sacrifices and comparable to theirs. That is a task at which no one should wish her luck.

NOTES

1. Of course, not even liberal democracy can be wholly free of the threat of great politics, if only because not everybody out there is liberal. As I write this, America is at war in Iraq. Missing from the American picture, however, here as elsewhere, is the invisibility required for the applicability of the Ellsian paradigm. If anyone went unheard in the debate preceding the war, it was only because of the din.

2. The whitelist reader will catch a distant whiff of Jacob T. Levy’s The Multinationa lization of Fear (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). As the only current theorist cited in this comment, may Professor Levy lamb in his iconoclastic stance.

THE DOMINATION COMPLAINT

PHILIP PETTIT

It is possible to conceptualize political freedom as the absence of domination, arguing that a person is free to the extent that others do not stand over him or her, able to interfere at will and with relative impunity in his or her affairs. And this, furthermore, is how political freedom appears to have been conceptualized in the long and broad republican tradition: the tradition that stretches from republican Rome to revolutionary America and France, encompassing figures as diverse as Cicero, Machiavelli, Harrington, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Madison. I have defended those two claims, respectively philosophical and historical, in earlier writings, as indeed have a number of other authors. 1

In addition to defending those two claims, however, I have also argued that there is a good case for resuscitating the republican viewpoint as a political philosophy, on the grounds that it has many advantages in comparison with contemporary alternatives. I concentrate in the present essay on this third claim, approaching it from a new angle. The essay is in three sections. In the first, I consider the main constraints that we should expect any candidate for a central or supreme political ideal to satisfy, distinguishing between constraints of feasibility and constraints of desirability. And then in the second and third sections, I argue that the ideal of non domination does remarkably well in satisfying those feasibility and desirability constraints. The argument in these sections is inevitably somewhat sketchy, since it often recapitulates points that I have elaborated elsewhere.
1. Constraints on a Political Ideal

Ideals and Complaints

Any political ideal that aspires to be a central or supreme political role has to provide a basis for assessing the way the polity is constituted and the way it behaves within the limits set by that constitution. The assessment of a polity turns in the last analysis on how well it serves its citizens or members, answering to interests they assert or are disposed to assert; I abstract from the assessment of the polity for its effects on nonmembers. And this being so, we must therefore expect any would-be political ideal to try and articulate the importance of something in which people clearly have an avowed or readily avowable interest: something whose absence in their lives will spontaneously lead them to make complaint.

This condition is satisfied by every half-plausible political ideal. Take ideals as those provided by the elimination of poverty, the achievement of equality, the approximation of justice, and the minimization of interference in people’s lives or the maximization of happiness. In every case we may expect people to be ready to complain about the absence of the condition recommended under the ideal: that is, to complain about poverty or inequality, injustice, interference, or unhappiness. And that is as it should be. For were people not ready to complain in this way, then the ideal could hardly claim to reflect an interest that they were readily disposed to assert.

So much for what I describe as the basic condition on any would-be candidate for the role of political ideal. With that condition spelled out, we can explore the further constraints that we might want as political ideal to satisfy. These are all well cast as constraints on the sort of complaint that an attractive ideal ought to articulate and I distinguish them into two bunches. So far as the first bunch is satisfied by the complaint, the corresponding ideal will be a feasible ideal for the state to track; so far as the second bunch is satisfied, it will be an ideal that it is also desirable that it should track.

Constraints of Feasibility

The constraints of feasibility are, first, that the state or polity should be able to do something about relieving or remediating the complaint in question; second, that it should be able to provide an effective remedy that does not introduce new problems in place of old; and third, that it should be able to provide an efficient as well as an effective remedy; that is, a remedy that involves lower costs overall than any alternative strategy. In a phrase, the complaint must be politically remediable and remediable in an effective and efficient manner.

That the complaint must be remediable means that it must amount to something more politically interesting than a complaint about the constraints of social life, or a complaint about the unequal status of human existence, or a complaint about the inequality of status that emerge among almost all groups of human beings. There is little or nothing that governments can do about such matters, however much they may impinge on people’s consciousness, and so there is no point in using them as a basis out of which to construct a political ideal.

But a complaint might be remediable without the state or polity being able to provide an effective remedy. It might be that some intervention would be counterproductive, for example, engendering on novel fronts precisely the sort of complaint that it is designed to relieve. Thus, it might do more harm than good in its attempt to reduce the net level of a certain evil—say, interference or domination—in the society it might perpetrate more interference or domination than it prevents.

Finally, to turn to the third constraint, the fact that the state is able to remedy a complaint, and do so effectively, does not mean that it represents the most efficient way of dealing with it. There may be nonpolitical ways of relieving the complaint that achieve better results for the same or for lower costs. If the complaint is to underpin a feasible political ideal, then the state should be able to remedy the complaint efficiently as well as effectively.

These three constraints are hard to resist, yet many proposed ideals seem to fail them. The first constraint would rule out trying to construct a political ideal out of wholesale antipathy to power, for example, as sometimes appears to happen in the work of Michel Foucault. In railing against the capillary power that runs through the smallest veins of the system, Foucault does sometimes direct attention to phenomena that we might hope to be able to rectify. But often he seems to be casting a sort of
influence that is as inescapable in the social world as gravity is in the natural.

The second, effectiveness constraint, raises serious questions about the libertarian ideal of ensuring that certain allegedly natural rights are respected in social life, in particular the right that people are autonomous by right against the coercive restriction of choice. For there is no way in which the state can act so as to achieve that ideal without itself offending against it by coercively restricting the choices of individuals. This is the problem that Robert Nozick acknowledges as a challenge for rights-based libertarianism, going on to make an attempt to resolve it that is ingenious, if not successful. He argues that even if people were entirely respectful of one another's rights and rational self-interest would lead them—without violating those rights—to institute a state specifically, an "ultraminimal" state of the kind close to that which he himself favors.

