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'Freedom, Psychological, Ethical and Political', Critical Review of International, Social and Political Philosophy, Vol 18,

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Freedom: psychological, ethical and political

Philip Pettit^{a,b*}

^a*University Center for Human Values, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, USA;*

^b*School of Philosophy, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia*

Freedom is sometimes cast as the psychological ideal that distinguishes human beings from other animals; sometimes as the ethical ideal that distinguishes some human beings from others; and sometimes as the political ideal that distinguishes some human societies from others. This paper is an attempt to put the three ideals in a common frame, revealing their mutual connections and differences.

Keywords: freedom; psychology; ethics; politics; non-interference; non-domination

1. Introduction

The discussion of freedom in recent political philosophy has centered, understandably, on the different concepts or conceptions of social or political freedom, with the focus falling in particular on the distinction between freedom as non-interference and freedom as non-domination. I do discuss that distinction in this short piece but set the discussion within a broader treatment of the relation between political freedom and freedom in other domains.

I identify three distinct ideals of freedom, one psychological or mental, the second ethical or moral, and the third political or social. The first is freedom in the sense in which we ascribe it to most human beings, including those who are extremely irresolute or weak-willed; this is freedom in the will and it constitutes a psychological ideal. The second is freedom in the sense in which we think that only those with strength of will, only those who achieve personal autonomy, enjoy it. This is an ethical ideal of freedom and, following a suggestion of Frankfurt's (1988), I call it freedom of the will. The third is freedom in the sense in which it requires other people to be suitably disposed or constrained in their dealings with you, not subjecting you to their will. This I describe as freedom for the will – freedom for the will in relation to other wills – and it constitutes a political ideal of freedom.

It is important to distinguish these different ideals of freedom, not just for reasons of clarity, but also for reasons of policy. The state is a coercive entity that ought to be given charge of people's freedom only when that is essential

*Email: ppettit@princeton.edu

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for promoting the ideal. I think there is no doubt but that the state should be charged with a concern for political freedom in the sense identified here. But I think it is even more important that it is not assigned the task of nurturing freedom in any other sense. The point should become apparent as we chart the various sorts of freedom at issue.

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2. Freedom in the will

To be an agent is to be a system that has certain goals or purposes, that represents its environment in response to incoming channels of evidence, and that acts for the realization of its purposes in a manner that is guided by its representations (List and Pettit 2011, ch. 1). In this sense, even a simple robot can count as an agent. Imagine a little mechanism on wheels, about the size of your fist, that sits on a table and scans the top with bug-like eyes. Suppose that there are glasses on the table and that whenever a glass is on its side, the robot moves toward that glass and raises it with arm-like levers to an upright position. And suppose that it does this reliably, time after time, staying at rest only when all glasses are upright.

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I assume that we would have no difficulty in recognizing that this system is an agent. It is a system designed to pursue certain purposes in an executively reliable way according to evidentially reliable representations. Or, more strictly, it is a system that does this in the absence of independently intelligible obstruction or perturbation. It may not perform well when the lights are out, for example, or the table surface is slippery, or there is a failure in the batteries that power its movements.

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Just as the robot fits this minimal specification for being an agent, so will most animals, in particular human animals like you and me. We may be rather more versatile in the purposes we pursue and better equipped in the sources of evidence that shape our representations, but still it remains true that we resemble the robot in normally pursuing those purposes according to those representations. But we human beings differ in one striking respect from the robot, and perhaps from all other animals. We often deliberate in the course of forming our representations and our purposes; we are not confined, like the robot, to responding more or less autonomically to the changes it registers in its environment. Our deliberative capacity is important because, as I shall argue, it is what makes room for the idea of the free will.

