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Political Republicanism and Perfectionist Republicanism

Paul Weithman

In recent years, a number of political thinkers in philosophy, political theory and law have defended political theories which are deeply indebted to classical republicanism. Like classical republicans, these thinkers have claimed that a flourishing polity depends upon citizens' exercise of the civic virtues. Unlike classical republicans, some of these thinkers have defended what might be called "political republicanism"—republicanisms which are also indebted to the methodological restraint of Rawls's political liberalism. The article argues that political republicanism suffers from a viability problem. Its list of civic virtues is too short. More worrisome, the public justifications that would be available to a political republican regime are not sufficient to motivate the development of the civic virtues. Therefore, if we are to be republicans, we should be "perfectionist republicans" instead.

When we call some trait of character like patriotism a *civic virtue*, we typically mean that it suits its possessor to contribute to her society's good. But when we shift our attention—and emphasis—to the claim that it is a civic *virtue*, what we mean is ambiguous between two possibilities. We might mean that someone must be patriotic if she is to be a good human being. Or we might mean simply that she must be patriotic if she is to be a good citizen.

Someone who means the first thinks of the civic virtues as human excellences, as traits which make their possessor a good or an excellent or a flourishing member of her kind. This contribution to human flourishing, she thinks, is what *makes* patriotism a virtue. She also thinks that that excellence has salutary social consequences, at least in favorable circumstances. A person possessed of it is disposed somehow to contribute to the good of her society. She is therefore a good citizen. The proponent of this view does not typically think the connection between the virtues, human flourishing, and good citizenship is mere happenstance. Asserting a stronger connection is part of what is meant by philosophers who claim that human beings are naturally political: because human beings need to live politically, the qualities that make them good citizens and enable them to live political life well are partially constitutive of human excellence.

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Someone who means the second commits herself to a much weaker thesis. Wary of the philosopher's ability to identify human excellence, she does not commit herself to the claim that contributing to human excellence is what makes a trait a civic virtue. Rather, what makes a trait a virtue is ultimately its relation to something the value of which is, she thinks, far less controversial. In the case of civic virtues, what makes these traits virtues is that they are the qualities a person must have if she is to satisfy the demands of a certain civic role, that of the citizen. However the value of being a good citizen in a decent society is cashed out¹—if it needs cashing out at all—it will not be by drawing on a robust conception of human flourishing of which good citizenship is a part. If someone else wants to make the further claim that these qualities or civic virtues are genuine human excellences, the advocate of this latter view may not protest. But she does not go so far herself.

A number of contemporary republicans have allied themselves with the second view. Mindful of republicanism's traditional invocation of a virtuous citizenry, they have argued that republican government depends upon citizens' possession of certain civic virtues. Mindful, too, of moral pluralism, they avoid basing their political theories on controversial premises about the human good. Instead they invoke what they think are less controversial premises about the public good. They therefore omit some of the traditional civic virtues from their lists. And they refrain from claiming that the virtues they do include are genuine human excellences. Instead they claim only that these traits are derivatively valuable states of character, counting as virtues because they suit their possessors to take part in republican government. They decline to make the further claim that doing so is part of a good human life. For reasons that will become clear, I shall refer to the version of republicanism defended by these contemporary thinkers as "political republicanism."

I will suggest that the political republican list of civic virtues should be longer. Furthermore, the reasons a political republican regime would give us for thinking some trait worth having would affect our motives to develop and act from it. The problem with presenting the civic virtues as virtues in the weaker sense is that it makes our motive to cultivate and sustain them too heavily dependent upon our identification with our citizenship. This is too frail a reed to support republican government in contemporary liberal democracies. It is also considerably frailer a reed than that on which

1. The phrase "decent society" is taken from the title of Avashai Margalit, *The Decent Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

many classical republicans rested their hopes. If political republicans are correct in claiming that republican government really does depend upon citizens' possessing the civic virtues, then my claims imply that political republicanism does not adequately secure the conditions of its own success. I shall suggest that if we are to be republicans at all, we would do better to embrace what I shall call "perfectionist republicanism,"² This is a republicanism that values and promotes the civic virtues as genuine excellences of character.

I will not argue for the superiority of republican political theory to alternative political philosophies such as classical or contemporary liberalism. My conclusion can therefore be cast as a conditional: if republicanism is the best political philosophy available, then we should be perfectionist rather than neo-republicans. Nor will I lay out the perfectionist argument that civic virtues contribute to human flourishing. These arguments are familiar enough from the tradition. I want to establish the need for such arguments, rather than to rehearse them here. Thus my primary aims are to identify and settle a dispute within contemporary republicanism. This is a significant enough enterprise in its own right. Republicanism has proven a very attractive intellectual paradigm in a number of disciplines, providing a framework for efforts which are constructive as well as historical. It is important to see what form of republicanism is most defensible.

Current interest in republicanism reflects a broader trend. In recent years political thinkers have turned increasingly to the history of their disciplines in hopes of recovering political theories which might—with suitable adaptations—be serviceable under contemporary conditions. This turn to history has resulted in the serious discussion of views which are variously Aristotelian, Thomist, Hobbesian, Lockean, Rousseauian, Kantian, Millian, Hegelian or republican. It is far from obvious, however, that political theories which were framed to address political circumstances quite different from our own can be recovered and refurbished for contemporary use. The best way to assess these recovery efforts is by fine-grained analyses of the views that result, analyses which

2. The word "perfectionist" is meant to recall both John Rawls's use of the term and descriptions of Joseph Raz's view as "perfectionist liberalism." No connection with extreme or Nietzschean forms of perfectionism are intended. Rawls applies the adjective "perfectionist" to theories like Aristotle's according to which the state has an interest in promoting human excellence; see John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 25. Raz's liberalism is said to be perfectionist because he argues that autonomous choice is choice among options that are genuinely worthy; see Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 417.

pay careful attention to the ways in which modifications have altered the original view. I attempt one such analysis here.

The critique of political republicanism is also significant because it turns on the social and political conditions for developing the civic virtues. Even political theories which do not claim to be republican—deliberative democratic theories and some liberal theories, for example—claim that citizens need some of the qualities of character which political republicans describe as civic virtues. Yet many of them say little about how those virtues are to be acquired. My critique of political republicanism links the conditions for developing the civic virtues to what is publicly said about their value. If these other theories account for the value of the civic virtues in the same way that political republicanism does, by appealing only to political values, then it is possible that my critique of political republicanism can be extended to those theories as well. If it can be, then this may show something important, not only about political republicanism, but about other political conceptions as well. I shall not, however, attempt such an extension here.

Let me begin by saying something more about republicanism and about the conditions any form of contemporary republicanism must satisfy. In sections II and III, I shall elaborate the distinction between political and perfectionist republicanism. In section IV, I shall argue that citizens must have the virtue of temperance with respect to material possessions if political republicanism is to be viable. In section V, I argue that political republican regimes would not have the intellectual resources needed to sustain that virtue among citizens. In section VI, I consider various defenses of political republicanism.