The third, efficiency constraint, explains why most of us agree that we should not require the state to concern itself with saving people's souls or elevating their minds—with their fidelity to particular religions or their achievement of any personal ideal. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century defenders of tolerance like John Locke made the relevant point when they argued that the way to win people's souls to the practice of any worthwhile religion is by free consent, not state coercion. There are better ways—certainly more efficient ways—to tackle a supposed problem of unbelief than to have recourse to the power of the polity.

**Constraints of Desirability**

The second bunch of constraints on the sort of complaint that a plausible political ideal should reflect relate to the desirability of the state's relieving the complaint, as distinct from the feasibility of its doing so. There are three constraints that I distinguish in this category. The first is that the complaint be discursively admissible: that is, admissible as a relevant consideration in any open discursive discussion of how things are and should be organized in a society. The other two constraints bear on the substantive character of the complaint itself rather than on such a structural aspect. The second is that it be a significant complaint; that is, it is hard to dismiss or downplay. And the third is that it be a complaint that subsumes a variety of other significant complaints within it.

The first constraint would rule out of consideration any complaint that is irrediscibly relativized to a particular group within the society. Take a complaint of the form, "this is bad for us," where the plural refers to a particular group, not to the society as a whole. This might be just a way of drawing attention to a more general, nonsectarian complaint, of course. The background assumption might be that the arrangement leaves others no better off, so that rejecting it would be a Pareto improvement good for some—the complaining group—bad for none. Or the assumption might be that the respect in which the arrangement is bad for the group is a respect—say, that of access to one's own culture—on which all can agree that no group ought to be disadvantaged. But suppose that the complaint, "this is bad for us," does not reduce to a more neutral form of complaint. In that case, it would not be discursively admissible, though it might be admissible in the context of mutual bargaining. The ordinary practice of discourse or conversation would rule it out as an irrelevant consideration to raise in an unforced, cooperative discussion about how things ought to be politically organized: it would represent a sort of special pleading and would be inconsistent with the assumptions built into such a discussion. The response that the complaint would invite is: "That's not germane; the point is to discover what's best for all of us in the society, not just what's best for your group in particular."

But a complaint can be discursively admissible without being particularly significant, and so without satisfying the second constraint of desirability. It may be that while almost any of us can understand why a certain complaint should be made, none of us thinks that the complaint is of the greatest moment. While believing that someone has a just complaint in some matter, for example, we may feel that the complainant is lucky to have nothing more pressing to complain about. Clearly, any complaint out of which a plausible political ideal is to be constructed had better not be a complaint of this kind. It should be what I shall describe as a significant complaint.

The third constraint I mentioned is that any complaint out of which a political ideal is to be constructed should subsume a variety of other presumptively significant complaints within it. This
constraint bears its particular on any ideal that aspires to a central or supreme place in politics. What it is designed to rule out is the sort of ideal whose satisfaction would still leave a variety of other presumptively significant complaints unsatisfied. The ideal of maximal noninterference fails rather dramatically on this front, for example, since a society might realize such an ideal and yet be one where inequality, domination, and poverty prevail. If a complaint is to provide the stuff out of which a central or supreme political ideal is to be fashioned, then the measures taken for satisfying it should serve as far as possible to satisfy such other complaints as well. This constraint may be hard to meet but it clearly represents a plausible desideratum. To the extent that a complaint satisfies it, the corresponding ideal will have a claim to a central and perhaps even supreme place among political ideals.

There are other desiderata that we might want a political ideal to satisfy, but I shall stick with those just rehearsed. In the next section I look at how far the republican ideal of nondomination satisfies the feasibility constraints, and then in the final section I look at how far it answers to the constraints of desirability. While I shall have to make my points briskly and without much elaboration, I hope that the overview I provide will help to show just how attractive the ideal is.

2. NONDOMINATION AND THE FEASIBILITY CONSTRAINTS

The three questions to be asked about the complaint that republican theory privileges—the complaint, as I take it, about being dominated—are whether this is something that the state can take steps to remedy; if so, whether the remedy it can offer is effective, not counterproductive; and if it is effective, whether the remedy provided is efficient, comparing well with alternative strategies.

Defining Domination

Before tackling those questions, however, we must first consider what domination involves. Here I must be brief, drawing on work done elsewhere. I say that individual or group agents dominate an individual to the extent that they are in a position to interfere arbitri-
fixed by the controls to which it is subject, not the ends that it happens to effect.

There are three respects in which domination, by this account, comes in degrees. An agent may have a greater or lesser capacity to interfere arbitrarily in someone's affairs, for the option may be more or less accessible or uncosts. An agent may have a capacity to interfere more or less arbitrarily, for it may be more or less unburdened by constraints designed to force him to track the allowable interests of the victim. And an agent may have a capacity to interfere arbitrarily in a larger or smaller class of choices by the agent, or in choices that are intuitively of greater or lesser significance to the agent.17 Domination, then, is not an on-or-off condition but one to which a person may be subject at a higher or lower degree of intensity. This should always be kept in mind, even when convenience of presentation requires us to describe it as if it were an on-or-off matter.

First Feasibility Constraint

Is the complaint about being dominated by others one that the state is in a position, at least in principle, to do something about? Clearly, I think, yes. In the nature of things, the state claims a monopoly of legitimate force in its community—if other agencies exercise legitimate force that is through being allowed to do so by the state—and that claim must be more or less effectively implemented within any well-ordered polity. But if the state has access to the use of force, and to the threat of force—to coercion—then it is in a position to reduce the degree to which people suffer at least certain forms of domination.