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Deliberation is an activity, sometimes described as reasoning (Pettit 1993, Broome 2013), in which we intentionally think about the things we register in some representations with a view to letting them determine other representations we form, or purposes we endorse, or actions we pursue. Thus, we think about whether or not p , register that p and, registering also that if p , q , we conclude that q . We conduct this sort of activity, exemplified at its sharpest by Rodin's *Le Penseur*, on the assumption that it will help to lead us where we ought to go in the attitudes we form or the actions we take. There are some

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occasions when deliberation can upset performance – don't think too much, as the coach will tell you, about your tennis swing – but few of us think that that is generally true. And it is presumably for that reason that we often rely, explicitly or implicitly, on deliberation.

Our interest here is in the practical deliberation that helps to shape action. Suppose that you have to decide something as straightforward as whether or not to go to a film tonight. You will deliberate practically about that decision insofar as you think about the things you register as you contemplate what it would be like to go to the film or stay at home. Going to the film would be a break in your routine, you recognize, give you other things besides work to think about, and offer the opportunity to join some friends in the outing. Not going to the film would enable you to catch up on various household chores and to put in some extra time on a work assignment. Currently, you are undecided about what to do but you think about the pros and cons of the different options – you think about how to weigh them or about whether other considerations are relevant – in the expectation that this will lead you to make an appropriate, well-supported choice.

In this deliberative process, it is essential that you take each of the options under consideration to represent a live possibility: to be something you might choose. It makes sense to deliberate only on the assumption that doing so determines what you will do. And to think that some option was not a live possibility – to rule out the possibility of choosing it – would undercut that assumption. Thus, while you continue to deliberate about what to choose you have to think of each option: I can do that. You have to think: for all that I have decided, that option is an open possibility; whether the possibility is realized or not is up to how my deliberation goes.

To think that what you do is up to how your deliberation goes is not to think that whether you choose one or the other option is dependent on an impersonal process within you: a process on which you have to wait, as it were, with bated breath. Deliberation is an activity that you conduct according to more or less well-understood rules of evidence and argument, validated in exchange with others; these determine what sorts of considerations count in favor of what options, for example, and what weights they have in relation to other considerations. Operating under those rules, you have to be sensitive to the need for a coherent performance over time: in making any move you have to consider the moves you made in previous situations and perhaps even the moves you would make under certain possible scenarios. And so you have to assume the intertemporal identity of a player in the exercise of deliberation – the identity of a person or self to whom the moves you make are attributable, as to a single source.¹

This means that when you think that whether you take one or another option in a choice is up to how your deliberation goes, what you register is that whether you take it is up to you: that is, up to how you conduct yourself in deliberation. But this means that you have to think that you have free will

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in making the choice. For to think that you have free will, by almost all accounts, is just to think that what you choose is up to you; it is something of which you are in control (O’Leary-Hawthorne and Pettit 1995).

That you have to think this about yourself, of course, does not itself make the thought true. But if we take deliberation to be a genuine, decision-making process – if we reject the implausible view that it is just epiphenomenal con-fabulation – then there is a truth expressed in your thought, ‘I can do that’, as you hold it about each option. And equally there is a truth expressed in the more general thought ‘I can take any of the options’. It is the truth in these thoughts that means that you have free will. In the choice at issue, and in any choice where deliberation does or could make the difference to what you do, you enjoy freedom in the will.

On this account, freedom in the will consists in the ability to make deliberatively conducted choices, in particular deliberatively well-conducted choices. Registering that you have that ability with respect to a future choice, you think correctly that you can do this or do that. And registering after the event, that you made a choice deliberatively – or perhaps that it was possible for you to have made it deliberatively – you think correctly, in a corresponding sense: ‘I could have done this or could have done that; I did such and such but I could have done otherwise’.²

The approach just sketched connects up nicely with the line argued by Strawson (1962), that in feeling resentment (or gratitude) at how I treat you – or indignation (or approval) at how I treat others – you take me to be an agent who has a corresponding ability and who can be rebuked for not having chosen as deliberatively available considerations purportedly made it right to choose. I may reply that as a matter of fact those considerations were not deliberatively available and, if you agree, you will excuse my failure. But assuming the absence of excuse, your treating me in this way shows that you are not resigned to my behavior, as you might resign yourself to the vicissitudes of nature. You insist on treating me – as presumably I would like to be treated – as someone with the ability to deliberate well and, in that sense, with free will.