I

What has come to be called the “republican revival” in American law, as well as in American history, political theory, and political philosophy is in fact a family of reactions against the forms of liberalism which were seen to dominate each of these fields. Historians of the American Founding and its intellectual antecedents, most notably John Pocock,³ Bernard Bailyn,⁴ and Gordon Wood,⁵ reacted against the claim that Lockean individualism provided the ideo-

3. J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

4. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

5. Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

logical underpinnings of the founding.⁶ In law, Frank Michelman,⁷ Cass Sunstein,⁸ and Suzanna Sherry⁹ reacted against the classical liberalism—the libertarianism—that others found in the Constitution and held up as a standard for constitutional and legal interpretation.¹⁰ In political theory, and philosophy, Michael Sandel reacted against the Kantian liberalism of Rawls.¹¹ Philip Pettit reacted against the identification of political freedom with negative liberty.¹²

In philosophy, law, and political theory, thinkers engaged in the revival attempted to frame republican legal and political theories appropriate for contemporary societies like the United States. These theories were to preserve liberal advances over classical republicanism, like liberal commitments to human rights and political inclusiveness, while avoiding the inadequacies of the liberal theories they were meant to supplant. This required supplementing classical republicanism to address concerns—like the concern for personal autonomy—that sparked the development of the liberal tradition but were peripheral to the republican one. To answer the objection that republicanism is a form of ethical life which is unavailable under modern conditions,¹³ it required imagining institutional forms through which republican government can now be exercised. Most important for present purposes, the revival of

6. For an overview and critique of the uses to which republicanism was put once it gained currency among historians, see Daniel T. Rogers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," *The Journal of American History* 11 (1992): 11-38; I am grateful to John McGreevy for this reference. For a deep and interesting reply to Rogers, see G. Edward White, "Reflections on the 'Republican Revival': Interdisciplinary Scholarship in the Legal Academy," *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities* 6 (1994): 1-36.

7. Frank Michelman, "Law's Republic," *Yale Law Journal* 97 (1988): 1493-1538.

8. Cass Sunstein, "Beyond the Republican Revival," *Yale Law Journal* 97 (1988): 1539-90.

9. Suzanna Sherry, "The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution: A Lawyer's Guide to Contemporary Historical Scholarship," *Constitutional Commentary* 5 (1988): 323-48.

10. See Laura Kalman, *The Strange Career of Legal Liberalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 132-66.

11. Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America's Search for a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

12. Phillip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

13. For this objection see Jeremy Waldron, "Virtue *en Masse*," in *Debating Democracy's Discontent*, ed. Anita L. Allen and Milton C. Regan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 32; also Bernard Williams, "Saint-Just's illusion," in his *Making Sense of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 135-50.

republicanism required abandoning elements found in classical republican writers because they were at odds with what seemed to be liberal insights. It is because of their self-conscious commitment to framing a *reconstructed* republicanism that these authors are often referred to as *neo-republicans*.

Any neo-republican theory—whether political or perfectionist—must satisfy three conditions. First, it must be *intellectually satisfactory*. It must give intellectually satisfying accounts of the core notions of political theory, including the notions of citizenship, freedom and the public good. It must also offer plausible answers to problems like “How do we know when a given political outcome promotes or is consistent with the public good?” and “Under what conditions is the state’s exercise of power legitimate?” Second, it must be *politically adequate*. It must be capable of serving as a self-sustaining public philosophy for a pluralistic democracy. This requires that it be capable of informing the habits of thought and conduct that enable citizens and public officials to sustain the political practices the theory identifies as republican, and to realize freedom and the public good as neo-republicans conceive them. Third, if the theory is to be called “*neo-republican*,” it must be *historically responsible*. It must have sufficient affinities to the republican tradition of political thought running from Cicero to Madison that it is plausible to locate the theory within it.

The last condition, while hardly vacuous, is rather loose. Neo-republicans typically draw upon historical materials that belong to the earlier republican tradition. Those materials were written in a variety of circumstances, often by political actors who were responding to the quite different political dangers each perceived as most salient in his own time. Some worked under the threat of despotism, others under the threat of imperial designs like those of Julius Caesar, still others under the shadow of political domination by a ruling family like the Medici or a regional power like the Papal States. Thinkers in the tradition accordingly gave emphasis to the republican ideas that seemed the most effective political and intellectual responses to the threats they faced. The result is a set of texts which show strong enough family resemblances and lines of descent to distinguish them from other traditions of political thought, but which are sufficiently different in tone, emphasis and guiding ideas that they could never be mistaken for clones.

Faced with these diverse materials, neo-republican theorists abstract and systematize their leading ideas in different ways and establish different orders of intellectual priority. Frank Michelman turns to the republican tradition to solve a persistent puzzle about

citizen sovereignty. John Pocock, by contrast, suggests that the location of sovereignty was a problem of at most secondary concern to the republican thinkers about whom he writes.¹⁴ Philip Pettit makes freedom, understood as nondomination, the “supreme political value” of his neo-republican theory.¹⁵ Michael Sandel, Cass Sunstein, and Frank Michelman endorse a form of neo-republicanism that accords pride of place to self-government—something Pettit thinks has only instrumental value because it promotes his preferred form of freedom.¹⁶ Both sorts of neo-republicanism are, I believe, historically responsible. Here I shall be concerned with the immensely influential neo-republicanisms that are centrally committed to self-government and with the perfectionist and political forms this republicanism can assume.¹⁷

14. See Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p. 316: “Humanist political thought excelled at this sort of analysis, and subordinated the consideration of power to it; liberty, virtue and corruption, rather than the location of authority, were its prime concerns.”

15. Pettit, *Republicanism*, p. 8.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Pettit’s neo-republicanism is also extremely interesting and worthy of critical examination in its own right. Here I simply want to point out that the republican tradition is more complex, and his appropriation of it more selective, than his historiography occasionally suggests. As I noted, Pettit takes freedom as nondomination by others as the “supreme political value” of his theory. The achievement of this sort of political freedom is so valuable, Pettit thinks, because it brings the independent social status that Pettit says was the mark of citizenship in the republican tradition. There is ample support in Pocock’s historical work for the claim that Italian and English republicans valued such independence and thought it a short step from dependence to corruption. On the other hand, I am not aware of anything in Cicero’s writings that suggests he noticed the tension between his embrace of republicanism and the Roman institution of patronage and clientage, under which some citizens were very much dependent upon others. For the importance of clientage in Cicero’s Rome, see Erich S. Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 435, 446; on pp. viii-ix, Gruen stresses that clients’ dependence on their patrons was social as well as political. Furthermore, republican citizenship was not always valued because of the social or political status it conferred. Sometimes it was sought for the access it brought to economic benefits. See A.N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 135. Pettit argues that making freedom as he understands it the central political value of his neo-republicanism fits with the contrast between freedom and slavery that is so prominent a feature of republican writing. This is because slaves’ lack of freedom, Pettit thinks, consists precisely in the fact that they are legally and socially dominated even by masters who let them do what they like. But this seizes on one feature of the slave’s status at the expense of others that are arguably of equal importance. To mention two others, slaves are not typically consulted about the ends or organization of the enterprises in which they are employed, and they are typically exploited in the

II

Neo-republicans who give self-government a central place in their theories typically think that citizens should govern themselves by public deliberation. That is, they think citizens should decide issues and choose representatives after processes in which they deliberate—in which they offer one another reasons or arguments, rather than threats or bargains. Participants in these processes should be free and equal. Deliberations should be inclusive, so that citizens can participate regardless of point of view or group membership. The reasons they offer one another should be public-regarding, rather than self-regarding. They should be proposals to advance the good of the public rather than that of an individual, section or faction.

