to secure something that is legitimately under the discretion of others. Pettit acknowledges that the power/wealth-ratio is subject to diminishing marginal productivity in terms of the intensity of nondomination.⁵⁵ There is, then, a level at which providing someone with additional power or wealth will not do anything for the intensity of her nondomination. I have argued that this level is reached when citizens are guaranteed basic capabilities. As long as citizens are at the relevant threshold, other things being equal, they seem to have the resources they need in order to resist or deter any mogul, despite the huge difference in wealth. We could imagine things be-

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 115.

coming more serious. If the mogul became determined to bring about my downfall, surely I would be vulnerable to all kinds of unpleasant interference.⁵⁶ Cases like this one, where other things are not equal, are addressed through criminal law statutes against, say, harassment rather than the redistribution of wealth. In any decently functioning society under a rule of law, citizens with the basic capabilities have enough to respond to any attempt others might make to lord their position over them with the same degree of nonchalance as anyone else. Poverty induces dependence and vulnerability, thereby compromising freedom, not inequality.

There are three ways to resist this conclusion and maintain the more radical republican aspirations. The first is to observe the ways in which significant inequalities in wealth undermine decent societies functioning under a rule of law. The rich are able to purchase political power or, through more complex social processes, use their wealth and influence to capture political and legal institutions and use them to further their interests at the expense of the common good.⁵⁷ As I write this, demonstrators with “Occupy Wall Street” are attempting, some with more success than others, to make this point. Governments provide “corporate welfare” and other direct and indirect forms of subsidy to corporate profit-making ventures. This tends to enhance the power of large corporations, insulating them from competitive pressures. One result of this is that less advantaged citizens will have fewer employment options, which leaves them vulnerable to domination.⁵⁸ More radical forms of redistribution might be necessary to combat this structural domination. Yet this argument suggests to me that despite his acknowledgment of the practical and empirical considerations that constrain the pursuit of the republican ideal, Pettit underestimates the problems in implementing redistributive policies more ambitious than those that secure basic capabilities. It isn’t just that at a certain level there is a tradeoff between promoting the intensity of nondomination and promoting the extent of undominated choices, such that the attempt to address inequalities in the latter may compromise the former in certain circumstances. The task of institutional design is much more complex and the problem much more fundamental, for if inequalities create opportunities for the arbitrary exercise of power, then on Pettit’s view the state should act to rectify them. But in taking this on, the state acquires extraordinary powers to dominate. Republican policymakers face a very complex series of interactions and tradeoffs.⁵⁹ Supposing that they want to ensure my nondomination, they must take into

⁵⁶Thanks to an anonymous referee for suggesting this example.

⁵⁷Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this point.

⁵⁸See Matt Zwolinski, “Structural Exploitation,” *Social Philosophy and Policy* 29 (2012): 154-79.

⁵⁹Thanks to Kevin Vallier for this suggestion.

account power inequalities not just between me and other citizens, but also those among me, other citizens, and state actors. Decreasing the power inequality among citizens through state action *increases* the power inequality between citizens and agents of the state, which must now be rectified. Ambitious interpretations of republican redistribution require power equality between multiple and revolving groups, which would be impossible to institutionalize under the rule of law. Too much reliance on the rule of law will allow too many power inequalities among non-state actors, and too little will result in too many power inequalities between state and non-state actors. In other words, it would be very bad news if republicanism required equalizing power asymmetries, because the only way to do this would result in other power asymmetries. So this argument goes further than suggesting empirical and practical constraints, because it is unclear how this problem of redistributing power is supposed to be resolved even in principle.

Defenders of more radical distributive principles could press a second argument. Perhaps those who are less well-off, though armed with the basic capabilities, should as a matter of justice be *more* insulated from domination than they are from people who have much more. Despite possessing capabilities sufficient for basic functioning, the intensity of their freedom might be insufficient because they are *less* insulated from domination, where what this means is that they are *closer* to the level at which they *would* be vulnerable to predation and domination. My response to this characterization of the argument is that this fact seems irrelevant to whether or not their nondomination is ensured, since on my republican proposal the basic capabilities are to be *guaranteed*. The relevant capabilities are those that are sufficient to effectively deter or resist unwanted interference. Ensuring nondomination requires this guarantee, but not higher level capabilities. Someone might object that this argument implies that it could be permissible to introduce a policy that provides economic benefits to the already advantaged at the expense of citizens less well off. It could be permissible because such a policy, by my reckoning, wouldn't necessarily weaken the intensity of nondomination of those negatively affected so long as their basic capabilities are guaranteed. Yet while I agree that my argument implies that a policy having this perverse effect would not necessarily worsen the intensity of nondomination of the less well-off citizens, it would be, nonetheless, unjust. Minimally, such a policy would negatively affect the extent of the less well-off citizens' nondomination. As I argued above, this generates a presumption against the policy that can only be overcome by establishing that it accords with public reason and, in this case, it is difficult to see how it could. It is unlikely that a policy that provided benefits to affluent citizens at the expense of the less privileged could be justified to the less

well off on the basis of an interest they share. Therefore it would not accord with the “welfare and world-view of the public” and so would likely be “sectional or factional in character.”⁶⁰