There might not be a point in remonstrating with me like this, if remonstrat-ion did not promise to help me live up to my ability, prompting me to do better in the future. But Strawson assumes, plausibly, that remonstrat-ion generally has such a regulatory, prompting point. You may pursue it just out of distaste for what I did, recognizing that I could have done otherwise, and not because of aiming to change my behavior. But you would not be likely to maintain the practice, whether in general or with me in particular, if it were commonly assumed that remonstrat-ion served no such regulatory goal (McGeer [Forthcoming](#)).

In concluding this discussion, we should note that the account given means that the ascription of free will to an agent is primarily important for its contrastive implications. When you ascribe free will to yourself or to me in the exercise of certain choices, you mark a contrast with ~~those~~ who are not ~~susceptible to~~

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~~deliberation in such choices, or perhaps in any choices at all. With such people, you can only adopt the objective stance, as Strawson calls it, treating them as a force of nature, whether in general or in one or another domain; say, to take some stock examples, in the domain of religion or politics.~~

5 Free will is what distinguishes you and me, then – or at least you and me, on a good day – from ~~those~~ whom we have to regard as lying beyond the reach of conversation: that is, the deliberative conversation that you can hold with yourself or with another person. In that sense, free will is nothing more or less than conversability, as I have called it elsewhere (Pettit and Smith
10 1996, Pettit 2001). It is the capacity to be reached with effect in deliberative exchange – personal or interpersonal – about the pros and cons of various choices.

This account of free will is compatibilist in the familiar sense that for all it
15 supposes, the world of which we are part may or may not be a mechanistic world, governed by impersonal laws, deterministic or otherwise. What freedom in the will marks out is a capacity that most of us human beings enjoy but that some of us lack all of the time and many of us lack some of the time.³ Those
20 who lack it are people whose desires or beliefs are subject to such fixation or pathology – perhaps generally or perhaps only in certain domains – that the actions they generate materialize without deliberative control. Such agents may be fully intelligible but deliberatively impaired, as in the case of those subject to psychopathic desires or paranoid beliefs. Or they may fail to display any discernible agential pattern; in a common, perhaps unhappy phrase, they may be out of their minds.

25 3. Freedom of the will

To have free will, by the account just given, is to have deliberative ability: to be capable, in relevant choices, of guiding your decision by ~~the~~ consideration of the pros and cons of the options. It is to enjoy a capacity that marks you off, at least in the exercise of those choices, from those who attract the objective
30 stance rather than the stance of fellow participants in deliberative exchange.

As there is a contrast between those with deliberative ability and those without it, so there is a salient contrast between two sub-groups within the category of those who possess that capacity. This is the contrast between those
35 who possess and reliably exercise it, on the one side, and those, on the other, who possess ~~es~~ it but exercise it only in a hit-or-miss way. This is the contrast marked in the distinction between people who have freedom of the will and those who don't. Those with freedom of the will do not just have the abstract capacity to deliberate well and effectively; they actually exercise that capacity
40 in their deliberation and decision-making.

The difference between freedom in the will and freedom of the will is nicely caught in an analogy with playing the piano. Think of the old joke:

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‘Can you play the piano?’, ‘I don’t know, I’ve never tried’. This forces us to distinguish between the ability to play the piano that any normally equipped child or adult possesses and the skill of playing the piano that only comes with practice. Freedom in the will is the ability akin to the piano-playing ability of the normal child or adult. Freedom of the will is a skill akin to that which only the trained pianist achieves.

The distinction between freedom in the will and freedom of the will is similar to a distinction that Henry Sidgwick took Kant to have overlooked. This is the distinction between autonomy in the sense of the ability and autonomy in the sense of an achievement. According to Sidgwick (1981, pp. 514–515), Kant sometimes casts autonomy as the ability to reason that marks off human beings from other animals and sometimes as a skill or achievement that only some people exhibit: that of exercising their autonomy properly, resisting the impulses and temptations that would alienate them from themselves.

