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The Republican Critique of Liberalism

ALAN PATTEN*

A number of writers have drawn upon the republican tradition in political thought to criticize liberals like Rawls and Dworkin for neglecting the importance of public service and civic virtue. In this article, I present and evaluate one version of this critique, which can be found in recent work by Quentin Skinner and Charles Taylor. I argue that their critique, which I term ‘instrumental republicanism’, is caught on the horns of a dilemma. Depending on how the critique is formulated, either there is no interesting disagreement between liberals and republicans, or there is, but not one which should concern liberals. Either way, instrumental republicanism cannot be said to offer an improvement on the liberal attitudes towards public service and civic virtue.

An important problem facing contemporary liberalism concerns whether any special value should be attached to a life of active citizenship and civic virtue. It is commonly supposed that the answer for contractarian variants of liberalism is no, and that this answer reflects a commitment to two different ideas. The first idea, very roughly, is that the central priority in specifying the principles that should regulate the basic structure of society is that each individual should enjoy an extensive system of negative liberties. The second is that there is no special connection between negative liberty and public service: if freedom is understood as an absence of external constraints on one’s activity, then it makes no sense to identify it with a life of active citizenship and civic virtue.

One prominent strand of contemporary liberalism – the liberalism that can be found in some of the writings of, for instance, Rawls and Dworkin (which I shall simply call ‘contractarian liberalism’ or occasionally just ‘liberalism’)¹ – has been assailed from a number of different perspectives for its treatment of the goods of citizenship, community and public service. One kind of objection draws upon the republican or civic humanist tradition in political thought to argue that liberalism’s main error lies in its narrow commitment to the ideal of

*Department of Politics, University of Exeter. I am grateful to Jessica Brown, Iain Hampsher-Monk, Mark Philp, Michael Rosen, the members of the University of Exeter and Nuffield College political theory workshops, and to the Editors and two anonymous referees, for comments on earlier drafts of this article.

¹ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973); Ronald Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* (London: Duckworth, 1977); and ‘What is Equality? Part II: Equality of Resources’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 10 (1981), 283–345. In more recent writings, Dworkin has explicitly repudiated contractarianism. See, in particular, ‘Foundations of Liberal Equality’, in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, Vol. XI (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1991), pp. 3–119. I use the label ‘contractarian liberal’ to indicate that I am not talking about liberalism more generally and because it is convenient to follow Quentin Skinner’s terminology in his articles about republicanism, cited below.

negative liberty.² Although republicans are not necessarily hostile to negative liberty, they are often read as recommending other important ideals as well, such as civic friendship, shared understandings, self-government and participation with others in the political affairs of one's community.³ To reinstate the proper value of community and public service, on this view, it is important to look beyond liberty to these and other goods.

A standard objection to this kind of critique of liberalism is that it ignores the plurality of human ends and values. By assuming that there is some single good – such as civic friendship or self-government – that is a good for everyone, republicans seem insensitive to difference. Although many people have assumed that this represents a decisive refutation of the relevance of the republican tradition for contemporary politics, in the past decade or so a number of writers have attempted to revive the republican tradition by arguing that its continuing relevance is somewhat different in nature. Rather than questioning the liberal pre-occupation with negative liberty, the republican tradition, on this reading, takes issue instead with the idea that negative liberty can be divorced from a commitment to public service and citizenship. Active citizenship, these revisionist republicans argue, should be valued, not necessarily because it is good in itself, but because it contributes to the maintenance of a free society. I shall call this view *instrumental republicanism*,⁴ both to distinguish it from other views that are influenced by the republican tradition, and to emphasize its distinctive feature, which is the claim that citizenship and public service are goods because they contribute to the realization of negative liberty.⁵

In what follows, I want to examine and assess instrumental republicanism as it is formulated and defended by two influential contemporary writers – Quentin

² See, for instance, Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); and 'The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self', *Political Theory*, 12 (1984), 81–96.

³ See, for instance, Charles Taylor's characterization of civic humanism in 'Kant's Theory of Freedom', *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 334–5. See also John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 205–6.

⁴ I am grateful to Richard Bellamy for suggesting this label to me. Shelley Burt's distinction between an 'Aristotelian' politics of virtue and an 'instrumental' politics of virtue is similar to my distinction between the two kinds of republicanism. See Shelley Burt, 'The Politics of Virtue Today: A Critique and a Proposal', *American Political Science Review*, 87 (1993), 360–8, at p. 360.

