

# Republicanism in the History of Political Philosophy and Today

3rd Biennial *Ideas in Politics* Conference

Prague: November 3rd-4th, 2017

Abstracts of Keynote Speeches

## ***Neo-liberalism and Neo-republicanism***

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The neo-liberal ideal of freedom as non-interference is anti-state in taking all coercive laws to be inimical as such to freedom; and pro-market in taking all market exchanges to be contractual and voluntary. It projects the image of a competitive free-for-all in which choices are maximized and the state only provides a very basic safety net. The neo-republican ideal of freedom as non-domination is pro-state to the limited extent that law-making can be disciplined by electoral and contestatory control, and rendered un-dominating. And it is anti-market to the extent, again limited, that market exchanges establish or facilitate relationships in which the stronger dominate the weaker. It hails an image of a democratically ordered society in which citizens are secure enough as free persons to can look one another in the eye without reason for fear or deference and can lament unwelcome legislation without reason for resentment.

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## ***Overcoming the Demoi-cratic Disconnect: A Republican Intergovernmental Proposal for Reconnecting Citizens to EU Governance***

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Improving the democratic legitimacy of the EU has tended to be viewed in terms of meeting the democratic deficit at the EU level, largely by strengthening the competences of the European Parliament (EP). By contrast, I argue that the real dilemma is that of a demoi-cratic disconnect between policy making at the EU level and the citizens of the different demoi of the member states. Drawing on Philip Pettit's distinction between three political ontologies – solidarity, singularity and civicity – I argue that at present the EU is caught between the ideal solidarism of the EP and actual singularism of the state governments represented in the European Council (EC). The key is to introduce an element of civicity into their mutual deliberations. The paper proposes a 'republican inter-governmentalism' as a response that treats inter-governmental negotiations among states as reflecting a two-level game in which no state seeks to dominate the democratic decisions of the peoples of other states. The involvement of national parliaments in EU decision-making is advocated as a mechanism to achieve this result.

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## ***Rousseau's Republicanism Revisited***

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Rousseau's theory of republican government is marked by the superiority of a democratic sovereign over the government. Recent critics have argued, however, that Rousseau fails to provide any practical guarantee for the theoretical superiority. A government that prevents the sovereign from assembling, it is claimed, is free to usurp functions that belong by right to the sovereign. This paper will explore Rousseau's treatments of this problem in his *Letters Written from the Mountain* and *Letter to d'Alembert*. It will be argued that Rousseau's deep suspicion of governments in fact makes him very attentive to the question of preventing usurpation. His endorsement of republican resistance to the government masquerades as a conservative defense of law.