If neo-republican theories are to be politically adequate, they must identify conditions necessary for citizens to advance the public good through well-conducted deliberation, and for them to maintain the practices of deliberation over time so that they govern themselves well in the long run.¹⁸ They must also say something about how those conditions are to be satisfied in the societies to which they are addressed, societies like the contemporary United States. What are those conditions?

For many writers in the classical republican tradition, the conditions of effective, sustainable self-government prominently included moral conditions. Republican government that attains the public good, they thought, requires a virtuous citizenry. The concepts they used to describe the virtues and their opposites were

crude sense that those enterprises are not reciprocally beneficial. Their efforts are expended for the benefit of others in non-consensual arrangements. We can imagine republican theories which made much of the opposition between slavery and freedom, but which seized on these other features of slavery instead. Thus in some moods Cicero made much of the importance of consultation. The contrast Aquinas drew between the rule over slaves and political rule turned on the fact that slaves are used for another's benefit; see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I.96.4. A Thomist republicanism could take this distinction as its point of departure; perhaps Jacques Maritain held such a view.

18. The question of how to maintain republican government against the ravages of *fortuna* and of changing circumstance was central to the republican tradition of thought. This theme is brilliantly explored by Pocock in his *Machiavellian Moment*. The question as Pocock conceives it is especially well put by Michael P. Zuckert, *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 161. For a similar concern among Roman and early American republicans, see Wood, *Creation*, p. 51.

thick ethical concepts: fortitude, rectitude, integrity, dependance, servility, corruption. At least some writers in the tradition stressed that the civic virtues were genuine human excellences because contributing to the public good is part of the human good.¹⁹ The virtues required by republican government were therefore thought to be virtues in the strong sense. Finally, the virtues required for self-government were thought to be very demanding. Indeed they were thought so demanding that they could not be developed and sustained simply by engaging in the practices of politics in which they were exercised. They required significant extra-political support. This support was to take the forms of prevalent ways of life like yeomanry or soldiering,²⁰ and prevalent religious or quasi-religious beliefs, deemed conducive to the civic virtues.²¹

In sum, parts of the classical republican tradition, at least, offered highly moralized theories of politics. This is true of the republicanism of the American founders.²² It is equally true of that part of the republican tradition that arguably influenced the American Founders most profoundly, the Roman republicanism of Cicero and Sallust.²³ For my purposes, the most important feature of these views is their claim that effective and lasting self-government requires citizens to develop and exercise traits of character which are genuine human excellences. Views which endorse this are versions of what I call “perfectionist republicanism.”

Like perfectionist republicanism, the neo-republican position in which I am interested identifies certain civic virtues necessary for republican government. Some of the most prominent exponents of this view are, however, indebted to a form of liberalism that refuses to build on theories of human flourishing or on traditional

19. See Cicero *De Re Publica* 6.xxiii-xxvi.

20. The connection Jefferson saw between yeomanry and republicanism is well known. Montesquieu, on the other hand, famously thought that commerce was necessary for republican government; see Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p. 441. For thinkers who believed that a republic required citizen-soldiers, *Machiavellian Moment*, pp. 203, 243-44, 271, 413.

21. Religious belief was long thought necessary to sustain American republicanism; see Stephen Macedo, *Diversity and Distrust: Civic Education in a Multicultural Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). By “quasi-religious beliefs” I mean the belief in personal immortality that is so prominent in Cicero *De Re Publica* 6.ixff.

22. For the founders on civic virtue generally, see Wood, *Creation*, pp. 65ff.

23. For Cicero, see the text just cited at *supra* note 24; also his *De Officiis*. For Sallust, see *Catalinae Coniuratio*. For the influence of Roman republicanism on the Founders, see Wood, *Creation*, pp. 48-53; Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p. 25; and Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 6, 48.

views of human excellence. The civic virtues on which they dwell are not the cardinal virtues that were traditionally opposed to dependency and personal corruption. Instead they are the traits citizens need to talk with one another as equals in the public fora of a contemporary pluralistic society. These neo-republicans stress that citizens must be willing to participate in politics,²⁴ that they must offer public-regarding justifications for the policies they favor,²⁵ that they should attempt to understand points of view different from their own,²⁶ that they should be prepared to “reconsider [their] ends and commitments.”²⁷ Furthermore, in calling these virtues *civic* virtues, these neo-republicans are making a claim about their value. That claim is the weaker of the two I distinguished at the outset. Civic virtues are valuable traits of character because they make their possessors good citizens, equipping them to contribute to the public good understood as the outcome of well-conducted public deliberation. There is not said to be any further connection with genuine human excellence. As Cass Sunstein says of his own view:

Some of those who value civic virtue emphasize the improvement of individual character—as in the classical formulation—while others understand it as a precondition for the achievement of social justice. On the second view, civic virtue is necessary for participation in public deliberation, and it is instrumental to a well-functioning deliberative process. The second view is the principal object here.²⁸

I suggested that the focus on the deliberative virtues and the weak account of why those virtues are valuable pay the neo-republican’s debt to a form of liberalism. Some neo-republicans are indebted to this liberalism for isolating one of the requirements their views must satisfy if they are to meet the political adequacy condition. The liberalism in question eschews theories of human flourishing because the societies to which it is addressed are morally and religiously pluralistic. These societies are characterized by deep disagreement about the good life. No normative theory of politics which requires citizens to accept a view of human flourishing can gain citizens’ allegiance, hence none can be politically viable.

24. Michelman, “Law’s Republic,” p. 1503.

25. Sunstein, “Republican Revival,” p. 1550.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 1555.

27. Michelman, “Law’s Republic,” p. 1528.

28. Sunstein, “Republican Revival,” p. 1541 note 8; also Michelman, “Law’s Republic,” pp. 1550-51; and Quentin Skinner, “The Republican Ideal of Political Liberty,” in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, ed. Bock, Skinner and Viroli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 297, 307-309.

Accepting this line of thought, some contemporary republicans also refuse to build their political theories on theories of the human good. They therefore distance themselves from what Sunstein calls the “classical formulation” of the civic virtues—and the classical list—in order to satisfy the political adequacy requirement. These are the thinkers I refer to as “political republicans.”