Should we adopt Kant’s terminology, take Sidgwick’s caution on board, and describe the achievement of freedom of the will as autonomy? By the account in the first section, freedom in your will consists in the capacity to register deliberative considerations, weigh them appropriately, and let them determine what you do. To exercise that capacity well might be cast as exhibiting the achievement Kant describes as autonomy: the achievement of letting your *autos* or self rule in your life, not the *heteros* or alien. But it is much more naturally described as exhibiting a different sort of achievement: that of letting the *orthos* or right, as that presents itself to you in deliberation, rule in your life, not the *heteros* or mistaken. Thus, I prefer to describe the freedom of the will that you may or may not achieve as orthonomy (Pettit and Smith 1996, Pettit 2001). Orthonomy contrasts with heteronomy as orthodoxy – right belief – contrasts with heterodoxy.

On the approach I favor, then, freedom in the will – free will, period – consists in being conversable, as we assume most human beings are on most occasions of choice; and freedom of the will consists in being orthonomous, as few of us manage to be. In order to achieve orthonomy, you have to be reliable in accessing evidence as to the facts about the various options you face, including facts about the rival values displayed by those options, if indeed there are such facts. You have to be reliable in reasoning from those facts to a conclusion about what it is best to do in this or that case. And you have to be reliable in acting in fidelity to that conclusion.

In distinguishing as I have done between freedom in the will and freedom of the will, I have inevitably favored the way in which I think of the two forms of freedom myself, and hence the way in which I think of the contrast between them. But it is important to note that the distinction is not mine alone and, in particular, that my preferred way of thinking about freedom of the will – like my preferred way of thinking about freedom in the will – is only one of many candidates.

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Perhaps the best-known contemporary approach to freedom of the will is that which Frankfurt (1971) inaugurated when he made the point that there is a striking distinction between the following three kinds of agents (see also Dworkin 1970). First, people who act on the basis of ground-level desires for this or that goal, without any concern with whether they desire at a higher level that they should be moved by such desires and goals. Second, people who act in the same way on the basis of ground-level desires, hold higher-order desires about those desires, but do not or cannot give the higher-order desires any effect at the ground level; whether or not they are happy about it, their ground-level desires *March* to an independent drum. And third, people who act only on ground-level desires such that they desire at a higher level that they be moved by those desires.

Frankfurt suggests that if you belong to the first category, then you are not a person in any proper sense but only what he calls a wanton. He thinks that if you belong to the second category in any area of desire, then you are like an addict – whether a willing or unwilling addict – who lacks control over what you want and do. And he maintains that to count as enjoying freedom of the will you have to belong to the third category: you have to act only on ground-level desires that fit with your second-order desires as to what you should seek at the ground level.

An obvious problem with this approach is that just as you may be a prisoner of ground-level desires, like the addict, so you may be a prisoner in the same sense of your higher-order desires; they may operate in you like avatars of a history of drilling and indoctrination you would prefer to suspend. In response, Frankfurt (1988) suggested that what is important is that the desires that are in control – presumptively, as he continued to think, the higher-order desires that are in control – ought to be desires with which you identify.

With this twist, however, the theory ceases to have the clarity of the earlier version. It begins to seem that a better approach, building on Frankfurt, would be to say that what freedom of the will requires is not that your operative desires are controlled by any other sorts of desires, but rather that they are controlled by your evaluations: your judgments as to what it is appropriate or desirable in some way that you should desire. That approach was pioneered by Watson (1975) in a critique of Frankfurt and it comes close to the orthonomy line taken here (see also Watson 2003, Introduction).