⁵ A third kind of republican argument has recently been advanced by Phillip Pettit in 'Negative Liberty, Liberal and Republican', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 1 (1993), 15–38; and 'The Freedom of the City: A Republican Ideal', in A. Hamlin and P. Pettit, eds., *The Good Polity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989). As I understand it, Pettit's argument is neither a rejection of the ideal of negative liberty nor a claim about the causal conditions under which this ideal can flourish. His thesis, instead, is that republicans have a distinctive view about what constitutes negative liberty: whereas liberals have typically held a 'realization-centred' conception of liberty (to what extent am I interfered with?), republicans, according to Pettit, have worked with a 'resilience-centred' conception (to what extent is my freedom from interference resilient to various counter-factual differences in the world?). In what follows, I shall not consider Pettit's argument, but concentrate solely on the instrumental republican argument, which I believe raises its own distinctive set of issues.

Skinner⁶ and Charles Taylor⁷. It is debatable whether instrumental republicanism represents a historically accurate interpretation of the views of classical republicans such as Machiavelli, but, in this article, I shall ignore questions of historical interpretation.⁸ Instead, I am primarily interested in whether instrumental republicanism represents an improvement on the liberal attitude towards active citizenship and civic virtue.

It is undeniable that the language and emphasis of instrumental republicans contrasts quite sharply with that of contractarian liberals. But is there a philosophically interesting disagreement between the two views – one which liberals would be advised to take notice of? Both Skinner and Taylor, albeit for somewhat different reasons, think that there is. In what follows, I shall argue that there is not. I shall maintain that instrumental republicanism is caught on the horns of a dilemma: depending on how it is formulated, either there is no interesting disagreement between liberals and republicans, or there is, but not one which should concern liberals.⁹

⁶ Quentin Skinner has developed his account of republicanism in a number of different articles since the early 1980s. They include: 'Machiavelli on the Maintenance of Liberty', *Politics*, 18 (1983), 3–15; 'The Idea of Negative Liberty: Philosophical and Historical Perspectives', in Richard Rorty, J. B. Schneewind and Quentin Skinner eds., *Philosophy in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 193–221; 'The Paradoxes of Political Liberty', in S. McMurrin, ed., *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, Vol. VIII (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 225–50; 'The Republican Ideal of Political Liberty', in Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner and Maurizio Viroli, eds, *Machiavelli and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 293–309; and 'On Justice, the Common Good, and the Priority of Liberty' in Chantal Mouffe, ed., *Dimensions of Radical Democracy* (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 211–24. For the most part, I shall refer to the two most recent of these articles, which contain the fullest and, according to Skinner, strongest statements of his position.

⁷ Charles Taylor, 'Cross-Purposes: The Liberal–Communitarian Debate', in Nancy Rosenblum, ed., *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1989), pp. 159–82. In some of his other writings, Taylor is a critic of the ideal of negative liberty itself. See, especially, 'What's Wrong with Negative Liberty', *Philosophical Papers*, 2 (1985), pp. 211–29. In 'Cross-Purposes', however, Taylor explicitly formulates his 'republican thesis' in terms of 'a broader gamut of freedoms, including negative ones' on pp. 171–2. I defend the claim that Taylor can be considered an 'instrumental republican' more fully in Section 3 below.

⁸ For a critique of Skinner's interpretation of Machiavelli, see John Charvet, 'Quentin Skinner on the Idea of Freedom', *Studies in Political Thought*, 2 (1993), 5–16, where Charvet argues that republicans, including Machiavelli, are committed to a positive conception of liberty. Another historical problem that I shall ignore concerns whether there are two distinct traditions in the history of political thought – one liberal, the other republican. Charvet contests this claim, as does J. C. Isaac, 'Liberalism and Republicanism', *History of Political Thought*, 9 (1988), 349–77.

⁹ My own critique of instrumental republicanism can be distinguished from several other critiques that have recently appeared in journal articles. For instance, I do not follow Charvet, 'Quentin Skinner and the Idea of Freedom', in arguing that Skinner is too quick to abandon positive liberty. Nor do I assume, with Don Herzog and Shelley Burt, that the main problem with instrumental republicanism is the 'transition problem' of getting a republican regime started in the first place (as Burt points out, liberals can have the same problem). See Herzog, 'Some Questions for Republicans', *Political Theory*, 14 (1986), 473–93, especially pp. 483–90, and Burt, 'The Politics of Virtue Today', p. 363.