I want to query whether this attempt to meet the political adequacy requirement undermines the political republican’s ability to satisfy it. I suggest that emphasis on the deliberative virtues leads to the not so salutary neglect of a civic virtue that was more prominently discussed earlier in the republican tradition, at times when political theory could be more overtly moralized without failing to be politically adequate. I also suggest that the political republican account of why that virtue would be valuable leaves citizens too weak an incentive to develop and act on it. When citizens of a pluralistic society like ours regard the virtue as a virtue simply because of its connection to effective self-government, they may not have the motivation they need to be civically virtuous. To ask whether this is so I shall focus, not on one of the obviously deliberative virtues, but on the cardinal virtue of temperance. Before doing so, however, let me comment on my application of the label “political republican” to those who rely on a weak view of the civic virtues.

III

The term “political republicanism” is, of course, reminiscent of John Rawls’s term “political liberalism.” Rawls famously distinguishes political from comprehensive liberalism by three conditions. According to the first, the central focus of a political conception of justice is society’s basic institutions, the norms that apply to them and the ways “those norms are to be expressed in [citizens’] character and attitudes.” These ways of expressing the norms include the virtues citizens must normally have if they are to do their part in the maintenance of just institutions. According to the second condition, political conceptions can be presented independent of comprehensive doctrines. They therefore account for the value of the civic virtues without appealing to claims about human flourishing or about what makes human life worth living. According to the third condition, political conceptions are worked out from fundamental ideas seen as implicit in the public political culture of constitutional regimes.

Nothing in Rawls’s statement of the three conditions implies that the distinction between political and comprehensive conceptions can only be drawn among liberal conceptions, as Rawls would readily

acknowledge.²⁹ It should therefore be possible to develop political versions of neo-republicanism or, what I call “political republicanism.” Political republicanism is republican theories that satisfy Rawls’s three conditions. Like political liberalism they are restricted in scope and are capable of being presented independent of comprehensive doctrines. They include accounts of the civic virtues, but do not explain the value of the civic virtues by appeal to comprehensive doctrine. They are also worked up from fundamental ideas implicit in the public political culture of constitutional regimes like the United States and other north Atlantic democracies.

As I have stressed, the resurgence of republicanism in the last decade and a half has been the result of a self-conscious revival. It is the result of attempts to revive a strain of political thought that is a part, albeit a previously neglected part, of the political tradition of the United States, England, the Netherlands, and Italy. Much of the work of those contributing to the revival has been historical or has drawn on the work of historians to show that republicanism is part of that tradition. This work has been done to make claims for the justifiability of republicanism at least initially plausible. For if a revived republicanism is presented as based on ideas to be found in the North Atlantic tradition or on ideas present in the public culture of, say, the United States, citizens may be more easily persuaded that republicanism coheres with their considered judgments. At least, they will be more easily persuaded if the republicanism in question is a neo-republicanism which incorporates liberal commitments to rights. Thus contemporary proponents of republicanism have, in effect, tried to show that republicanism satisfies the third of the three conditions which define political conceptions.

The interest of the other two conditions on political conceptions—and the distinction between political and comprehensive republicanism—has been more clearly recognized by some contemporary republicans than others. Because of Michael Sandel’s early criticisms of Rawls, we might expect to find the distinction clearly drawn in his more recent defense of republicanism, though it seems to be there only implicitly.³⁰ Suzanna Sherry seems to grasp

29. John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 374.

30. There is one passage in which he could be taken to say that republicans may divide between political and comprehensive republicanism, though this reading strains the text and Sandel does not say which republicanism he would prefer *Democracy’s Discontent*, p. 338. The tenor of *Democracy’s Discontent* suggests that he thinks of republicanism as a comprehensive doctrine. When pressed later by critics to say whether he is a “strong” or a “weak” republican, Sandel replied in terms that suggest his republicanism is comprehensive, though his reply did not refer to the distinction between political and comprehensive views; Allen and Regan, *Debating Democracy’s Discontent*, pp. 324-27.

the distinction between perfectionist and political republicanism, and to defend the weak account of the civic virtues characteristic of political republicanism.³¹ The distinction between political and comprehensive republicanism seems to be drawn most explicitly by Richard Dagger in his discussion of Rawls's work.³² There are problems with the way Dagger distinguishes political from comprehensive views.³³ Still, Dagger's remarks show that he sees the possibility of a political republicanism.

The identification and study of this possibility would be of interest even if no working political theorist had clearly formulated

31. Sherry notes that the republicanism which was current in the American founding period "stemmed from the classical tradition of political participation as the highest human good" (Suzanna Sherry, "Without Virtue There Would Be No Liberty," *Minnesota Law Review* 78 [1993]: 69). When Sherry lays out her own proposals for education in the civic virtues, she conspicuously stops short of claims about the highest human good; see "Without Virtue," pp. 75ff. See also Suzanna Sherry, "Responsible Republicanism: Educating for Citizenship," *University of Chicago Law Review* 62 (1995): 172. Her reticence, in conjunction with her remarks about eighteenth-century American republicanism, suggest that she favors a more modest and perhaps a political republicanism, one that gives a weaker account of the civic virtues. As if to confirm this, Sherry says that the "moral certitude of the earlier republican eras has been irretrievably lost; we no longer have faith in God, natural law or even a human *telos* that lent virtue its incontestability in the past" (Sherry, "Responsible Republicanism," pp. 143-44).

32. As Dagger notes near the end of his book *Civic Virtues: Rights, Citizenship and Republican Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Rawls distinguishes classical republicanism from civic humanism. The former, Dagger writes, is "the more modest view that citizens of a democratic society must exhibit 'to a sufficient degree' the political virtues, as Rawls has defined them, and 'be willing to take part in political life.'" By contrast civic humanism, he continues, "is a comprehensive doctrine, 'a form of Aristotelianism' in which 'taking part in democratic politics is viewed as the privileged locus of the good life.'" Both quotes are from p. 186. According to Dagger, Rawls claims that justice as fairness is a form of classical republicanism. Because justice as fairness is a political conception of justice it follows that it is, on Dagger's reading, a political republicanism.