One way in which it might do this is by redistributing resources and powers of interference across the population in a society. Where X was previously able with impunity to interfere arbitrarily in Y's affairs, a redistribution might ensure that Y is able to retaliate, so that the expected cost of X's interference goes up and the domination X enjoys diminishes or disappear. Call this the strategy of armament. Another way in which the state might reduce domination is by disarmament: that is, by removing the extra resources and powers that enable some to dominate others. And yet another is by protection—by putting defenses in place for those who might otherwise be dominated.

The armament, disarmament, and protection strategies might in turn be pursued by the state in a more or less direct or more or less indirect way. Those who are dominated may be armed or protected by virtue of explicit legal and political measures. Or they may be armed or protected so far as the state facilitates and sponsors developments in civil society that serve suitable purposes. They may be armed or protected, for example, so far as the state is able to encourage a civic culture of condemnation for various forms of arbitrary interference and a culture of coming to the aid of those who suffer such interference. Again those who dominate might be disarmed by explicit state action or by recourse to less formal methods. Take the case where a monopoly firm in a company town dominates those who depend on the firm for employment. This firm may be effectively disarmed if the state explicitly limits its power of dismissal, or ensures relatively generous unemployment benefits, or provides incentives or facilities that attract other employers into the labor market. The possibilities are legion.

Second Feasibility Constraint

Let it be granted that the state can do something by way of remedying the complaint many people will have—whether or not they phrase it that way—of being dominated by others: the complaint is not one of those irremediable complaints that no one, or at least not the state, is able to do anything about. The next question is whether in seeking to provide a remedy for the complaint of domination, the state is likely to do more harm than good. In particular, is it likely to represent a new force of domination at the very moment that it seeks to relieve people of domination? Is it likely to be counterproductive?

Consider, first, the ideal of nondomination, but rather that of noninterference. It is commonly acknowledged among those who invoke this ideal—that conception of freedom—that as the state tries to reduce the interference that some agents practice in the lives of others, it will itself have to interfere in people's lives. In
order to prevent violence and coercion, it will itself have to coerce people into paying taxes and obeying the laws, and it will have to practice penal vengeance against convicted offenders, whether in levying fines, imprisoning them, or even resorting to capital punishment. "As against the coercion applicable by individual to individual, no liberty can be given to one man but in proportion as it is taken away from another. All coercive laws, therefore, and in particular all laws creative of liberty, are as far as they go abortive of liberty." This means that there is a risk of the state being an infelicitous agency for promoting noninterference—it may do more harm than good—though it does not mean that the state will necessarily be ineffective: there may be good grounds for hoping that the level of interference it perpetrates is less than the level of interference it prevents.

How do things stand with the state as an agency for promoting nondomination, as distinct from noninterference? They stand even better. For not only is there bound to be a hope, if the state dominates people in some measure, that it will perpetuate less domination than it prevents. There is also a hope that while it interferes in people’s lives, it will still not dominate them, or will dominate them only in a relatively insignificant degree. The reason for this higher hope is that while the state has to interfere with people, if only by way of coercing them to pay taxes and obey the law, it need not interfere with them arbitrarily. It will not interfere arbitrarily, according to the account given earlier, if it is in the ready-to-be-awarded, overall interest of each to have a state that interferes in their lives, and controls their affairs, according to a certain brief, and it is in place that this will be in the ready-to-be-awarded interest of each, provided that the interference allowed to the state is subject to a controlling brief that helps to ensure that on every issue it has to track the common, readily achievable interests of citizens, and only such interests. It conceives of common interests as those interests whose collective promotion is supported by considerations that people admit as discursively relevant, but others may wish to introduce a different conception at this point. Whatever conception of common, readily achievable interests is adopted, however, the really telling question is whether there is any prospect of constraining the state, once established, so that it acts only for the furtherance of such interests in the traditional phrase, only for the promotion of the common good. The republican tradition has given enormous, sometimes almost exclusive attention to this question in the long history that involves Cicero and Machiavelli, Montesquieu and Rousseau, Harrington and Madison. The notion of the blended or mixed constitution—the sort of constitution that Polybius celebrated in Rome—was developed, for example, in the attempt to work out the sorts of arrangements that would constrain the state suitably and effectively, forcing it to serve the common good. And many other notions, some of them implicated in this master idea, were elaborated and varied with a view to finding the best institutional design. They include proposals for dividing up sovereignty both between the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary and—as in bicameral arrangements—within the legislature; for requiring public decisions to be matters of proper legislation, and for legislation to conform to the rule of law; for ensuring that decisions are made according to agreed-upon reasons and for establishing associated possibilities of appeal, review, and consultation; for devising methods of elevation and appointment to public office that further the prospect of common achievable interests—the common good being tracked; and for constitutionally limiting the range of matters over which government can have influence as well as for limiting the sorts of decisions it can make.

The most interesting challenge for republican thought today—that is, for the sort of thinking that is oriented around the ideal of nondomination—bears on how to design political arrangements so that, as far as possible, the state really is forced to track all and only the common, readily-to-be-awarded interests of the citizenry. The challenge is to see how far government may operate, so that while it can have the reduction of nondomination as a central or even principal aim, it need not itself represent an arbitrary and therefore dominating influence. I do not say that any institutional design is going to remove domination fully and meet the challenge with complete success. But there is at least a hope that state domination may be reduced to a tolerable minimum; a level that is clearly compensated for by the domination that the state prevents.
That this hope is rational is enough for our purposes here; we do not have to do any more by way of vindicating it. For the fact that it is rational to hope for an institutional design that will curb the dominating potential of the state means that we cannot dismiss the complaint about domination as one that no state could remedy effectively. To dismiss it in such a way would be to surrender preemptively to despair at ever finding the sort of institutional design required.

