

# Republicanism in the History of Political Philosophy and Today

3rd Biennial *Ideas in Politics* Conference

Prague: November 3rd-4th, 2017

## Panel 4.1 Abstracts

### ***A Dialogue between Republicanism and the 'Republic of Science'***

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In the republican theories of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and of James Madison, there is a continual tension between elitism and the necessity of a widespread participation in politics and the other affairs of society. It was perfectly possible for "republicans" reading such theorists like Rousseau to argue that a republican ideal of citizenry was best when it was participatory (despite Rousseau's own reservations about democracy per se), so it did not accede to the older notions of rank or of status as automatically conferring suitability for politics and for rule. Madison too swung between participatory and elitist inclinations and can be read in a variety of ways, depending on whether one reads the *Federalist*, especially no.10, or draws from his later opposition to Alexander Hamilton's vision of federalism. To be clear, both Rousseau and Madison at various points elucidated a sort of republicanism, which, while arguing for a popular participation, at least in the most legitimizing moments emphasized the importance of mutual association and the subordination of subjective interests to that of a greater virtue and that of the greater good. In this way, republicanism, both of Rousseauian and - despite its more elitist inclinations - Madisonian provenance, could have promised to avoid many of the pitfalls of elitist approach, by creating a kind of 'open society' in which the most important aspect of a society was a community of like-minded individuals freely working towards the good.

An essential tension within republicanism, how to ensure both the participation of the community while also establishing the quality of politics, is much the same tension within science. Karl Popper and most recently the philosopher of science Joseph Agassi have sought to develop the rules for a "republic of science." Popper and Agassi contend that science, like politics, is theoretically open to everyone. Science like politics thrives not only on disagreement but also on shared rules (an original compact as it were) in which each individual proposes his best idea. But like the problem of republican theories of politics: how to ensure that there is quality in science without devolving into elitism?

Their possible solution is to be found through an adherence to one central principle: that everyone is liable to error. Quality of scientific discussion and the avoidance of elitism would be maintained through an awareness that every idea was more than likely in some way incorrect. Errors, which are very likely, are only discovered with a fully participatory public. Correction of errors, moreover, is only possible through the correction of another individual through dialogue. Correction is social and it is mutual. It is participatory and by its very nature is normative, as through correction we get closer and closer, however slowly, to the truth of the matter.

We propose that given that correction and the philosophy of science is unusual in the context of republicanism that Popper and Agassi's "republic of science" can serve, not without conceptual difficulties (and we shall explore those), to aide modern "republicans" in their search for cogent and intelligent debate. Agassi and Popper's "republic of science" can also serve to suggest a new theoretical framework for "republicans" for the moderation of politics and the promotion of the good society.

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### ***The Democratic Forms of Global Domination***

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This paper deals with the relationship between global democracy and domination as absence of freedom. The author intends to answer the following question: Is global democracy completely incompatible with domination? There are two possible answers to this question. One of them (yes) is trivially right if we use the traditional concept of domination. The other one (no) is wrong for all the wrong reasons. The author offers a redefined notion of domination that makes the second answer non-trivially right—and the first one wrong. She proceeds as follows. In the first section, she illustrates one problem that the traditional concept of domination presents when it is applied in connection with the global context. In the second section, she offers a redefinition of the traditional concept, which she uses in the third and final section of this paper in order to show that some forms of domination are not only compatible with global democracy but are also its necessary condition.

(1) A problem of the traditional concept of domination. The traditional concept of domination, which will be explained in this section, can be summarized in one phrase: domination is subjection to the will of another. This stems from the definition constructed by Pettit which has (at least) one problem. His definition fails to extend to certain transnational relations which are relevantly similar to the international relations covered by it. In order to show this, the author of this paper exemplifies the kind of international relations that are covered by (Pettit's) traditional definition of domination and then offers an analysis of those transnational relations that are, while relevantly similar to the former, excluded from Pettit's definition of domination.

(2) A redefined notion of domination. In this section the author redefines the notion of domination related to the global context in such a way as to avoid the problem dealt with in the previous section. The redefinition does not reject the traditional motto: domination is subjection to the will of another. Instead, it extends Pettit's use of that motto in order to encompass the entire global context. To show that the redefinition covers Pettit's examples of domination, the author first applies it to the example of international relations from the previous section. Moreover, she finishes this section by showing how those transnational relations that are relevantly similar to the former example, fit the new redefinition.

(3) Global democracy through domination. On the basis of her redefinition of domination, the author now classifies different forms of this phenomenon in the global context with the aim of showing whether they are compatible or incompatible with global democracy. To identify these forms, the author uses the distinction between the ideal and non ideal theory. She first identifies the form of domination that is incompatible with global democracy, and then turns to the forms which are compatible with it. One of these forms of domination weakens global democracy. Another one strengthens it. The third and final form of domination that the author analyzes in this paper makes global democracy possible.

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### ***Is Structural Domination a Coherent Concept?***

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Contemporary republicanism has isolated domination as the main obstacle to freedom in modern developed societies and it has defined it as the exposure to the arbitrary interference of another person's will in the conduct of one's life. Unfreedom consists in the fact that our existence is not under our own control, but under the control of someone else, who exercises over us a domination which is analogous to the power of the master over his slave in ancient Rome. A consequence of this approach is that contemporary republican political theory sets freedom as non domination as the essential value of a free government. To make citizens free is to protect them against this vulnerability to the arbitrary interference of other private parties.

Some critics nevertheless have some doubts about the capacity of non domination to take into account all and every kind of unfreedom which can affect individuals in our contemporary social and political world.