1. SKINNER'S FORMULATION OF INSTRUMENTAL REPUBLICANISM

There are sufficiently important differences between Skinner's and Taylor's accounts of instrumental republicanism to warrant examining their views separately. So let me start with Skinner's formulation. Republicans, according to Skinner, are above all committed to the ideal of a 'free state'. A free state, like a free individual, is one which is not subject to constraints, but which is able to act according to its own will, that is, according to the general will of all of the members of the community.¹⁰ As Skinner sees it, republicans value free states for two distinct kinds of reasons. First, free states tend to be better than unfree ones at accumulating wealth and civic greatness. Secondly, and more importantly for Skinner's account, free states are better at guaranteeing the personal liberties of their citizens than are unfree ones.¹¹ The personal liberties which republicans have in mind here are some of the familiar negative liberties cherished by liberals: they include, for instance, personal security and the political liberties. To possess these liberties, as Skinner puts it, 'is simply to be unconstrained from pursuing whatever goals we may happen to set ourselves'.¹²

Free states, republicans assume, break down easily into unfree ones because of the negligence and indifference of their citizens. When this happens, the negative liberties cherished by liberals and republicans are in danger of being lost. This sets up the central republican problem, which is to identify the conditions under which a society can maintain the institutions of its freedom, despite this tendency to corruption.¹³

Republicans address this problem by exploring various different arrangements and policies which help to preserve liberty, typically including the rule of law and some form of democratic self-government.¹⁴ The *distinctive* claim made by republicans – the claim which they think takes them beyond the liberal tradition – emphasizes the role of political participation and civic virtue. It is a necessary condition of the maintenance of a free state, they argue, that its citizens be politically active and motivated by a high degree of civic virtue.¹⁵ Unless citizens participate actively in political life, they will allow their institutions to stagnate and corrupt and will eventually lose them. Moreover, this participation is only likely if citizens are motivated by commitment to the common good and a high degree of civic virtue, rather than by self-interest. Purely self-interested citizens will prefer to attend only to their private affairs and to free ride on the public activity of others.

Let us call citizens who are politically active, and motivated by a high degree of civic virtue, 'good citizens'. The next question that Skinner turns to concerns

¹⁰ Skinner, 'Republican Ideal of Liberty', p. 301.

¹¹ Skinner, 'Republican Ideal of Liberty', pp. 301–2.

¹² Skinner, 'Republican Ideal of Liberty', p. 302.

¹³ Skinner, 'Republican Ideal of Liberty', p. 302.

¹⁴ Skinner, 'Republican Ideal of Liberty', pp. 302–3.

¹⁵ Skinner, 'Republican Ideal of Liberty', p. 303.

the conditions under which individuals can be relied upon to become and remain good citizens.¹⁶ Here republicans emphasize the importance of social institutions in moulding individuals into citizens: it is a necessary condition of individuals becoming and remaining good citizens, republicans think, that their social institutions imbue them with certain attitudes and dispositions.¹⁷ The qualities of the good citizen are not something which individuals are naturally born with. They must be nourished and fostered by education, by the everyday customs and practices of the culture, and, where necessary, by the threat of sanctions and the strict regulation of personal conduct.

Putting these claims together, then, we can see that, so far, Skinner's republicanism consists in a commitment to the ideal of negative liberty and an empirical analysis of the conditions under which this ideal might be realized. Republicans think that negative liberty is a worthwhile ideal – but not one which it is easy to realize. They argue that it can only be realized if individuals are good citizens, and that means that they must participate actively in the political life of their community and be motivated by a high degree of civic virtue. This participation and virtue, in turn, are only found where social institutions inculcate individuals with the right sorts of attitudes and dispositions.

From this analysis of the conditions of the maintenance of a free state, Skinner draws several important normative conclusions. He concludes, first of all, that individuals have a duty to participate actively in politics.¹⁸ The exact reasoning behind this conclusion is never spelt out explicitly, but it seems to be something like the following. Since we all have reason to live in a free society, and whoever wills the end, wills the necessary means to that end, then, if the republican analysis sketched above is correct, we all have reason to participate actively in politics. To the extent that the end of living in a free society has priority over our other ends, our reason to participate in politics takes on a similar priority and we can say that it is a *duty*.¹⁹ As it stands, this deduction of a duty of participation will not do, of course, because it ignores the familiar problem that no *particular* individual's participation is strictly necessary for the maintenance of liberty. I do not see how it is possible to negotiate this difficulty, except perhaps by appealing to fairness, or by embedding the argument in a more Kantian moral framework, which has recourse to an 'original position' or other similar device.²⁰

¹⁶ Skinner, 'Republican Ideal of Liberty', p. 304.