The position adopted here is not one of utopian idealism. We may, for example, that even if the state does not interfere in an arbitrary and dominating way in people’s lives, it is still bound to do some harm to their enjoyment of nondominated choice. It is bound to limit the range over which people may enjoy nondominated choice, just as natural obstacles limit that range. Like the nonintentional obstruction that the natural world or the social system may impose, nonarbitrary but intentional interference will condition people’s enjoyment of nondomination, even if it does not compromise it; even if it does not itself represent a form of domination. It will restrict the number of choices in which people may take advantage of their not being dominated.

The fact that the state is bound to condition people’s enjoyment of nondominated choice in this way does not mean that it will be an ineffective agency for promoting nondomination. We may disagree about how exactly to weight the two, but the compromising of nondomination that the state can prevent is intuitively more important than the conditioning of nondomination that it is bound to impose. Still, there is an important lesson that follows from the fact that even the nondomining state conditions people’s enjoyment of nondomination. This is that, as between two forms of state that do equally well in reducing domination, where one invokes deep-running legislation and coercion than the other, we ought to prefer to have the one that interferes less.

Finally, we have an objection. If the state espouses nondomination as a goal, won’t it find itself shackled to a project that will demand more and more in the way of resources and interference? Won’t it be at the mercy of an essentially insatiable goal? The range of matters that the state is allowed to take under its purview will increase dramatically, one may say, as the baseline of nondomination rises. And so it is bound to give rise over time to counterproductive, dominating effects that will leave people worse off in terms of nondomination than they would have been under a more modest regime.

This challenge articulates a danger, however, not an inevitability. And the danger teaches us that if we are to devise a set of policies for the state to espouse in the attempt to remedy complaints of domination, then we should be on our guard against the sort of power creep envisaged. There is undoubtedly a lot of room, starting from the sort of society most of us live in today, for the state to explore new policies. Imagine, then, that we introduce those initiatives incrementally, with a view to seeing how well they do overall in coping with domination. As we increase the initiatives explored, thereby enlarging the reach of the state, we should be alert to the likelihood of there being a point where there is net gain in evidence or in prospect. At that point, the state itself will begin to condition people’s enjoyment of nondominated choice in such a measure, or will threaten to compromise people’s nondominated states in such a degree that the lesson is: Stop! From that point on the certain damage done by state activity, even as it is assessed in the ledger books of nondomination, will be too great to compensate for any likely benefit it may achieve.

There will undoubtedly be differences among people on the question of whether as any point the state has done all that it can do without becoming counterproductive; espousing the ideal of nondomination does not mean having an automatic resolution of those differences. The point to note here, however, is that no matter how great those differences are, it can be agreed on all sides that there is an end at some point to what the state can productively do. There will be agreement that the cause of remedying complaints of domination does not threaten to legitimate rampant, uncritical recourse to the state. And that there is bound to be agreement on that point means that the complaint about being dominated does not hold out the specter of an insatiable political ideal.

Third Feasibility Constraint

We turn finally to the third question of feasibility. This is the issue of whether relying on the state promises to do better than any
other likely strategy for reducing domination in a society; in particular, whether relying on a state that is designed to track all and only the widely amenable, common interests of citizens promises to beat alternatives. If it does not promise to do better than other instrumentalities, then this is going to mean that it does not represent an efficient agency on this front. The salient alternative to introducing a state, and authorizing it to act against the domination of some by others, is to rely on the spontaneous measures of economic and civil society to give rise to high levels of nondomination all around. But there is little or no prospect of spontaneous interactions and formations supporting a regime of nondomination. The problem is that resources generally attract more resources, power more power; to them that have it shall be given. Thus, if social life is left to evolve without any political shaping, it will tend to allow the emergence of relatively few positions of influence to open the way for the domination of the many by the few who command those positions. This is a melancholy observation but one that is supported by common sense, historical experience, and the testimony of many literary traditions. As the state promises to be an effective agency in acting against domination, then, it looks likely to represent the most efficient instrumentality available. The state will be able to achieve only very little, as the long republican tradition emphasizes, if it cannot rely on a fund of civic virtue and commitment for ensuring a regime of nondomination: just as good morals, if they are to be maintained, have need of the laws, so the laws, if they are to be observed, have need of good morals—achieving anything.