33. In an attempt to show that Rawls's distinction between political and comprehensive views is not clearly drawn, Dagger introduces a distinction between views which are "implicitly" and "explicitly comprehensive." Implicitly comprehensive views are those that rely on a conception of the nonpolitical good but do so implicitly rather than explicitly. Dagger then argues that Rawls's view, while ostensibly political must be implicitly comprehensive. It must, that is, rely implicitly on a conception of the nonpolitical good. The crucial step in Dagger's argument for this conclusion is the claim that justice as fairness is not neutral in its foreseen but unintended affects. For this line of argument, see *Civic Virtues*, pp. 188-91. I would argue that to make the distinction between political and comprehensive views dependent upon the difference between neutrality and non-neutrality of foreseen but unintended affects is mistaken, though I cannot pursue the matter here.

and defended political republicanism. For if the distinction between political conceptions of justice and comprehensive doctrines is indeed significant, then it is surely interesting to learn which views in the history of political thought can plausibly be reformulated as political conceptions and which cannot. This is especially true of views such as republicanism, which had so profound an influence on the development of Western liberal democracies and which is presented as a rival to various forms of liberalism, including political liberalism. It would surely be interesting to learn whether those that cannot be reformulated plausibly cannot be because they fail to be intellectually satisfactory, politically adequate or because they fail some other condition. The study of political republicanism might also show that the distinction between political and comprehensive republicanism, though tenable, is not the most illuminating distinction to draw between republican views or not the most illuminating to draw for some purposes.³⁴

But as I have already suggested, political republicanism is not a previously unidentified possibility. This possibility has been seen most clearly by Sunstein and Michelman, two thinkers whose remarks about the civic virtues suggest that they wish to account for the value of those virtues while eschewing comprehensive doctrine. They do not refer to their own views as “political republicanism,” but they have most fully grasped the implications of Rawls’s political turn for work in the republican tradition. Like other participants in the republican revival, they draw on historical work to show, in effect, that their republicanism satisfies Rawls’s third condition. They also recognize that questions about the civic virtues fall within the scope of their views, consistent with Rawls’s statement of his first condition. But they recognize—at least implicitly—the importance of satisfying Rawls’s second condition when they answer those questions. By satisfying the three conditions, they presumably hope to gain the advantages that Rawls thinks his own view enjoys over comprehensive liberalism. They hope to frame views which are worked up from ideas which are familiar because present in the shared political culture of constitutional democracies. And they hope those views will be widely acceptable because they avoid the deeper controversies which divide the societies they address.

34. As Amy Gutmann seems to think that for purposes of justifying programs of democratic education, the distinction between political and comprehensive liberalism is less important than the distinction between liberalism which are “deeply partisan” and those which are not; see her “Civic Education and Social Diversity,” *Ethics* 105 (1995): 575.

The study of political republicanism may suggest what strengths and weaknesses to look for in other conceptions that are political and that share certain essential features with political republicanism, such as the emphasis on self-governance and the list of civic virtues deemed necessary for self-government. Deliberative democratic theories, for example, also emphasize self-government and, at least in some versions, claim that citizens must have certain deliberative virtues if they are to govern themselves. It is not surprising that Sunstein and Michelman are among the foremost proponents of deliberative democracy.³⁵ Both move easily between republican and deliberative views. In one recent work, Sunstein suggests that for purposes of understanding American constitutionalism, there is not a significant difference between the two.³⁶ Some deliberative democratic theories are also egalitarian,³⁷ as I shall claim political republicanism is. I would argue that they therefore require citizens to have the civic virtue of temperance, as I shall claim political republicanism does. As we shall see, it is the conjunction of an important feature of temperance which I shall call "broad basedness" on the one hand, with political republicanism's commitments to self-government and egalitarianism on the other, that leaves it vulnerable to critique. This suggests that political versions of deliberative democracy may be similarly vulnerable.

Of course only a careful examination of deliberative democratic theories would settle the matter. The advantage of examining political republicanism is that views are most easily assessed in contrast with their rivals. In the case of political republicanism, there is a natural rival readily available for comparison. The history of the republican tradition itself provides that rival in the form of perfectionist republicanism. That history also shows that republicanism has traditionally been thought to require certain moral conditions. Teasing out why suggests criticisms that might be pressed against political versions of deliberative democracy.³⁸

35. For just two of the many constructive works in which Sunstein defends it, see Cass Sunstein, *The Partial Constitution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) and his *One Case at a Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

36. He writes of "the way the American constitution understands [the concept of a republic], in terms of a deliberative approach to democracy"; see Cass Sunstein, *Republic.Com* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 37.

37. See Joshua Cohen, "The Economic Basis of Deliberative Democracy," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 6 (1988): 25-50.

38. For a clear statement of such a theory, see Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy," in *The Good Polity*, ed. Hamlin and Pettit (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 17-34.

Here, however, I am concerned with political republicanism. The question I now want to press is whether the views of political republicans, if implemented, could allow a political republican regime to encourage the virtues they themselves think citizens need to sustain it.

IV

The achievement and maintenance of economic justice should be high on the agenda of any government. I assume that taxation and redistribution of income and wealth are among the means of achieving economic justice that have to be considered and sometimes implemented. I also assume that republicans are especially sympathetic to the egalitarian distribution of income and the dispersal of wealth. For inequalities of income and wealth may make some citizens financially dependent upon others. This, in turn, may compromise the political freedom and equality of the dependents. Moreover, republicans may fear that concentrations of wealth will concentrate political power because of the ability of the wealthy to exercise unequal influence. And so I assume republicans will insist that taxation, redistribution, restrictions on intergenerational transfers, and restrictions on the use of money in politics, all receive very serious consideration.

Clearly if citizens are to consider and, when necessary, implement such measures, they will have to be properly disposed to income, wealth and possessions. The elements of the relevant dispositions are quite complex, and they are likely to be quite demanding of those who are better off. Reaching and abiding by just outcomes may well require those citizens to be somewhat detached from material wealth and from the prestige that wealth confers. Giving serious consideration to egalitarian measures will require them to be ready to part with some of what they have and to refrain from rationalizing their possession of it in public deliberation. It will also require them to be reflective about the effects of their first order dispositions on their own capacities for judgment, hence to be self-effacing about the personal and political consequences of being unduly attached to material possessions. In sum, governance which is just by republican standards may well require citizens—especially the better off—to develop and exercise important forms of temperance.

This is especially so if the government is to be *republican* government conducted by inclusive public deliberation. Some forms of liberalism are consistent with a relatively passive citizenry. They do not particularly value citizens' political participation. They do require that citizens be temperate enough to comply with just legislation but the sanctions which attend noncompliance provide strong incentives to obey. Republican government, however, is *self-government*. It requires temperate behavior for which citizens have no comparable incentives. Republican citizens are, for example, to cast public- rather than self-regarding votes for candidates. This implies that they must be ready to support candidates who, if elected, may ask them to make sacrifices so that others can have more. Citizens are also to take part in public deliberation about issues, offering public-regarding arguments for the policies they regard as just. This implies that they must be ready to argue for proposals which could impose significant costs on them. In neither of these cases is the readiness reinforced by the threat of legal sanction. Republican government thus requires an especially high degree of voluntary, noncoerced temperance. It requires, as classical republicans recognized, an especially virtuous (or perhaps an especially continent) citizenry.

Political republicans might well accept this point. Nothing they say is inconsistent with it. If convinced that temperance is necessary for adequate self-government, they might agree that it should be considered a civic virtue along with the more obviously deliberative qualities they explicitly mention. It is interesting that they have said little about temperance and that their list of civic virtues would have to be expanded to include it. As I mentioned earlier, I attribute this reticence to a reluctance to endorse the traditional theories of human flourishing that accorded temperance an important place. But I do not want to make too much of this suggestion. Instead I shall simply assume political republicans would acknowledge that republican government requires a temperate citizenry.