Whether freedom of the will is understood in Frankfurt's way, in Watson's way, or in the way presented here – or indeed in other contemporary variants (Bratman 2007) – it is an ideal, in my view, that ought to be taken as ethical rather than political in character. To task the coercive state with nurturing people's freedom of the will, however that is understood, would be a reckless proposal. It would put a dangerous kind of power in the hands of officials. And it would hold out little chance of positive results. It is in the nature of this freedom that you should achieve it for yourself, struggling to be perceptive in the relevant domains of fact and value and to be responsive to those percep-

tions in the determination of what you do. This is not an ideal that anyone else, let alone a coercive state, can realize on your behalf. 5

To endorse this point is to make common cause with one of the claims, Berlin (1969) defends when he rejects the positive concept of liberty as an ideal for politics. Berlin considers two versions of positive liberty. First, a more political version under which it is the liberty you enjoy when you participate equally with others in a majoritarian, self-determining polity. And, second, a more psychological rendering, according to which it is the liberty you enjoy, as Kantians often say, when your true self is in charge: when you achieve autonomy. He is a vociferous critic of the idea that freedom in any such psychological sense should be laid to the charge of the state. And on this issue, I am fully on his side. 10 15

4. Freedom for the will

It is by virtue of our socially realized nature that we enjoy freedom in the will. And it is in virtue of our personally shaped character that we enjoy freedom of the will. But regardless of the resources of our nature and character, and regardless of what we achieve in our psychology or ethics, we are still liable to miss out on freedom in the political sense. You may have freedom in the will on the widest front, having the ability to assume deliberative control across many sorts of choice. And you may enjoy freedom of the will in the highest measure, being fully skilled in the exercise of deliberative control over your impulses and dispositions. Yet for all that this says, you may operate in more or less total subjection to my will or the will of others. You may lack freedom for the will. 20 25

To have freedom in the will is just to be able to exercise deliberative control in whatever choices are available, over whatever options are on offer. But of course, you could have such freedom and yet be subject to my will in the matter of which choices are available, which options are on offer and whether you should continue to enjoy such a range of choices. Similarly, to have freedom of the will is to possess the skill of exercising deliberative control over whatever choices are available. But of course you could have such freedom, once again, and yet be subject to me in the same way. The lesson is that we must recognize a third ideal of freedom: that which consists in not being subject to anyone else's will in the exercise of deliberation and choice. This is what I describe as freedom for the will. 30 35

4.1. *The basics about choice and interference*

What does it mean for you to be subject to my will in a given choice? Let the choice be defined by the range of options at your disposal: say doing X , Y , or Z . And let it be granted that absent subjection to the will of others, you have all the personal, natural, and social resources required for being able to do X 40

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5 or do *Y* or do *Z*. The question then is what might make it the case that you are subject to my will – or by extension, the will of any other – in the exercise of that choice.

10 I will certainly subject you to my will if I remove any option in that choice, preventing you from making it, whether by resort to sheer force or subtle agenda-fixing. Some contemporary thinkers hold that this is essentially the only way in which I can subject you to my will – or, alternatively, interfere in your choice (Steiner 1991, Carter 1999, Kramer 2003). But their motivation is to make interference into a readily ~~charitable~~, measurable, ~~evil~~ and I think that this is insufficient to support the line they take. For it is surely clear – and is
15 accepted on most sides – that I can also interfere in two other ways. Rather than removing one or another option, I can replace it by a penalized alternative: I can allow you to choose *X* or *Y*, as they are, but replace *Z* by *Z*-with-a-penalty. And whether or not I actually remove or replace an option, I can remove or replace it in your perceptions. Assuming I don't actually remove or
20 replace it, for example, I can misrepresent it, whether by misleading you into thinking it is unavailable or subject to a penalty, or by manipulating you into thinking about it in a distorted, unappealing way.