¹⁷ Skinner, 'Republican Ideal of Liberty', pp. 305–6.

¹⁸ Skinner, 'Republican Ideal of Liberty', pp. 307–8.

¹⁹ Skinner hints at such an argument in 'Republican Ideal of Liberty', pp. 304 and 308.

²⁰ It is possible that Skinner has something like this in mind, but then it is misleading of him to characterize corruption (the tendency to ignore the claims of our community) as 'simply a failure of rationality, an inability to recognize that our own liberty depends on committing ourselves to a life of virtue and public service', 'Republican Ideal of Liberty', p. 304. The use of the words 'our' and 'ourselves' makes this claim about the preservation of liberty crucially ambiguous. If he means each of us separately, then the claim seems mistaken: it is false that any particular individual's liberty depends on committing himself or herself to 'a life of virtue and public service'. If, however, he

The second normative conclusion which republicans draw from their analysis of the conditions of liberty is a recommendation that social and political institutions be shaped and modified so as to encourage individuals to acquire the civic virtue which will ensure that they conscientiously fulfil their duties of political participation.²¹ Although republicans are pessimistic about the prospects of establishing and maintaining a free state, they deny that it is a matter which is entirely outside of human control. Human beings can shape and modify their own social institutions, and these institutions, in turn, can imbue individuals with the virtuous attitudes and dispositions that are required to preserve liberty. Because liberty depends on citizenship and public service, it becomes imperative that social institutions be constructed so as to foster and encourage these values.

2. SKINNER'S OBJECTIONS AND LIBERAL REJOINDERS

Having given a rough sketch of Skinner's instrumental republicanism, I want now to explore the objections to contractarian liberalism which Skinner thinks are implied by his account. I shall identify five different objections to liberalism which Skinner draws from his reflections on the republican tradition. Since the republican analysis consists in part in a set of empirical hypotheses concerning the maintenance of a free society, one might expect Skinner's differences with liberalism to be empirical in character.²² However, with the possible exception of the first objection, this does not seem to be the case. What Skinner's different objections have in common instead is the philosophical claim that contractarian liberals' commitment to some particular doctrine or idea makes it impossible for them to take seriously the republican analysis of the maintenance of liberty. In each case, I argue that the objection fails: in the case of objections (i), (iii) and (v), liberals are not committed to the doctrine or idea in question; whereas in the case of objections (ii) and (iv), they are, but this does not inhibit them from taking seriously Skinner's republican analysis.

(i) *Liberalism's Commitment to the 'Invisible Hand' Doctrine*

Skinner charges that contractarian liberals – and here he mentions Rawls in particular – have come to rely upon a complacent 'invisible hand' doctrine of how individual liberty can be maintained. According to this view, 'if we all

(Footnote continued)

literally means 'our' and 'ourselves', the claim about liberty may well be true, but then corruption hardly seems like a *simple* failure of rationality. Rather it looks like a failure either of collective rationality or of individual rationality with a normative component built in.

²¹ Skinner, 'Republican Ideal of Liberty', pp. 305–7.

²² For a fascinating attempt to test some of the republican hypotheses empirically, see Robert D. Putnam, with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), especially chap. 4.

pursue our own enlightened self-interest ... the outcome will in fact be the greatest good of the community as a whole'.²³

Reflection on the republican tradition shows us that the problem with this invisible hand doctrine is that it forgets the fragility of free institutions and, in particular, the need for civic virtue which this fragility occasions. It ignores the fundamental insight of instrumental republicanism, which is that individuals must have certain duties and virtues, and attitudes and dispositions, if their institutions are to avoid corruption and decline. Liberalism's commitment to the invisible hand doctrine helps explain its hostility to the goods of citizenship and public service.

This objection, however, runs foul of two different doctrines which Rawls expounds in *A Theory of Justice*. The first is his doctrine of the sense of justice: Rawls argues that a condition of the possibility of a just society is that citizens possess an effective sense of justice and, in particular, a highest order desire to abide by the principles of justice.²⁴ Without this other-regarding motivation, the basic liberties cannot be maintained. One of the strengths of his theory, Rawls thinks, is that it can explain how citizens would come to acquire this sense of justice. A republican might choose to take issue with this explanation, but this would be quite different from the objection that Rawls is committed to an invisible hand doctrine.