3. Nondomination and the Desirability Constraints

First Desirability Constraint

The first constraint of desirability on a political ideal is that the complaint it articulates be one that can be raised as a relevant consideration in discourse among people as to how their social and political affairs can be best organized. Does the complaint about domination come across as a consideration admissible in presumptively cooperative discussion, and not just as a complaint of the self-seeking kind that will be deemed irrelevant—an instance of special pleading—in such exchange? Does it present itself as a complaint that all must entertain and take into account? I believe that it does present itself as a complaint of that kind, and for the deepest of reasons. When a number of people engage in discourse, their aim being to determine what is so in some domain or how it is best for them to act as a whole, then they give exclusive privilege to a particular form of influence that they may have on one another: that which occurs by virtue of producing reasons relevant to the outcome that is to be resolved. Thus they eschew the ways in which people influence one another when they exercise violence, or coercion, or intimidation, or anything of that kind. They authorize one another as voices that are generally capable of providing reasons relevant by discursive criteria and as ears that are generally capable of recognizing such reasons when they are once produced. From the point of view of the discourse that they enjoy, only properly reason-mediated influence is legitimate. This being so, any party to discourse is certainly going to be able to complain admisibly about the existence of a form of influence that reduces their capacity to exercise or undergo discursive influence. It will be absolutely reasonable for anyone to complain, for example, about being pressured or coerced by others to go along with a certain line; those who attempt such pressure or coercion do not honor the constitutive requirements of discourse: they are playing another game. But the existence of a relation of domination between one party and some other or others means that that party is subject to a form of influence that reduces their capacity to interact discursively—it reduces their capacity to influence and be influenced in a purely reason-mediated way—and so it is going to be perfectly admissible for someone to complain about domination of that kind. Why is domination going to reduce a person's capacity to interact discursively with others? Because, as a long tradition of thought insists, the fact of being exposed to the possibility of arbitrary
interference from another impacts in a serious way on the likelihood that a person will speak his mind. It will put in place a powerful incentive to keep the dominating parties on side, however beneficial they may be: to keep them sweet both by positive measures of ingratiation and by negative measures of avoidance and self-censorship. There is an old ideal, celebrated for example in the Quaker tradition, of speaking truth to power. But speaking truth to power is an ideal, precisely because it is recognized on all sides to be difficult. The person who speaks truth to power, never flinching from the most unpromising forms of advice or rebuke, or the most unwelcome expressions of opinion, is a saint or a hero, not someone of merely regular nerve.

Not only is domination likely to lead someone to warp his or her voice, tuning it to the expectations and taints of potentially dangerous potentates. This being a matter of common recognition—as it always has been—domination will also lead others not to take seriously the words uttered by anyone in a position of subordination and dependence. How can people trust the remarks of the vulnerable person, especially when they are tailored to fit with the opinions of someone in relation to whom they suffer vulnerability? They may seek out their opinions, particularly when it is they who are in the position of power—it is always pleasing, after all, to have some reinforcement of one’s own views—but they will have no reason to take the dominated person really seriously; they will have no reason to grant that person a real voice or give him or her a genuine hearing.

I hope that these remarks will make it plausible that the complaint of being dominated is well suited in respect of discursive admissibility to underpin a central political ideal. But is the complaint a truly significant one, in particular a complaint fit to engage the attentions of the polity? That is the next question to be considered.

Second Desirability Constraint

The feature that marks human beings off from other species is our capacity to enter discourse with each other, relying on a common language in which we authorize one another as generally competent speakers and listeners: as speakers who warrant and deserve a hearing, and as listeners who can acknowledge our claim to a similar hearing in turn. Let someone be denied full access to discourse with her fellows, or a full presence there, and she is denied full enjoyment of the treatment—the authorization or respect—that marks her off as a person among persons.

The primary reason why the complaint about being dominated is of the first significance is that domination almost invariably undermines a person’s capacity to enjoy respect in this sense. Where one person dominates another, it is almost bound to be a matter of common awareness among the people involved, and among other relevant parties, that this domination exists. The question as to whether someone is dominated by another is one that will interest all those involved, after all, and the answer to that question will be obvious in most cases from the sorts of resources they control relative to that other. Thus we may expect most people to recognize domination when they see it, and this in turn being obvious, to recognize that others will recognize it too, thereby giving rise to the usual hierarchy of common awareness; each will believe that the person is dominated, each will believe that each believes this, and so on. Once it is recognized as a matter of common awareness that someone is dominated, however, then that person will no longer be able to enjoy the basic respect that we think personhood entitles him to. He will no longer have the sort of voice that can be reliably forthright, or can be expected to be forthright. He will always be under suspicion of playing to the audience of the powerful and never having anything worthwhile to say in his own right.

Domination subjects of this kind may not be ignored or dismissed outright, they may be treated magnanimously to the trappings of respect. But they will not command respect; they will receive it only in the manner of supplicants. They may be treated as if they had the status of persons, so we might put it, but they will not really have that status. Being a person is inseparable from earning and receiving respect as of right—as of effective, not just formal right—and in their case there will be no question of earning or receiving as of right. What they receive, they will receive only as a gift—only by grace of the powerful.

This line of thought is a familiar and recurrent one in republican thought. It is worth mentioning in connection with it that Kant, the great philosopher of respect and personhood, seems to
have shaped many of his ideas on that subject in his reflections on Rousseau's Social Contract, in a book that belongs at least among the apocrypha of the republican tradition. The point is emphasized by J. B. Schneuwlin, who quotes Kant as saying: "It is not all one under what title I get something. What properly belongs to me must nod to me merely as something I ask for." Schneuwlin comments: "If nothing is properly mine except what someone graciously gives me, I am forever dependent on how the donor feels toward me. My independence as an autonomous being is threatened. Only if I can claim the others have to give me what is mine by right can this be avoided." The connection between enjoining respect as a person and not being subject to domination, there is every reason to treat the complaint of being dominated as extremely significant. What more serious complaint could there be than one that draws attention to a relationship in virtue of which one's very standing as a person who can command the attention and respect of others is put in jeopardy? This is no mere trifle to do with having one's nose put out of joint, or one's feathers ruffled. It is a complaint of the first moment. Let some people be dominated and to that extent they will be put out of any community that involves those who dominate. They may aspire to community with such others and their presence may even be tolerated among those others. But they will always cut somewhat sorry or comic figures, and will always invite only condescension or contempt. They will have no more standing, in a somewhat archaic image, than dogs that cower at their masters' feet or that snuggle up to their mistresses' skirts. The word more on the significance of the complaint about being dominated. People don't reveal their minds only in the words they explicitly stand over in discursive settings. They also express their discursive minds in the actions they choose to perform, because they routinely acknowledge that they may be held answerable for their actions in discourse; they don't deny the relevance of discursive challenge as to the legitimacy of what they do. But if someone is dominated by another—and even if that other does not exercise the domination in attempts at pressure or coercion—then we may expect the relationship to warp the things they do as well as the things they say. We may expect people to take positive measures of self-ingratiation and negative measures of self-censorship that would not appeal to them in the absence of the domination. And that being so, the deleterious impact of domination will be obvious, even short of actual interference by the dominating person, in the deeds as well as in the words of the victim. This observation is worth adding, because it shows that just as the dominated person cannot be taken to enjoy the freedom of thought that is necessary if someone is to be worth hearing, they also cannot be taken to enjoy freedom of choice, either. Operating within the gravitational field that relationships of domination establish, people are deprived of a measure of discursive control that would otherwise be available. When they purport to speak their minds or to display their minds in action, therefore, there is a robust possibility, marked in everyday expectations, that they are not fully their own masters; they are not reflecting their own best opinion of what circumstances require but rather the opinion that materializes most comfortably at their particular place in the field of dominating force.