25 Thus, there are three distinct modes of interference by means of which I can subject you to my will in a choice: I can remove an option, I can replace an option – in either case, you may or may not be aware of what I do – or I can misrepresent an option. These forms of interference can vary in degree, since one or more options may be removed or replaced or misrepresented; the replacement may be more or less radical, depending on how severe the attached penalty is; and the misrepresentation may be more or less resistible,
30 depending on the resources of deception or manipulation deployed. But still they all count as ways in which I may impose myself on you, restricting your capacity to exercise your will – to choose as you wish – among the options that define the choice. Or at least they count as ways in which I may impose myself, assuming that the imposition is not licensed or allowed by you: it is
35 not subject to your own control and in this sense is arbitrary. Unlike the interference that his sailors practice with Ulysses when they keep him bound to the mast, this imposition is arbitrary in the sense of putting another's *arbitrium* or will in control.

40 What distinguishes removal, replacement, and misrepresentation as ways in which I interfere in your choice is the fact that they affect the domain of options available to you or affect your capacity to deliberate within that domain. Thus, they all contrast with the intervention I make when I attempt to persuade you to take one or another option. And equally they contrast with the intervention I make when I offer you a reward for taking one or another
45 option. Assuming that I do not resort to deception or manipulation in these overtures, I will leave your domain of choice and your deliberative capacity unaffected and intact. The persuasion makes the pros and cons of different options more salient. And the offer adds to the domain of options available: if

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you promise a reward for my doing X – presumptively, a refusable reward – then you leave the options X , Y , and Z in place, merely adding the option of X -with-a-reward. Neither intervention restricts the options between which you can choose or your capacity to deliberate properly in choosing between them. They are wholly consistent with your freedom.

In this discussion of how I can subject you to my will by interfering in a choice, we have been assuming that it does not matter whether the option you actually prefer is one that I remove, replace, or misrepresent; I will subject you to my will if I interfere in any option, preferred or unpreferred. This assumption runs counter to the line defended by Hobbes (1994, ch. 21) when he says that freedom requires that a man not be ‘hindered to do what he has a will to’: that is, not hindered from satisfying his preference. Hobbes holds that you are free in any choice just insofar as you manage to satisfy your actual preference; it does not matter that you would not have satisfied your preference – that you would have faced interference – had you been inclined to choose another option.

The assumption made here is well supported, however, by an argument provided by Berlin (1969). Berlin makes the important point that if you can be free just by virtue of getting what you want, then you can make yourself free in the face of frustration just by adjusting your preferences appropriately. Suppose you are in prison and wish to live outside. You can make yourself free by thinking about the good things that prison life provides – shelter, food, a bed each night – and thereby getting yourself to prefer a stretch behind bars to living in the wider world.

This, of course, is absurd. As Berlin (1969, p. xxxix) says,

to teach a man that, if he cannot get what he wants, he must learn to want only what he can get may contribute to his happiness or his security; but it will not increase his civil or political freedom.

If we are to avoid the absurdity of thinking that you can secure freedom in a given choice by adjusting your preferences, then we must endorse the anti-Hobbesian assumption we have been making that in order to enjoy freedom in a choice, you must escape interference with any option, preferred or unpreferred.

4.2. *Toward a republican view*

If it is to support a good account of freedom for the will, this discussion of choice and interference has to be supplemented by two observations. First, that your freedom in a choice is reduced by my possession, not just by my exercise, of a power of arbitrary interference in your choice: in a word, by my domination, not just by my interference. And, second, that what it is for you to be free as a person opens up a much wider issue than the issue of what it is

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for you to be free in a particular choice. These observations will take us toward a republican perspective on what it is to enjoy freedom for the will.

Suppose that I do not actually interfere with you in the choice between X, Y, and Z but that I have the power of interfering with you, should I wish to do so. This power will be greater or lesser in degree, depending on how far I may expect to be able to overcome difficulties or avoid penalties in exercising it: depending on how far, in a traditional formula, I can exercise it at will and with impunity. Equally the interference that the power enables me to impose will be more or less intrusive, depending on whether it involves removal or replacement of an option, for example, and depending on how severely I may penalize it in the event of replacement. But I put aside such issues of degree here. The question to consider is whether my possession of a power of interfering in your choice – that is, interfering arbitrarily, beyond your control – already constitutes a way of subjecting you to my will. Does freedom require an absence of domination, not just an absence of interference?