My own view is that some orientations toward wealth and consumption make us worse as people. Among the many ways in which they do so is by dulling us to the claims of the spiritual, broadly understood as including the intellectual, the aesthetic, and the religious, and by deafening us to the claims of others on our resources. Temperance is a corrective which orients us properly toward wealth and consumption. When properly developed, it is a human excellence. There is no way of determining what the

proper or temperate orientation toward these things is without principles of justice.³⁹ There is at least that much truth to the claim that the virtues are unified. Because temperance must be informed by justice, it is a civic virtue—in the strong sense.

These views, the view that better people make better citizens and the attractions of self-government, all contribute to the appeal of some version of perfectionist republicanism. One such version would be a republicanism that is reconciled to big government as the most effective counterweight to concentrations of private economic power. Such a republicanism would also value self-government, thinking that an informed, public-spirited, and vigilant citizenry is necessary to forestall devolution into what de Tocqueville famously referred to as “soft despotism” by an increasingly powerful state.⁴⁰ Like traditional republicanism, it would be

39. Indeed Thomas Aquinas, who calls the proper orientation toward these things “liberality,” argues that that orientation is part of justice rather than temperance; see *Summa Theologiae* II-II,117,5 ad 2. Some will think that Aquinas is correct. Temperance, they may think, cannot be a civic virtue for it seems to be a self-regarding virtue having to do with the proper regulation of one’s own appetites for food, drink and sex. Note first, however, that even apparently self-regarding virtues can also be civic virtues, for actions that proceed from them can have political consequences. Aquinas himself recognizes this at *Summa Theologiae* I-II,61,5 where he grants that in one sense, all the natural virtues are political virtues. Furthermore, Thomas’s argument that the virtue at issue is part of justice rather than temperance does not turn, as the objection does, on a distinction between self-regarding and civic virtues. Instead it turns on one between appetites and pleasures of the body on the one hand, and those of the soul (“concupiscentia .. et delectatio ... animalis”) on the other. Temperance, he says, regulates the former; he numbers the desire for and delight in money and possessions among the latter. By classifying delight in money and possessions among the pleasures of the soul, Aquinas draws attention to a fact I would also stress. The undue attachment to wealth and possessions has a significant intellectual component. It often arises from reflection on the status we think wealth and possessions confer. But the unqualified distinction Aquinas seems to draw between pleasures and appetites of the body and those of the soul is untenable. Bodily pleasures and appetites also have significant intellectual components. This is clear from the role of fantasy in sexual desire and from the fact that educated tastes can make the pleasures of food and drink more nuanced and enjoyable. Once we recognize the untenability of Thomas’s distinction, the way is clear to argue that the pleasures of possession are among those governed by temperance. It seems to me that they are.

The connections I have asserted among status, reflection and the pleasures of possession seem to have been recognized by Cicero; see the counsel against ostentatious dwellings at *De Officiis* I, 139-40. These paragraphs of *De Officiis* fall in the section of the work devoted to temperance. Thus though it is not clear, Cicero may side with me and against Aquinas on which virtue regulates our attachment to wealth and possessions.

40. See Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 9.

wary of political dependence, particularly the interdependence of governing and economic elites. It would also be perfectionist in that it would view the civic virtues required for self-government as genuine human excellences. I cannot develop and defend such a view here; indeed such a view may have serious problems of its own. To indicate its advantages over political republicanism, I want to examine the practical consequences of a political theory which claims that temperance is a civic virtue only in the weak sense. I want, that is, to query the practical consequences of claiming that it is a quality of character which is valuable because it is necessary for self-government while remaining silent about whether it is a genuine human excellence.

V

Let me begin by defusing an objection that might be thought fatal to the political republican view. Temperance with respect to material possessions, it might be thought, is *broad-based*. Temperance effects a certain orientation toward material possessions. That orientation manifests itself in characteristic actions and attitudes where material possessions are concerned. Public deliberation and voting may be among the activities which engage temperance, but they are not the only ones. A truly virtuous orientation toward possessions also shows itself in activities that have nothing to do with politics. It shows itself in many areas of private life as well. If it does not, then the person in question does not really have the virtue after all. Because a temperate orientation shows itself in so many areas that have nothing to do with republican government, the objection concludes, it is a mistake to seize on the connection between temperance and politics to explain why temperance is a virtue.

The political republican could reject the claim about the broad-basedness of temperance. She could appeal to the intuitively plausible claim that civically virtuous people betray what look like inconsistent orientations toward material possession. They show austerity in some areas and self-indulgence in others. So long as someone's self-indulgence does not impede her ability to contribute to and act on the outcomes of public deliberation, her self-indulgence is not inconsistent with the ascription of civic virtue. To deny this and insist on broad-basedness is to impose too demanding a standard of virtue-ascription.

This reply to the objection is suggested by a traditional view of the civic virtues. According to that view, the civic virtue of temperance does not confer or require an ideal orientation toward material possessions, nor does the virtue make its possessor ideally temper-

ate. It merely makes its possessor temperate enough to be a good citizen. That, it might be thought, is consistent with quite a bit of laxity in private life. This “good enough” view of the civic virtues might be very attractive to the political republican who endorses the weak view of what makes civic virtues. On the weak view, what makes a quality of character a virtue is that it suits its possessor for citizenship. It is natural for someone who accepts this to think that *all* a quality of character must do to qualify as a civic virtue is suit its possessor for citizenship. It is natural, that is, for someone who endorses the weak view of the civic virtues to endorse the “good enough” view of the civic virtues as well.

I am inclined, however, to think that some version of broad-basedness is correct. As I have already suggested, the temperance needed for contributing to public deliberation about tax policy, say, and for adhering readily to its verdicts manifests a deeper orientation toward our income, wealth, and consumption. It may be consistent with a certain amount of self-indulgence. But there is truth to the remark that “where your treasure is, there also your heart shall be.”⁴¹ Recast in more prosaic and political terms: too deep an attachment to our pocketbooks makes us too ready to vote them. Too strong an attraction to our money and the things it buys makes it too difficult for us to part with money when justice demands it. The orientation toward income, wealth, and consumption that is necessary for someone to perceive and act on the demands of justice, and sincerely to deliberate about what she may have to give up, needs reinforcement in private life. Even someone who accepts the “good enough” view of the civic virtues should recognize that.

I therefore think the political republican should grant that the civic virtue of temperance requires a family of affective, intellectual, and appetitive dispositions which are exercised in activities seemingly unrelated to citizenship. Consistent with her theory, she can stick to her claim that, appearances of incongruity notwithstanding, the members of this family are valuable simply because they equip their possessors for self-government. The pressing question for the political republican is whether accounting for the value of temperance this way diminishes the likelihood that citizens will develop and act from it. It seems to me that it does, and that recognizing the truth of some form of broad-basedness makes the problem even more pressing.