A third argument is that more generous redistributive policies designed to benefit people who are already functioning at or somewhat above the minimal level would have a positive effect on their freedom as nondomination. It would do so by enabling them to do *more*, providing them with a broader range of capabilities. For example, these policies could make these citizens better off in terms of nondomination by countering the effects of various conditioning factors (e.g., natural or social obstacles, lack of marketable skills, bad luck, and so on) and extending the range of undominated choices they could make. Again, as mere conditioning factors, their lack of functioning at the higher levels doesn’t *compromise* their freedom as nondomination. Yet, the same is likely to be true for citizens who are quite well off: provided that the policy is nonarbitrary in the requisite sense—in the sense that it invokes a shared interest that tracks “the welfare and world-view of the public”—the increased tax burden they would shoulder to secure a more equitable redistribution might only count as a conditioning factor, and wouldn’t compromise their freedom. Pettit is committed to always promoting, *maximizing*, people’s freedom as nondomination. More generous redistributive schemes interfere with relatively well-off citizens by restricting their choice set in order to broaden the extent of freedom enjoyed by less well-off ones. The reason to think that the transfer will make for a gain has to do with the diminishing marginal utility of resources for wealthy citizens, and it may be justified in a political order committed to promoting the republican ideal.

I find this argument more promising; however, the fact that more expansive redistributive schemes would have these positive effects on some group’s enjoyment of nondomination does not provide a conclusive justification for them. Again, the default is no domination. Republicans are committed to the idea that the state can legitimately interfere with citizens in order to ensure the nondomination of all citizens. Advocates of the republican ideal are committed to a redistributive principle that grounds a guarantee to all citizens of a level of provision where they are effectively insulated from arbitrary interference and enjoy a certain kind of independence and decisiveness over their preferences. Beyond the minimal level, though, it is much harder to justify interfering with citizens merely to enhance the extent of other citizens’ undominated choices. How much, then, can the state limit the extent of nondomination of some in order to expand the extent of others? How much can the state do

⁶⁰Pettit, *Republicanism*, p. 56.

this without these policies diminishing the *intensity* of the former group's nondomination? It is unlikely, of course, that these redistributive policies would diminish the intensity of their freedom by leaving them financially vulnerable to predation and intimidation in the way people in poverty typically are, because it is unlikely that the policies would leave them without the basic capabilities for functioning. Nonetheless, how much can the state advance more ambitious redistributive measures and still be justified in this on the basis of publicly shared interests? The republican presumption against interference, the requirement that it be nonarbitrary in the requisite sense, establishes a burden of justification that increasing the extent of undominated choices available to citizens not come at the expense of anyone's intensity of nondomination. Redistributive policies designed to address capability inequalities above the minimal threshold are more likely to fail this test by subjecting citizens to arbitrary interference, or, minimally, provoking disagreement among members of the public concerning whether the interference is, in fact, arbitrarily enacted or administered by agents of the state. So while these policies *may* be justified, the state's responsibility to ensure the freedom of all establishes a presumption against them. Pettit acknowledges that for policies of the state that are subject to dissent to be justified, they must be justified in terms of "a higher-level consensus about [political] procedures."⁶¹ So the pressure to focus on basic capabilities in republican theories of distributive justice isn't just indicative of practical empirical constraints; rather, it is grounded in this commitment to the rule of public reason. The question I have raised here—how much can the state advance more ambitious redistributive measures and still be justified on the basis of publicly shared interests?—points to a need in contemporary republican theory to undertake a more systematic approach to the requirements of public justification.

4. Conclusion

Many advocates of freedom as nondomination tend to overstate the public provisions that are necessary to insulate citizens from domination and the conceptual resources their preferred view of freedom has to deliver them. These advocates would have to establish that egalitarian redistributive policies, policies that aim to equalize differences in capabilities insofar as this is feasible, have the effect of reducing overall domination in a society. I have argued that their attempts tend to understate the difficulty in utilizing the redistributive powers of the state to accomplish this. To summarize the point in another way: while I recognize that a commit-

⁶¹Ibid.

ment to promoting or maximizing nondomination sits uneasily alongside a principled sufficientarian approach to distributive justice, I have also provided reasons for thinking a consequentialist approach sits uneasily alongside a commitment to the rule of public reason. I have attempted to exploit the latter commitment to weaken the perceived egalitarian tilt in republicanism.

A state that is committed to the ideal of freedom as nondomination will be determined to guarantee an adequate level of protection against poverty and destitution. Poverty usually entails a palpable vulnerability to the arbitrary interference of others. Economic independence functions as a type of protection against different forms of assault, coercion, exploitation, and discrimination inasmuch as it insulates people from situations in which others could easily make free with them in their circumstances, situations in which they are at the mercy of the will of others. When people enjoy economic independence, they possess one of the more important conditions necessary to govern their lives by their own wills. It supplies them with, as I have described the idea, suitably decisive preferences. Their preferences are decisive independently of the content of their preferences and independently of the favor or beneficence of anyone. All this is accomplished with basic-level capabilities. The idea behind this republican distributive principle is that the republican concern with domination in the argument from vulnerability and dependence presents a way to accommodate the intuitive idea of an especially urgent demand to address poverty and destitution. Employing the ideal of freedom as nondomination as a fundamental political value suggests redistributive policies in line with an egalitarianism with respect to the meeting of basic needs, a principle of republican equality that guarantees everyone a level of capabilities minimally necessary for operating as a free and independent citizen.⁶²

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