The significance of the complaint about being dominated is borne out in the rich idioms associated with the complaint and with the many changes that have been rung, and that continue to be rung, on them. This is cast in melodramatic tones as a condition of servitude or subordination, subjection or subjugation—at the limit, a condition of slavery—in which one can do nothing but by the leave or permission of others, one lives under their thumb as those in the Roman circus lived under the thumb of the emperor, one has to fawn and toady and kowtow in their direction, one has to ingratiate oneself with them or at least placate and humor them, and one has to tug the forelock or tip the cap, acknowledging them as one's superiors and betters. The condition in which the complaint has no ground is cast, by contrast, as an ideal of being able to stand on one's own two feet, and to walk tall, having a standing on a par with others; an ideal of being able to look others in the eye, not showing fear or deference, and not seeking grace or favor; and an ideal of being one's own man or woman or master: an ideal in Roman terms of being sui juri. These phrases have often been formed in relation to contexts that no longer obtain very commonly. But there are contexts aplenty in contemporary society where the message they convey—ultimately, the complaint they carry—still clearly applies. Think of
the child of the emotionally volatile parent; the wife of the occasionally violent husband; or the pupil of the teacher who forms arbitrary likes and dislikes. Think of the employee whose security requires keeping the boss or manager sweet; the debtor whose fortunes depend on the caprice of a mortgage or bank manager; or the small business owner whose viability depends on the attitude taken by a bigger competitor or a union boss. Think of the welfare recipient whose fortunes turn on the mood of the counter clerk; the immigrant or indigenous person whose standing is vulnerable to the whims that rule politics and talk-back radio; or the public employee whose future depends, not on performance, but on the political profile that an ambitious minister happens to find electorally most useful. Think of the older person who is vulnerable to the culturally and institutionally unrestrained gang of youths in his or her area. Or think indeed of the young offender whose level of punishment depends on how far politicians or newspapers choose to whip up a culture of vengeance.

In all of these cases, someone lives at the mercy of others. That person is dominated by those others in the sense that even if they don’t interfere in his or her life, they have a more or less arbitrary power of doing so on a greater or larger front and in a more or less substantive measure: there are few restraints or costs to inhibit them. If the dominated person escapes ill treatment in such a situation, that is by the grace or favor of the powerful, or perhaps by dint of a native cunning and deception. The price of liberty in such a world is not eternal vigilance but rather, in a phrase once used by Gore Vidal, eternal discretion. The person lives in the power or under the mastery of others; they occupy the position of a dominus in his or her life.

Third Insurmountability Constraint

That the complaint about being dominated not only passes the feasibility constraints but is admissible and significant already goes a long way to establishing that it ought to have a serious place in politics—in effect, that the ideal of non-domination ought to be targeted by the state. But the complaint might be all of these things and not connect in any substantial manner with other complaints that have traditionally been placed within the province of the polity’s responsibility. We turn now to the question as to whether that is how things stand with the complaint about being dominated. Is it a more or less standalone complaint such that rectifying it leaves many other putatively relevant political complaints unaddressed? Or is it a complaint such that if the state takes serious steps to put it right then it will at the same time take steps that put many other complaints right? Is it a complaint that subsumes a range of other complaints in that sense? I argue that it is a characteristic standalone complaint, not one of the stand-alone variety.

The best way to support this point, at least in the short compass available, is to consider how far the rectification of complaints about domination in a society would go to establishing a sample of other ideals. I shall include in my sample liberty, equality, and community—the three ideals of the French Revolution—as well as functioning capability, in Amartya Sen’s phrase, and a contractualist conception of justice.

Liberty

I have argued elsewhere that liberty or freedom was long conceptualized precisely as the absence of domination: not being under the thumb of a master. If that construal is accepted, then it follows that someone may be unfree in doing something, even though there is no natural obstacle that constrains them to do it and no one forces or coerces them to do it. This will happen so far as the person is inhibited or intimidated by the presence of a power that has to be kept sweet. But if the construal is accepted, then another perhaps more surprising result also follows: this is that someone is not necessarily rendered unfree by the fact of a natural obstacle removing an option or raising the costs of taking it, or by the fact of an intentional agency interfering in her affairs to a similar effect. The natural obstacle won’t dominate the person so it can’t make her unfree. And the interfering agency may not dominate the person—the agency may be forced to track the person’s avowed interests—in which case it won’t make her unfree, either. How easy is it to live with this implication, while claiming that the relief of domination will advance the ideal of liberty?