The second doctrine is that of the natural duty of justice. Parties to the original position, Rawls argues, would rationally choose to be constrained by a duty to support and further just institutions.²⁵ This duty regulates, for instance, their compliance with the law, their decisions about participation in politics, and their voting behaviour.

Both of these points contradict Skinner's 'invisible hand' reading. The reason why the sense of justice is so important for Rawls is exactly because a just social system is not like a self-regulating market in which every agent can pursue his or her own interest.²⁶ Moreover, parties to the original position choose to be bound by the duty to support and further just institutions precisely because they recognize the fragility of free and just institutions – precisely, that is, because they recognize the naivety of the invisible hand doctrine. I conclude that, if instrumental republicanism offers an improvement on the liberal understandings of active citizenship and civic virtue, it is not because liberalism is committed to an invisible hand doctrine.

²³ Skinner, 'Republican Ideal of Liberty', p. 304.

²⁴ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 454–8, 474 and 493.

²⁵ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 333–7.

²⁶ As Rawls puts it in discussing the 'economic theory of democracy', 'since no system of constitutional checks and balances succeeds in setting up an invisible hand that can be relied upon to guide the process to a just outcome, a public sense of justice is to some degree necessary' (*A Theory of Justice*, p. 493).

(ii) Liberalism's Commitment to the Priority of Rights over Duties

A further objection made by Skinner is that contemporary liberals – and here he specifically mentions Dworkin – mistakenly give priority to rights over duties. According to Skinner, contractarians think that ‘we must first seek to erect around ourselves a cordon of rights, treating these as “trumps” and insisting on their priority over any calls of social duty’.²⁷ On the republican view, by contrast,

to insist on rights as trumps ... is simply to proclaim our corruption as citizens. It is also to embrace a self-destructive form of irrationality. Rather we must take our duties seriously, and instead of trying to evade anything more than ‘the minimum demands of social life’ we must seek to discharge our public obligations as whole-heartedly as possible.²⁸

The contractarian insistence on the primacy of rights forces them to neglect the instrumental republican idea that a commitment to liberty enjoins us virtuously to pursue certain determinate ends of public service and political participation. Contractarians forget that an ethic of rights, without a corresponding ethic of social duties, cannot form the basis of a self-sustaining system of free institutions and practices.

The problem with this objection is that Skinner is conflating two different senses in which rights can have priority over duties. On one view, rights can be said to have priority if and only if they have justificatory primacy in moral argument: the suggestion is that a good argument for some arrangement or action is one which appeals, ultimately, to the protection or advancement of rights. This is the view that Dworkin had in mind when he said that our political morality ought to be right-based rather than goal-based or duty-based.²⁹ Given the close connection between rights and negative liberties, it is hard to see how Skinner can disagree. The republican view, on Skinner's reconstruction of it, is not a duty-based theory, according to Dworkin's categories, but a right-based, or better yet a ‘liberty-based’, one.

The second sense in which rights might have priority over duties is if it is typically the case that the rights that we have are such that we never, or hardly ever, have any social duties. This is clearly the view that Skinner wants to criticize, but it is not a view that is implied by Dworkin's argument. Dworkin allows that we may have social duties, so long as they are right-based, that is, are ultimately justified not by goals or duties, but by the preservation and protection of rights.³⁰ As Dworkin points out, this makes such duties purely ‘instrumental’, but then this ‘instrumental’ view of duty is exactly what is on offer in Skinner's reconstruction of classical republicanism. Thus I can find no

²⁷ Skinner, ‘Republican Ideal of Liberty’, p. 307.

²⁸ Skinner, ‘Republican Ideal of Liberty’, p. 307.

²⁹ Ronald Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* (London: Duckworth, 1977), pp. 169–72. In his recent *Tanner Lecture*, ‘Foundations of Liberal Equality’, Dworkin appears to repudiate the right-basedness of political morality in favour of a more goal-based view.

³⁰ See the comments on ‘codes of conduct’, *Taking Rights Seriously*, p. 172.

relevant difference between Skinner's position and Dworkin's and conclude that the objection fails. Contractarianism's insistence on the primacy of rights does not prevent it from taking seriously the concerns raised by instrumental republicans.