I maintain that it does. You will be subject to my will in choosing between the options just to the extent that whether you can choose as you wish depends on the state of my will. And the fact that I have a power of interference means that it does depend on the state of my will. Let me be good-willed toward you, letting you have your way, and you can choose as you will. But let me turn nasty and you will not be able to choose as you will. Thus, you depend on the state of my will for the ability to choose according to your will. If you can choose according to your will, then that is only because I am happy to let you do so; you enjoy my grace and favor. The important point is that I am the one ultimately in control. What you can do you can only do because I let you do it.

You might think that if you manage to cajole me into letting you choose as you wish – if you fawn and toady and get me on side – then you will have won your freedom in the choice, albeit by unsavory means. But this would be a mistake. You may secure the satisfaction of your will by these measures but you will not put your will in control and you will not establish yourself as the agent in charge. This becomes particularly salient when we ask about what is essential for freedom, not in this or that particular choice – say, in the choice of exercising your vote in this or that election – but in a choice of that general type: in the electoral sort of choice that arises at regular intervals. You could not seriously think that you enjoy freedom in that type of choice – that you enjoy freedom as a voter – if on every occasion you depend on my goodwill for being able to exercise it as you wish.

These remarks must suffice here to indicate why in the long republican tradition freedom in any individual choice, or in any type of choice, is taken to require not just the absence of uncontrolled interference by others but also the absence of a power of such interference on their part: the absence of domination. You will be unfree in a choice, as the eighteenth-century republican, Price (1991, p. 26) put it, when your access to the options depends on an ‘indul-

gence' or an 'accidental mildness' in others. Freedom in the republican sense, to quote from the seventeenth-century thinker, Sidney (1990, p. 17, 304) requires something much more robust: 'independency upon the will of another' – or, as he also puts it, 'exemption from dominion' by another. The upshot is well caught in *Cato's letters*, a radical eighteenth-century tract: 'Liberty is, to live upon one's own terms; slavery is, to live at the mere mercy of another' (Trenchard and Gordon 1971, vol. 2, pp. 249–250).

But the republican tradition is not only distinguished by the fact that it takes freedom in any type of choice to require non-domination, not just non-interference. It is also marked out by the idea that the freedom of a person – the sort of freedom that every citizen of a republic can expect to enjoy – requires a public, law-based form of protection in a publicly recognized range of choices: those that the republican, Lilburne (1646) described as the basic or fundamental liberties. It was the protection afforded by such basic liberties, he maintained, that established 'the freeman's freedom', making citizens 'equal and alike in power, dignity, authority, and majesty' (Sharp 1998, p. 31).

What are the basic liberties, the choice types in which freedom of the person – and in its fullest sense freedom for the will – is to consist? They are types of choices that satisfy two constraints, one a ceiling, the other a floor. The ceiling constraint is that they should be restricted to choices that all the citizens in a society – in a contemporary version, all the adult, able-minded, more or less permanent members – can each enjoy at the same time that others enjoy them. If people had to compete with others to gain access to the basic liberties – if they had to compete in the way in which people compete in commercial markets – then not all could enjoy the range of choice associated with being a free person. The floor constraint is that they should encompass all the choices that are co-enjoyable in this sense, not just a sub-set of them. Imagine that a society provided for some of the basic liberties available in principle but not for all such liberties. The citizens of such a society could hardly be thought to count as free persons in the fullest sense; they would be unnecessarily hampered in the range of activities accessible to them.

Republican theory focuses on the possibility of establishing a framework of government and law in which people can aspire to this sort of political freedom, each achieving the best that is possible in freedom for the will. The preferred framework in the long tradition is a mixed constitution that divides up government among many hands, giving an especially important role to a contestatory citizenry, ever vigilant in checking the organization and the performance of those in power.⁴ Such a framework is vital from the republican viewpoint, since it is expected to guard against public domination of citizens by the very authorities that are meant to guard them against private domination by other individual or corporate agents (Pettit 2012, 2014).