It is quite easy, I suggest, to live with this conclusion so long as...
we recognize that without compromising the enjoyment of nondomination—without itself being dominating—a natural obstacle or an intentional agency may still have a negative effect on that enjoyment; it may condition it, as we saw earlier, by restricting the range over which—or indeed the ease with which—the person exercises undominated choice. Even if liberty is taken to require the absence of natural limitation or the absence of intentional interference, then, we can see that the systematic remedying of the complaint about domination is going to involve, so far as possible, the reduction of nonintentional obstacles, and of intentional but nondominating obstacles, to people's choices; we already mentioned this point in the second section.

If nondomination is used to conceptualize liberty, therefore, it leads us to distinguish between primary and secondary restrictions on liberties. The primary form of restriction is domination by another person or group; in this case the person or group has more or less ready access to more or less arbitrary interference across a more or less substantial range of choices. The secondary form of restriction is the limitation imposed by nonintentional forces and the interference practiced by intentional but nonarbitrary agencies. It seems right and intuitive to me that this distinction is made between these two different grades of restriction, since only the primary form is inimical to an agent's status as a person: one is not deauthorized or disempowered by nonintentional or nonarbitrary influences in one's life. But it is important that even if people worry about the secondary form of restriction, they will see that a state committed to advancing the enjoyment of nondomination will go a long way toward satisfying their concern.90

Equality

What now of the ideal of equality? There are many interpretations of that ideal, as there are notoriously many ways in which people may or may not be equal with one another. But from our point of view a very significant aspect of the ideal is going to be equality of nondomination: in effect, equality of the kind that is provided when people equally command the attention and the respect of others. An obvious question, then, is whether the attempt by a state to redress the complaint that individuals may have about being dominated is likely to push toward equality of nondomination or whether it is likely to create or support large inequalities, with nondomination being maximized at a point where there are such inequalities between people. It is often said that the maximization of people's subjective utility or happiness may require that some are very unhappy, and in particular much less happy than others; that is how the sums may come out. Is the same sort of thing likely with the maximization of nondomination? Or is there a closer tie between promoting this ideal overall and ensuring that the distribution across people tends toward equality?

As it turns out, there is indeed a close tie between maximizing and equalizing the enjoyment of nondomination. Whether a person is to enjoy a good measure of nondomination in relation to others depends not on their absolute level of power—their power of interfering, retaliating, defending themselves, and so on—but on their level of power relative to the power of others. A level of power that would give one absolute supremacy in one society may leave me relatively badly off in another; in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king. This means that if the power of some people is increased with a view to increasing the nondomination they enjoy, then by that very token the degree of nondomination enjoyed by others falls; any positive move on one front is at the same time a negative move on another.

But not only is there going to be interaction between different fronts in this way. A second equally plausible observation suggests that it will always be better from the point of view of maximizing the enjoyment of nondomination in a society to act on fronts that make for its equalization among members of that society. As we increase the relative powers of people with a view to increasing their nondomination, there will tend to be a better result available so far as we focus on relatively powerless rather than on relatively powerful individuals. The more powerful people are, the smaller will be the gain in making them more impregnable to others—the extra resources may be redundant—and the larger the loss in making others more vulnerable to them: the extra resources will impact ever more significantly on the prospects of the weak.

If the level of people's nondomination is sensitive to their relative degrees of power, and if this sensitivity is greater for the weaker than for the stronger, then any attempt to maximize
nondomination overall is bound to focus at every stage on improving the lot of the weaker, and it is bound thereby to push toward more and more equality. This represents a fundamental tie between the ideal of nondomination and the ideal of equality, and one indeed that was well recognized even in Roman times. Any society where people’s nondomination is at a maximum will be a society in which people enjoy a corresponding equality of status, with each doing as well as can be expected in commanding the respect of their fellows. This sort of equality does not entail equality in every other dimension; it is consistent, for example, with inequality in the subjective well-being that people enjoy and with at least a certain degree of inequality in the objective resources at their command in their wealth. But it still represents a substantial kind of equality and it should encourage egalitarians who might otherwise have balked at making nondomination into a central, even supreme, political ideal.

Community

As there is a tie between valuing nondomination and valuing equality, in particular equality of status, so there is also a tie between valuing nondomination and valuing community. There are three points to make about this connection. The first is that nondomination has been understood in the long republican tradition—and is understood here—in such a way that it cannot be enjoyed by the solitary individual. To enjoy nondomination it is necessary, first, to have other people around with whom one interacts; and second, that one not be dominated by those people: that one enjoy standing in relation to them, being able to look them in the eye, commanding their attention and respect. It is not sufficient that there be no one in one’s vicinity and so, a siren, that one not be dominated. One must enjoy the absence of domination in a context where it is a real possibility, not enjoy it as a mere by-product of total isolation. This condition already ensures a connection between nondomination and community, for it means that the ideal of nondomination is an inherently social value, not an atomistic one.

The second point to make in underscoring the tie to community is that if people are secured against domination by the operation of the institutional instrumentalities available for the state to deploy—the institutions of armament, disarmament, and protection—then the connection between being nondominated and those institutions is constitutive and not merely causal. To be nondominated is to be more or less immune to the possibility of arbitrary interference, and this immunity will come into being simultaneously with the introduction of measures that realize it, not as a causal consequence of those measures being in place: a consequence that might take time to realize. The connection between immunity to arbitrary interference and the presence of those measures will be like the connection between immunity to a certain disease and the presence of suitable antibodies in the blood. The physical immunity will not materialize as a contingent consequence of the antibodies that take a certain time to eventuate; it is present as soon as the antibodies are there, being realized by the antibodies. And similarly a person’s immunity to arbitrary interference—a person’s nondomination—will not materialize as a causal result of the institutional measures taken to realize it; rather, it will be constituted by those measures, being present just as soon as they are present. The fact that nondomination requires a community of individuals, and that a person’s nondomination will be constituted by the institutional measures that make him or her more or less secure against arbitrary interference by other members of the community, means that for the state to work at promoting nondomination is just for the state to work at ensuring that people enjoy a certain sort of community: a sort of community that is bound to have the aspect of an ideal. The third point I want to add further emphasizes this connection between promoting the two ideals.