Much of the time virtuous action takes place, if not automatically, at least with little reflection on our motives, on the deeper

41. *Luke 12:34.*

dispositions to which those motives are connected, or on the value of the dispositions and attitudes that comprise the virtue. There are, however, occasions on which we do reflect about these matters. We may ask whether a virtue is worth acquiring or is worth training in a different direction, so that it motivates a new family of actions. Or we may ask whether the quality which the occasion seems to call on really is worth having or worth acting from. Some of these are occasions on which we are exhorted by others to be just or faithful or to show some self-restraint. Some are occasions on which we are tempted not to act from these virtues, or when we find it difficult to do so. We may then remind ourselves of the kind of persons we aspire to be and recall why we think certain qualities are worth acting from even under difficult circumstances. At times like these, what we believe about the value of the virtues matters.

If all that political republicans are prepared to say about the civic virtues is that they are valuable because they make their possessors good citizens, this will show itself in the public culture and government action of a political republican regime. The weak view of the civic virtues will inform public practices of criticism and encouragement, and individual reflection on action with political consequences. When young people are publicly educated in the right forms of temperance, they will be told that temperance is worth cultivating because it will make them good citizens. When political leaders exhort constituents to relinquish earnings because tax revenues are needed to fund government programs, they will say that it is characteristic of the good citizen to defer gratification for justice's sake. When citizens are tempted to do the intemperate thing, what the political republican counts on to check them is the knowledge that temperance is one of the virtues of a good citizen. Public morality in a political republican regime will therefore be morality which stops with the invocation of political values. Education, exhortation, self-examination, and self-restraint will be quite different in a perfectionist republican regime. There public morality, public education, and political oratory could trade on the claims that helping to govern one's society is part of a well-lived life and that the temperance required for doing so is a human excellence.

The tendencies to be countered by political republican education, exhortation, and self-restraint are obviously very powerful. If they are to be effective against these tendencies, people must care very greatly about living up to the demands of citizenship. This is clear once we appreciate the truth of broad-basedness. According to broad-basedness, the temperance required for republican citizenship is connected to dispositions which show themselves in many other areas of life. Developing and exercising the former re-

quires developing and exercising the latter. If the only incentive political republicans can offer for developing the former is the importance of living up to the demands of citizenship, it is hard to see that they could offer any other incentive for the latter either. Our citizenship would therefore have to regulate large stretches of our lives, both public and private.

Some thinkers in the republican tradition thought that it could, at least with the right kind of education. American revolutionary Benjamin Rush famously gave extreme expression to this thought, saying that “[i]t is possible to convert men into republican machines.” In the ideal republican education, Rush continued, the American would “be taught that he does not belong to himself, but that he is public property.”⁴² No political republican, however, would endorse so illiberal a goal of civic education. Yet without an extremely heavy-handed educational program, it is not at all clear the members of contemporary democracies will value their citizenship highly enough or identify with it to a sufficient degree to spur development of the republican virtues. It is certainly not obvious that they care enough about being good citizens to let the demands of citizenship govern as much of their lives as they would have to if I am right about the broad-basedness of temperance. There is also some evidence—in the form of low rates of voter turnout and political participation and the low level of effort people expend on their own political education—that Americans do not attach great importance to doing what a good republican citizen would do.

This empirical point serves a deeper aim. For many people in large democratic republics, the identity of republican citizenship is *reflectively escapable*. Their felt need to participate in self-government is not urgent. Reflecting on their lives, their many social roles, and the demands on their time, they can distance themselves from the role of self-governing citizen or reject it entirely with relatively few perceptible costs. In this the identity of republican citizen differs significantly from that of moral agent. Moral agency is not reflectively inescapable. It is not logically impossible for someone to reject the view that she is a moral agent and to reject the claims that that identity makes upon her. Moral skepticism is a coherent position. But the costs of this rejection to someone’s self-esteem, and to her abilities to deliberate and choose, are incomparably higher.

This is because the categories and norms associated with our moral agency are much more deeply implicated in our practical

42. Cited at Wood, *Creation*, p. 427.

thinking than are those connected with republican citizenship. We might be able to reason about whether to spend more or shelter income while denying the relevance of asking what a good citizen would do. It is much more difficult to do so while denying the relevance of questions about what it is good to do or right to do or what the good person would do. This is why the exhortation to be a good person can gain a greater purchase than the exhortation to be good republican citizen. This is also why it is much cheaper for someone to ask why she should do what the good republican citizen would do than it is for her to ask why she should do what the good person would do. And this, in turn, is one of the reasons why describing civic virtues as moral excellences can be much more compelling than simply describing them as excellences of citizenship. The perfectionist republican is able to take advantage of this by linking the two, and promoting good citizenship as an element of a good human life. The political republican, on the other hand, must forego this advantage.

VI

What arguments can political republicans offer for valuing citizenship more highly? What arguments can they offer that would show the price of rejecting republican citizenship to be dearer than I have estimated?

Perhaps they will argue that living up to the demands of citizenship is both attractive in its own right, because citizens are to be tolerant, open-minded and public-spirited, and necessary for self-government. Perhaps they will argue that self-government by public deliberation is both attractive in its own right, because deliberation is to be empowering, inclusive and public-regarding, and necessary for the achievement of correct political outcomes. And perhaps they will argue that the achievement of correct outcomes is of paramount importance because outcomes determine the distribution of social benefits and burdens. This distribution, in turn, conditions all citizens' chances in life. These connections among the civic virtues, self-government, and justice make a strong moral case for valuing citizenship quite apart from any further claims about the excellences of the civic virtues. In fact, it might be said, the case is so compelling that no real difference would be made by appending claims of this kind to it. Anyone who would reject the case would also reject the one that resulted from conjoining it with stronger claims.

There are, however, some difficulties with this line of thought.

First, political republicanism faces an assurance problem that perfectionist republicanism does not. The argument is supposed to make republican citizenship attractive enough to each person that she cares about developing the virtues of the good republican citizen. It depends crucially upon connections among civic virtue, well-conducted public deliberation, and just outcomes. This connection only holds when all citizens, or when a suitably large number of them, possess and act from the civic virtues. A single person's possession and exercise of the virtues is not enough. For the argument to make republican citizenship attractive to someone, she must therefore have some assurance that it also makes citizenship attractive to others. She must have some reason to believe that they will not engage in disingenuous argumentation, strategic voting, and self-interested agenda manipulation under cover of public-regarding talk. It is far from obvious what assurance might be forthcoming. Indeed, in a society of a quarter-billion people, it is not clear that assurance *could* be had. The perfectionist republican argument for valuing the virtues is much less vulnerable on this score. Excellences of the human character realize goods that can be made attractive quite apart from the prospect that others will develop them. Indeed we sometimes find them attractive because others have failed to develop them. This is reflected in the fact that on comparing ourselves with others we can pride ourselves on our virtues, sometimes to a fault.

