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Editorial

Republicanism constitutes an important and venerable tradition in Western political thought, which includes such important thinkers as Machiavelli, Harrington, Sydney, Montesquieu and the Founding Fathers of the United States. Nevertheless, this tradition was for a long time somewhat neglected by mainstream political theory. Recently, however, we are witnessing a renewed wave of scholarly interest in republican ideas. In the field of political theory, it led to the development of so called neo-republicanism—normative political theory inspired by the ideas of classical (in particular Roman) republicanism. Its most important representative is Philip Pettit, whose seminal work *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, appeared in 1997.

Pettit presents republicanism as (a more attractive) alternative to liberalism. Just like liberalism, it regards individual freedom as the key value. Nonetheless, while liberalism conceives of freedom as *non-interference*, republicanism (at least in Pettit's rendering) understands it as *non-domination*. This seemingly slight semantic shift has rather important consequences both for the understanding of the relations between the government and individual citizens and for the extent (and kind) of governmental actions that are deemed legitimate or desirable. If we define freedom as non-interference, we are bound to regard the law and the governmental institutions that enforce it as constraints on the freedom of individual citizens. Such constraints may be deemed legitimate, obviously, but they are constraints nonetheless. On the other hand, the republican understanding of liberty as non-domination enables Pettit to portray the law and the (representative and contestable) government in a more positive light as indispensable structures that enable and guarantee individual citizens' freedom. Similarly, the liberal notion of freedom implies that welfare-state redistributive measures or any other regulations of the free-market hinder individual freedom. On the other hand, the republican notion of freedom makes it possible to portray the regulatory measures as means of *protection* of individual citizens' freedom against domination by other individuals or corporations.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that the work of Pettit and other contemporary republican political theorists was inspired by previous research of intellectual historians such as Quentin Skinner, J. G. A. Pocock and Gordon S. Wood, who have explored the historical development and political significance of republicanism already since late 1960s. Both Wood, in his *Creation of the American Republic* (1969), and Pocock, in his *Machiavelian Moment* (1975), have challenged the then prevailing narrative of the liberal lineage of the founding of the United States when they stressed the role of republican ideas in the American Revolution and founding of the new republic. Nonetheless, Pettit has been probably most directly influenced by Skinner, who has both traced the influence of the classical (i.e. Roman) republicanism on Machiavelli and other early modern political thinkers and argued that the originally Roman republican tradition entails a specific understanding of freedom, which is distinct from its later liberal rendering as non-interference.¹

¹ See e.g. SKINNER, Quentin (1978). *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, vol. 1: The Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. SKINNER, Quentin (1981). *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

It is worth noting that the work in which Skinner presents his account of the specifically republican understanding of freedom in the most systematic way, *Liberty before Liberalism* (1998), appeared after Pettit's *Republicanism* and contains references to Pettit's book. This suggests that rather than focusing on the influence of Skinner (and other intellectual historians) on Pettit (and other contemporary political theorists), we perhaps should rather be speaking about a continuing intellectual debate about republican political theory that crosses the narrow boundaries of academic disciplines.

The present monothematic issue of *Acta Politologica* presents another contribution to this lively and interesting inter-disciplinary debate. The issue opens with Tomáš Halamka's interview with Philip Pettit. The interview focusses on the principal ideas of his republican political theory and on the differences between neo-republicanism and neo-liberalism. To illustrate the practical relevance of his ideas, Professor Pettit also refers to various current political developments, such as the independence referenda in the UK and in Catalonia, the Trump presidency, and the nefarious and potentially oppressive power of the globalised markets and social media.

The opening interview is followed by four historically oriented papers, which in various ways either react directly to Pettit's work or otherwise engage in the current scholarly debates about republicanism. The first of these papers, "Sovereign versus Government: Rousseau's Republicanism" by Christopher Kelly, is written as a response to Pettit's recent article, which questions Rousseau's republican credentials by pointing out that his notion of undivided and unlimited sovereignty is incompatible with the republican principle of mixed constitution and potentially makes individual citizens subjects to unconstrained and incontestable power of the sovereign Assembly. In his response, Kelly analyses Rousseau's understanding of the mutual relation between the sovereign and the government. Drawing from both the *Social Contract* and Rousseau's other writings, he stresses that the sovereign according to Rousseau has both a right and a duty to keep the government in check. More importantly, he argues that this oversight power, according to Rousseau, belongs not only to the duly constituted Assembly, but also to individual citizens or informal assemblies of citizens. This argument challenges the conventional reading of both Rousseau's notion of civic virtue and of his views on political deliberation.

The next paper turns attention to another important French political thinker, Benjamin Constant, who is usually perceived as a typical representative of classical liberalism. As its title suggests, the primary aim of Hana Fořtová's paper "Benjamin Constant and the Ideas of Republicanism" is to challenge this conventional reading of Constant's work. Focussing on Constant's awareness of the inherent dangers of modern individualism, his emphasis on the importance of political participation and, perhaps more importantly, of civic virtue, she argues that Constant, at least in some respects, belongs rather to the tradition of civic republicanism.

Serena Mocci's paper "Republicanism and Feminism: A Plausible Alliance. The Case of Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*" interprets Fuller's feminist manifesto in the light of recent debates on republicanism. Specifically, she demonstrates how in her defence of women's rights Fuller employed the republican ideas embodied in the American constitution as well as the public ideology of the antebellum American democracy. At a more general level, Mocci's paper aims to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between republicanism and feminism.

The last paper included in this issue, “A Dialogue between Republicanism and the ‘Republic of Science’”, co-authored by Rafał Lis and Christopher Donohue, takes the debate on republicanism outside of the fields of political theory and intellectual history. As its title suggests, it explores various parallels between republican political theory on one hand, and philosophy of science on the other. The authors suggest not only that the current philosophy of science deals with problems comparable to those that preoccupied eighteenth century republican political thinkers, but also, and more provocatively, that contemporary political theory could benefit from an interdisciplinary dialogue with the philosophy of science.

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