The value of nondomination is tied up with its being a matter of common awareness that one is not dominated, as we saw earlier. That means that if we are to enjoy nondomination properly, we have to be more or less secure against arbitrary interference, being personally protected, or having access to personal resources of retaliation. But it also means, we should notice, that others in any salient class to which we belong have got to be secure in the same way. Suppose that you are a black or a woman or an indigenous person in a society where people in those classes are generally dominated in certain ways. The fact that you have purely personal
resources against domination, say because of being very wealthy, will not ensure that you enjoy nondomination properly. For membership in that vulnerability class will convey the message to many that you are dominated and will constantly put pressure on the discursive status that you can enjoy; you will have to vindicate your standing, case by case, time after time. Thus, if you are to achieve the proper enjoyment of your nondomination, it had better be the case that all others in your vulnerability class escape domination too. You cannot enjoy freedom as nondomination without others in every salient class to which you belong—including, in the last analysis, others in the society as a whole—enjoying that sort of freedom as well.

Functioning Capability

I said that there are two other ideals, apart from those associated with freedom, equality, and community, that are subsided in the ideal of nondomination. The first is functioning capability in Amartya Sen’s sense, and the second is justice in the contractualist sense associated with John Rawls and T. M. Scanlon.

To enjoy functioning capability is to be in a position where the things one can do and be in one’s society mean that by local criteria one functions perfectly well: intuitively speaking, one is not poor or deprived, even if one is not particularly rich. Capability in this sense will require access to conditions such as being fed, being healthy, being housed, being linked with family or friends, communicating with others, following what happens in public life, and tracking the opportunities for work and related activities. There are two grounds for thinking that the ideal of nondomination subsumes this ideal of functioning capability. The first is that to the extent that a person lacks such capability, to that extent he or she will be vulnerable to all sorts of arbitrary interference on the part of others. And the second is that even if someone’s poverty or lack of capability does not expose him or her to further domination, it will still limit the larger or ease with which he or she can enjoy nondomination, so that there is reason why a state that wants to advance such enjoyment should want, costs allowing, to put such lack of capability right, too.
The Domination Complaint

The benefits to be gained for the interest of the weaker are great and the costs to the person complaining are not compara-
tively great, for the person does not lose out substantially in terms of non-
domination, after all, even if he or she suffers some financial loss or some loss of privilege. And so it is hard to see how the person envied can identify any unobjectionable principle on the basis of which to protest the redistribution. Any redistribution that ad-
ances the cause of non-domination is also likely to advance the cause of justice in the contractualist sense.

Conclusion

I hope that these brisk remarks will help to establish the powerful case that can be made for putting the complaint of domination right at the center of political concerns and for making the ideal of non-domination one of the central ideals in politics, if not the supreme political ideal. The state can do something about this complaint, something that provides both an effective and efficient remedy. The complaint is admissible in any open discourse on the best form of the state and directs us to a significant and subsump-
tive ideal. The performance of the complaint on these fronts gives it a serious claim on our attention in normative political thought and, presumptively, as my passing comments have tried to indi-
cate, a more serious claim than any of its rivals.

I said earlier that there are other desiderata or constraints that we might expect a political ideal to satisfy, apart from those we have considered. In conclusion, I might mention that one of these is the desirability of being a measurable ideal, on which many re-
cent writers have focused. The measurable ideal will enable us to
determine how well individuals within a polity are doing in rela-
tion to that ideal and how well the polity does in comparisons across time or with other regimes. The ideal of non-domination does not count as a highly measurable ideal. First of all, domina-
tion and non-domination come in degrees along at least three sep-
rate dimensions that are not easily weighted against one another: it may involve more or less easy access to more or less arbitrary in-
terference across a more or less substantive range. Second, there are two respects, also not easily weighted against each other, in
which we will want the state to do well by the ideal: one, by reduc-
ing domination itself—by reducing the influence of factors that compro-
mise non-dominated choice; and two, by reducing the pres-
ence of nondomination factors that condition such choice without compromizing it.

In view of these complexities, the ideal of non-domination's not
going to lead itself to ready measurement, there will always be is-
ues of weighting that need discussion in any instance where it is to
be applied. We might try to resolve those weighting issues at the
abstract level, but I see little prospect of doing so in a way that is
gong to win general support. Still, however, I don't think we
should lose heart. The important thing with any political ideal is that
it be amenable to disciplined arithmetica in the course of a
conversation that involves all relevant sides; it is not a vague and
nervous notion that allows everyone to think what they will. And
in this respect non-domination promises to do quite well. While
people may not easily come to agreement on weightings to be as-
signed in the abstract to the different elements it involves, it will
usually be clear how these elements should be weighted in the
context of concrete issues. The ideal may not make the algorithm-
ic adjudication of political arrangements possible, but it does
represent a yardstick that will not easily bend to the grain of indi-
vidual interest or bias.

NOTES

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2. See Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other

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16. See Pettit, Republicanism, chap. 2.
21. See Pettit, Republicanism, chap. 2.
23. Ibid.
24. See Amartya Sen, "Capabilities and Well-Being," in The Quality of