(iii) Liberalism's Defective Conception of Law

Another criticism that Skinner draws from his reflections on the republican tradition is that contractarians operate with a defective conception of law. They agree with republicans that the coercive powers of the law are required to safeguard individual liberty. But they mistakenly think that 'the law preserves our liberty essentially by coercing other people'.³¹ For republicans, by contrast, 'the law preserves our liberty not merely by coercing others, but also by directly coercing each one of us into acting in a particular way'.³² The contractarian conception of law, Skinner implies, inhibits them from endorsing the republican conclusion that a legitimate function of the law may be to coerce and cajole us into doing that which is necessary for the maintenance of our own liberty.

As examples of such a use of the law, Skinner mentions the republican doctrine of a balance of powers in the constitution and their policy of using the law to encourage citizens to fight courageously on behalf of their community. Directed against modern contractarians, the objection fails, however, because writers like Rawls endorse similar policies and on similar grounds. Rawls argues that a procedure of majority rule can legitimately be restricted by the 'mechanisms of constitutionalism', including the separation of powers, if such an arrangement has the best consequences for the complete system of liberty.³³ Likewise, he thinks that conscription may be justified if it is necessary to protect a just community against hostile powers likely to remove its liberties.³⁴ In short, Rawls does not operate with the defective conception of law that Skinner associates with contractarianism: for Rawls, a legitimate function of the law may be to coerce us into doing that which is necessary for the maintenance of our own liberty.

(iv) Liberalism's Hostility to Utilitarianism

A fourth argument made by Skinner is that liberalism's hostility to utilitarianism prevents it from taking seriously the republican insight that a commitment to the common good is a necessary condition for the realization of a free society.³⁵

³¹ Skinner, 'Republican Ideal of Liberty', p. 305.

³² Skinner, 'Republican Ideal of Liberty', p. 305.

³³ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 229–30. The 'balance of powers' and the 'separation of powers' are, of course, distinct sorts of constitutional arrangements, but the distinction does not seem relevant to Skinner's argument nor to my attempt to rebut it.

³⁴ Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, p. 380.

³⁵ This argument is made by Skinner in 'On Justice, the Common Good, and the Priority of Liberty'.

Skinner notes, for instance, that Rawls affirms the priority of individual liberty over all utilitarian considerations, including, he thinks, any kind of appeal to what Skinner calls the ‘general welfare’. As a result of this, Skinner concludes, Rawls is unable to sanction the kinds of limitations on individual liberty that are recommended by the republican view in the name of the common good, since these are essentially appeals to the general welfare. Rawls cannot allow that individuals should be required to participate in political life, because this would be to violate his own strictures against general welfare arguments for restricting liberty. Since Rawlsian justice ‘requires the maximizing of individual liberty,’ Skinner argues, ‘the basic duty of the state must be to keep its own demands upon its citizens to an agreed minimum’.³⁶

Skinner is correct to say that Rawls refuses to sanction limitations on individual liberty which are justified only on utilitarian grounds. For Rawls, it would be irrational for a party to the original position to choose to sacrifice his own liberties solely for the sake of greater benefits for *others*. Skinner is wrong to think, however, that this argument prevents Rawls from requiring the kinds of duties of citizenship, and commitment to the common good, that republicans cherish. In considering whether to impose upon themselves these duties, parties to the original position can take into consideration not only the benefits to others, but also the benefits to themselves, that these duties will help secure. The importance of the latter sort of benefit is implicitly conceded by Skinner himself: a failure to embrace our civic duties, he argues, is ‘simply a failure of rationality, an inability to recognize that *our own liberty* depends on committing ourselves to a life of virtue and public service’.³⁷ I conclude that, as with liberalism’s attitude towards rights, law and the invisible hand, its anti-utilitarianism does not prevent it from taking seriously the concerns raised by instrumental republicans.³⁸

(v) *The Misunderstanding of Negative Liberty*

An overarching concern of several of Skinner’s articles is to analyse the relationship between negative liberty and two historically important propositions about liberty. The first of these propositions is that liberty is only realized through the pursuit, by individuals, of certain determinate ends and activities. The second is that it can make sense, under some conditions, to talk of forcing someone to be free.³⁹

Skinner thinks that one tradition of thinking about negative liberty, which he identifies with contractarianism, rejects both of these propositions about liberty as incoherent. For contractarianism, negative liberty consists in an *absence* of

³⁶ Skinner, ‘On Justice, the Common Good, and the Priority of Liberty’, p. 215.