5. Conclusion

5 I hope that the brisk strokes of this discussion are sufficient to distinguish and
connect the rather different ideals of freedom that we confront in psychologi-
cal, ethical, and political contexts. Freedom in the will – free will, period –
consists, by the account presented, in having the psychological ability to
10 deliberate well about the options presented in any choice. Freedom of the will
consists in having the ethical virtue or skill associated with exercising that ability
reliably, displaying a live sensitivity to the considerations that ought to
guide you in deliberation. And freedom for the will consists in having such
political protection, in such a domain of choice, that you can count as a free
person.

15 Freedom in the will is presupposed, in this account, by both other forms of
the ideal. You cannot have freedom of the will without it, since you cannot be
skilled in the exercise of an ability you do not have. And you cannot have
freedom for the will without it, since you cannot be protected in the exercise
of choices that are not within your capacity to make.⁵ But you can have free-
20 dom of the will, as we mentioned, without freedom for the will. And equally
you can have freedom for the will without having freedom of the will; no mat-
ter how weak-willed you are, there is room and call for enjoying protection
against the domination of others. Each of those forms of freedom requires free-
dom in the will but neither variety requires the other. You can be ethically free
25 and politically vulnerable or politically free and ethically lacking.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

- 30 1. The idea here is that we identify a person as the origin of elements in a process,
when the process is rule-governed and the rules require the sort of consistency over
temporally distinct moves – and over actual and possible moves – that allows us to
ascribe them to a single, enduring player. The player is identified as a unity, not by
virtue of some mysterious agent-level contribution to the moves (Chisholm 1982),
35 but rather by virtue of being capable of being held responsible in any one move to
the pattern displayed in others. The player is not a unit of production, as we might
say, but a unity of responsibility.
- 40 2. The remark ‘I could have done otherwise’ may not express just the idea that you
were not forced to do what you did and were in deliberative charge of your action;
that in that sense, you have free will. It will carry an extra message if you make it
in reflecting on the fact that you overlooked something in choosing as you did. It
will communicate a claim to have the ability to deliberate well and a regret – per-
45 haps even a rebuke addressed to yourself – that you failed on this occasion to exer-
cise that ability (Pettit and Smith 1996). Similarly the remark ‘I could not have
done otherwise’ need not express the thought that you were forced in some way to
act as you did. It may communicate merely the claim that the deliberative

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considerations stacked up so powerfully on the side of one option that they ruled out every alternative. This is presumably what Luther meant to communicate in his alleged response to the demand that he withdraw his challenge to the Church: ‘Hier stehe ich, ich kann nicht anders’ (Here I stand, I can do no other). For further analysis of the requirements of responsibility, see McGeer and Pettit (2014).

3. While it provides a contrast between some human beings and other human beings, then, it does not necessarily provide a contrast between creatures allegedly possessed of a contra-causal, non-natural ability, as free will is taken to be by incompatibilists, and creatures of a more mundane, causally constrained variety.
4. This is not positive liberty in the political version in which it requires nothing more or less than the equal participation of all in the majoritarian self-determination of a polity. That is a distinct ideal that Rousseau introduced in an attempt to preserve the republican message under the absolutist assumption, derived from Bodin and Hobbes, that there has to be a single sovereign agent, individual or corporate, in charge of the state. See Pettit (2012, Introduction).
5. For further argument in support of this claim, see Pettit (2012, ch 1, 2014, ch 2).

Notes on contributor

Philip Pettit is the Laurance S. Rockefeller University Professor of Politics and Human Values at Princeton University. He has published extensively in moral and political theory and in the philosophy of mind and metaphysics. His most recent works include *Just Freedom: A Moral Compass for a Complex World* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2014) and *On the People's Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

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