Furthermore, if the political republican case is as compelling as it purports to be, then it is hard to see what would be *lost* by claiming that the virtues of republican citizenship are genuine human excellences. Politics is an ineliminable component of human life. The achievement of just outcomes in politics is a very great moral good. If the civic virtues, including temperance, are necessary for bringing about this very great good in an area of life that is ineliminable, why isn't someone who exercises the civic virtues a more excellent human being in this respect than someone who does not? The political republican who is persuaded that political adequacy requires silence about the human good will find it natural to stop short of the stronger claim. But political republicanism is addressed to a society in which many people seem to believe there are moral norms that do not owe their authority to public deliberation and seem to want a deep justification for political arrangements. These people may find the argument unsatisfying or oddly truncated because it pulls back before reaching its logical conclusion. Who has the better of the case depends upon exactly why political republicans think they should avoid claims about the human good.

Political republicans might think that the political adequacy of their theory depends upon avoiding claims which are unlikely to secure agreement. In a pluralistic society, claims about the human good are unlikely to do so since they have normative implications for human behavior that some citizens will reject. But the political republican list of civic virtues and the claim that citizens should cultivate them may be no less controversial than strong claims about the human good. The demands of republican citizenship are very heavy. Even those prepared to identify with their citizenship may not identify with republican citizenship. They might identify instead with a conception of citizenship that demands less political interest and involvement. The claim that citizens should cultivate temperance may meet with especially deep disagreement, particularly if temperance is broad-based and must be exercised in areas of private life that are far removed from republican politics. If the reason for staying within the bounds of the political is to avoid reliance on controversial premises, then the heavy demands of republican citizenship make it questionable whether this strategy has the advantages it promised.

Alternatively, political republicans might think that political adequacy requires avoiding claims which cannot secure *reasonable* agreement. They do not say much about reasonable agreement and disagreement, and so it may not be immediately obvious that their claims about the value of the civic virtues fall on the right side of the divide. Perhaps, however, their weak view of the civic virtues obviates the need to say much. The political republican may assert, as Sunstein does in the passage I quoted earlier, that the civic virtues are “instrumental to a well functioning deliberative process,” a process which the political republican thinks reaches just outcomes. The political republican may then say, in line with the weak view, that civic virtues are valuable simply because they stand in an instrumental relationship to those outcomes. The importance of reaching just outcomes would secure reasonable agreement if anything would. The claim that some trait is a civic virtue is therefore an instrumental claim about what is required to attain an object the value of which is beyond reasonable disagreement. However standards of reasonable and unreasonable disagreement are to be spelled out, disagreement about an instrumental claim of this kind is clearly not the sort of reasonable disagreement political republicans are concerned to avoid. Disagreement with more robust claims about the civic virtues is quite different.

But this reply sets the bar for political adequacy too high. Surely a theory could be politically adequate—could serve as the working

public philosophy of a liberal democracy—even if premised on claims with which some citizens could reasonably disagree. Indeed it might prove more workable than theories which provoke less disagreement if adopting it as a public philosophy increases the likelihood that a critical mass of citizens will develop the virtues needed for self-government.

Here it might be protested that perfectionist republican objections underestimate the deliberative character of republican politics. Citizens are supposed to approach inclusive public deliberation ready to rethink their political commitments in light of others' contributions. If the privileged really are ready to do this, if they really are prepared to listen to the contributions of the poor and the marginalized, those contributions will persuade them to favor just outcomes. The temperance that good citizenship requires is implicit in the openness of virtuous citizens to the contributions of others. It is elicited and exercised in sincere responses to them. Citizens' manifest willingness to contribute, to listen, and to change their preferences builds the mutual trust and confidence needed to overcome the assurance problem. With assurances that others will develop and exercise the civic virtues if we will, each can see and be inspired by the attractions of becoming a virtuous republican citizen. Each can see why republican citizenship is something she should try to live up to.

This protest is either unduly sanguine or begs a crucial question. There are a number of responses available to us when we are faced with the just claims of others. One is defensive rationalization. Another is the transient sentimentality that motivates isolated episodes of generosity. The right response, however, comes from an enduring disposition to honor those claims, even at our own expense in the face of strong temptation to the contrary. That disposition may be elicited and developed by political participation, but because it is broad-based it must also be nurtured in areas of life far removed from politics. Citizens must cultivate that orientation and affirm it as a deep-rooted element of their character. The presence of this disposition and its exercise in public deliberation are what needs to be explained. To assume that the disposition will be induced simply by the claims of others is to put more faith in the transformative character of deliberation than our knowledge of human nature warrants. To assume that citizens who enter public deliberation in the right spirit implicitly have the temperance they need is to assume away the problem on which the perfectionist republican seizes.

VII

The thoughts that republican citizenship can be attractive independent of stronger claims about the human good and that deliberative politics is sufficient to elicit, develop, and sustain the civic virtues, betray a deeper supposition at the heart of political republican thought. That is the supposition that republicanism is self-sustaining, intellectually and politically. More precisely, it is the supposition that political republican theory does not need a deeper ethical justification to be intellectually satisfactory and politically adequate. The supposition is a natural one to make. Political liberals like Rawls have taught contemporary political philosophers that their theories should be capable of being presented as “free-standing.”⁴³ Yet the supposition marks a significant departure from the classical republican tradition. Thinkers in that tradition, as I mentioned earlier, believed that republicanism required significant extrapolitical support.

Here the perfectionist republican sides with the tradition, fearing that this supposition threatens republicanism’s political adequacy by shearing off some of its most powerful supports. These supports include the widely shared beliefs that there are genuine human excellences and that the civic virtues are among them, the public culture that grows up around those widely held beliefs, the form of public education appropriate for transmitting that culture and political oratory at its best, which calls citizens to excellence at times when it is most needed. They also include the practices and secondary associations of so-called private life which help to foster those beliefs and cultivate the virtues. There are dangers to relying on the support mechanisms used by classical republicans, as political republicans’ trenchant critiques of the tradition make amply clear. These mechanisms were too often militaristic, sexist, exclusionary or, as in the case of the yeoman population favored by Thomas Jefferson, unworkable under current conditions. Secondary associations can foster intransigently held preferences and serve as a breeding ground of the factionalism so long anathema to the republican tradition. One challenge facing perfectionist republicans is that of describing forms of civic and associational life that will help us affirm our citizenship and support a strong view of the republican virtues while avoiding the problems so clearly identified by political republicans.

43. See Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 10.

When those who prize self-government and the civic virtues make the supposition that republicanism is self-sustaining, they also forego their claim to a potentially valuable piece of conceptual space. In American politics, it is conservatism that is popularly associated with moral strength, while liberalism is often associated with laxity. The space available for a morally demanding politics of the left is sometimes thought to be unoccupied. The best political republican writing defends positions on the left of the American political spectrum. Perfectionist republicans can do likewise. If I am correct that republican government is morally demanding—that it demands genuine excellences of character—then perfectionist republicanism holds out the promise of claiming that space for those whose political sympathies lie with the liberal tradition of American politics.