³⁷ Skinner, ‘Republican Ideal of Liberty’, p. 304 (emphasis added).

³⁸ Rawls’s recent work makes it especially clear that he does not wish to abandon notions of the common good. See, in particular, *Political Liberalism*, Lecture V, Section 7.

³⁹ See Skinner, ‘Republican Ideal of Liberty’, pp. 294–5.

external constraints on what one is able to do and thus seems entirely opposed to any suggestion that one only enjoys freedom in pursuing certain determinate ends and activities, let alone any claim that one can be forced or coerced into freedom.

Skinner argues, however, that the republican view shows that there is a much closer connection between negative liberty, public service, and perhaps even coercion, than contractarians have been willing to admit. As we have seen, republicans draw from their analysis of the conditions of liberty the normative conclusion that individuals have a duty to participate actively in politics: in this sense, a commitment to negative liberty does privilege certain determinate ends and activities as especially rational for individuals to pursue. Given the tendency for our institutions of liberty to decline, and given the way in which virtue and participation work against this tendency, it is crucial that we recognize our duties of participation. To ignore this would be to lapse into corruption.

Republicans warn, moreover, that human beings often fail to be rational. For this reason, as we have seen, they conclude that it may be necessary for social institutions to exercise coercion in order to preserve liberty. In this sense, it is coherent both to hold a negative conception of liberty and to allow that it may occasionally be necessary to force someone to be free.

So Skinner's claim, then, is that contractarians have misunderstood the nature and implications of their own central ideal – negative liberty. This misunderstanding inhibits liberals from taking seriously the republican warnings about the maintenance of liberty.

A first point to note about this argument is that there is an important ambiguity in the formulation of the two propositions about liberty. It is ambiguous whether they are making *constitutive* or *instrumental* claims about liberty. Do republicans want to say that the fulfilment of their civic duties is a condition that agents must satisfy if they are to count as being free? And are they claiming that agents still count as being free even when they are being forced or coerced? These would be constitutive claims about liberty. Or do the two propositions simply refer to certain enabling conditions, the satisfaction of which can lead to agents being free in some different sense that is assumed to be understood?

It seems clear from his discussion that Skinner is *not* making constitutive claims about liberty.⁴⁰ This would be to abandon the commitment to negative liberty that his republican view takes as its starting point. Rather, I take Skinner's point to be that contractarian liberals have themselves been confused by the ambiguity into leaping from a denial of the two constitutive claims about liberty to a rejection of the two instrumental claims.

What Skinner's objection boils down to, then, is the assertion that liberals have wrongly dismissed two instrumental claims about liberty, claims which the republican view shows to be plausible. I hope that my discussion of Skinner's other objections is sufficient to show that this assertion cannot be defended.

⁴⁰ Skinner, 'Republican Ideal of Liberty', p. 302.

Liberals can and do allow that the maintenance of liberty rests on the kinds of conditions which republicans emphasize. In particular, they agree that liberty cannot be maintained unless individuals have a sense of justice and recognize a duty to support just institutions. And they join republicans in thinking that the coercive powers of the law may occasionally need to be employed to ensure that individuals do what is required to preserve their own liberty. This is not to deny that liberals and republicans may disagree about what specific policy prescriptions might be necessary for the preservation of liberty; it is only to suggest that they do not disagree at the level of philosophical abstraction at which Skinner's critique operates.⁴¹

I conclude that Skinner's formulation of instrumental republicanism does not represent an improvement upon the liberal attitude towards citizenship and civic virtue, because it fails to identify any philosophically interesting disagreement between the two positions. Nothing in liberalism's attitude to the invisible hand, rights, law, the common good, or liberty itself, prevents it from endorsing the instrumental republican understanding of the importance of public service and citizenship. To the contrary, liberals like Rawls explicitly assume – with republicans – that we must have a sense of justice, that we have duties to support just political institutions and that legal arrangements may help ensure that we do not throw away our own liberty.

3. TAYLOR'S REFORMULATION

I now turn to the second horn of the dilemma I want to push against instrumental republicanism. So far, I have argued that on at least one influential formulation of this view – Quentin Skinner's – there is no interesting philosophical disagreement between republicans and contemporary liberals. I now want to examine a second formulation of instrumental republicanism, which does, I think, put it into conflict with liberalism, but which liberals, I shall argue, would be right to reject.