Alex Gourevitch has for instance attempted to put forth the concept of structural domination, a kind of domination which would be intentional without being – as is the case for the concept of domination in its primitive form – personal. In a system of property rights which associate private ownership of productive assets and the wage system, a class of owners can collectively exercise, through the right of property, some domination over non owners. But this domination is not a personal subordination to the will of a master, since salaried employees keep the right to exit and to leave the service of an employer who would exercise over them a personal domination of the kind described by contemporary republicans . Nevertheless – according to Gourevitch – it remains that, without the availability of a universal basic income which would allow wage earners to withdraw for long periods from the labour market, wage earning employees are collectively dominated by the group of employers, and this group may use legal institutions – among them essentially the right of ownership – to constrain them to abide by their collective will as far as wages and conditions of work are concerned.

Other critics, like Sharon Krause and Patchen Markell suggest that, instead of trying to expand the concept of domination to those kinds of collective and impersonal subordination which, though deliberately planned by no one, remain intentional, it would be better to abandon the very idea that domination, as an intentional individual or collective exercise of subordination, is the only major cause of unfreedom in our societies. Some very important kinds of unfreedom result from structural but non intentional patterns of thought and action. No one has intended to create those patterns and no one intends to them keep alive either, but they preserve themselves nevertheless through the actions and prejudices of individuals, some of whom may even be deeply opposed to them. Those patterns obviously constrain various groups of people from leading their lives according to their own aims. It is the case, for instance, with racist or sexist prejudices that no one might be willing to consciously perpetuate, but which remain nevertheless important factors of unfreedom for the groups who are targeted by them. The victims of those social patterns of thought and action are suffering a lack of recognition which impairs their ability to be - and to behave like - free agents in the fullest sense of the term, and no one can reasonably claim that those obstacles belong entirely in the private sphere, or that the state should not confront them in order to dissolve them or, at least, to temper their consequences. So making people free from the shackles of those patterns is indeed a valid political ideal though, obviously, one which is not adequately captured by non domination since it implies neither intentional, nor personal control.

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The proposed paper tries to determinate whether the concept of structural domination is coherent and whether it is adequate in order to understand the variety of unfreedoms which stem both from the asymmetrical access to productive assets and from inegalitarian social patterns of thought and action. Unfreedom stemming from asymmetrical access to productive assets seem clearly intentional, even in a non personal way, while unfreedom stemming from inegalitarian patterns of thought of action seem wholly unintentional and can even be maintained through actions and representations which reject the prejudices they are loaded with. So covering both phenomena with one concept seems rather problematic. A solution can nevertheless be reached if we import into the analysis the idea that the propertied classes do not need to intend to make wage earners unfree in order to be considered as responsible for this unfreedom and to be under a duty of justice to reform the institutions of ownership in consequence. The question is not whether those who own productive assets do in fact want to make wage earners unfree, nor is it to know whether it is possible to say that they cause the kind of unfreedom which results from the monopolization of those assets into their hands. The main point, instead, is to show that there is a possibility to build some social, economic and political institutions which would prevent employers and owners of productive assets to impose those unfreedoms to employees or wage earners. The simple fact that such unfreedoms could be prevented by property owners is enough to make them liable for their consequences. No proof that they intended it or that they actually caused it is required from this point of view. So we may say that those who behave in a way such that unfreedom is the consequence of their action are responsible for that unfreedom and have a duty to make it good, even if they did not intend it. Domination can be structural without being intentional so that it is not necessary to complete the ideal of freedom as non domination by a second political ideal ( freedom from the consequences of prejudiced patterns of thought and action ).

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### ***"A-topical" politics, demos-less, neoliberal statehood and the quest for citizenship: the EU case***

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The proposed paper analyzes the transformation of statehood under neoliberal directives on a double front: its shift from the national at the supranational level and the practically unchecked intrusion of the private sector in the public sector, taking over some of the core sovereign powers in order to exercise and re-introduce them to national states, albeit in a transformed, if not distorted way. The transformation of statehood will be approached from the perspective of the claim for re-emergence of citizenship as a defining and legitimizing factor of the concept of statehood.

Such transformation takes place in order on the one hand to strengthen the mobility of international capital by creating a form of statehood, capable of de-regulating national economies and on the other hand in order to dismantle the modern concepts of sovereignty which were built around public space or "topos".

Therefore a new type of statehood is born; one which is "a-topical" regarding the formation of "social" as "political" or in other words as a demos and therefore inherently non-democratic.

Such an emphatic case is the EU. On the one hand it exercises core state authorities as a distinct entity, while on the other hand constitutes a sovereign-less, demos-less such entity, given the minimal impact of the EU parliament.

So, how it is that citizenship might re-emerge under such circumstances?

The main argument of the paper is that in light of this new form of neo-liberal statehood, the quest for the restoration of a public sphere or in other words "topos" constitutes a precondition for the revival of democratic sovereignty and the re-emergence of citizenship and participation. A "topos" is the actual constitutional, institutional, ideological and social place, through which citizenship has the potential to enter the political process as the fundamental and legitimizing concept.

How are such a restoration and reemergence to take place though? Neoliberal, supranational statehood leaves little space for the restoration of the public sphere and the re-emergence of citizenship other than either through the dismantle or at least the retreat of the supranational and the prevalence of the national or through the rapid and synchronized movement of the masses, more or less in line with the concept of eventuality, which will lead to a revolutionary foundation of citizenship at a new level.

Therefore an opposing tendency transcends the present phase of neoliberalism: on the one hand the restructuring of the concept of statehood in accordance with its imperatives and on the other hand the quest for public topos as contradictory to this restructuring.

In order to reach my conclusion I begin with the analysis of the concept of supranational statehood and its impact on sovereignty, on the public sphere, as well as on the re-emergence of citizenship. I then adjust my findings on the EU and I assess its impact on the sovereignty of its member states. I conclude with my main argument about citizenship as a legitimizing factor.

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