The formulation I have in mind is taken from Charles Taylor's important article 'Cross-Purposes: The Liberal–Communitarian Debate'. One theme of Taylor's essay is that participants in the liberal–communitarian debate have

⁴¹ It is difficult to say whether Skinner thinks that contractarians and republicans would disagree about concrete policies and legislation, because we are told very little by Skinner about republican policy prescriptions. Some republican policies *might* include: (a) compulsory voting; (b) extending the idea of jury service into other domains; (c) encouraging the creation of neighbourhood councils and committees which take part in the political life of the community; (d) national service; (e) an education system which inculcates the virtues of the good citizen and a degree of patriotic allegiance; (f) prohibiting insults to the flag and national anthem; (g) subsidizing patriotic festivals and rites; or (h) establishing and preserving a certain social and cultural environment in the polity so as to secure maximal patriotic allegiance. Liberals might well balk at some of these proposals (in part, for reasons I discuss in Section 5 below), but not, as Skinner maintains, because they cannot, in principle, endorse the republican argument. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for suggesting to me some of the possible practical implications of instrumental republicanism.

tended to confuse ontological and methodological issues, on the one hand, with advocacy, or prescriptive, ones, on the other. I want to set aside this claim here and instead concentrate on a second thesis put forward by Taylor (as an illustration of the first) – namely, that liberals have failed adequately to recognize the implications of the ‘republican thesis’. The republican thesis is simply the claim that what Taylor calls ‘patriotism’ is a condition of the maintenance of a free society.⁴²

Taylor’s account of the republican thesis shares a number of features in common with Skinner’s version of instrumental republicanism. Both authors conceive of a free society in opposition to a despotic one, but also relate it to the protection of a system of negative liberties.⁴³ Both assume that a free society is a fragile construction which can only be preserved if individuals are motivated by certain attitudes and dispositions.⁴⁴ And finally, both accord to laws and institutions an important role in encouraging and fostering the required virtues and identities of citizens.⁴⁵

Taylor denies, however, that his republicanism is purely ‘instrumental’ and, on this basis, explicitly contrasts it with the position developed by Skinner.⁴⁶ Taylor’s point seems to be that the maintenance of liberty requires that individuals view citizenship not merely in instrumental terms, but as a good in itself, which is shared with others, and which is integral to their identities and self-understandings. There is an important sense in which Taylor’s account remains instrumental, none the less, and thus I think he exaggerates his disagreement with Skinner. It is important, for Taylor, that individuals regard citizenship as a (non-instrumental) good, not just because it *is* a good, but because it contributes to the preservation of a free society.⁴⁷ This thesis about what Taylor calls the ‘viability’ of free institutions⁴⁸ is an instrumental claim: like Skinner’s argument, it is a defence of public service and civic virtue which is distinct from the more traditional Aristotelian view that citizenship is an essential component of the good life.

So there are significant similarities in the republicanism of Taylor and Skinner, but there are also important differences, and it is these that I want to explore here. The most obvious difference is that, unlike Skinner, Taylor accepts that liberals can and do work with notions of the common good and of citizen

⁴² Taylor, ‘Cross-Purposes’, pp. 171–2.

⁴³ See Taylor, ‘Cross-Purposes’, pp. 165, 171–2; Skinner, ‘Republican Ideal of Liberty’, pp. 301–2.

⁴⁴ Taylor, ‘Cross-Purposes’, pp. 171–5; Skinner, ‘Republican Ideal of Liberty’, p. 303.

⁴⁵ Taylor, ‘Cross-Purposes’, pp. 181–2; Skinner, ‘Republican Ideal of Liberty’, pp. 305–6.

⁴⁶ Taylor, ‘Cross-Purposes’, p. 170 n. 19.

⁴⁷ Mark Philp explains this point well, suggesting that it is implicit in Skinner’s argument: ‘even if civic virtue is instrumental to liberty and security, the citizens of a state must not believe that it is so, since the state requires their unconditional commitment, not one which calculates proportionality between what is being asked of them and what they receive in return’ (see Mark Philp, ‘On Politics and its Corruption’, *Political Theory Newsletter*, 6 (1994), 1–18, at p. 13.

⁴⁸ Taylor, ‘Cross-Purposes’, p. 165.

allegiance. The liberal, Taylor thinks, can respond to his republican critic by saying that:

His formula does indeed exclude there being a societally endorsed common *good*, but not at all that there be a common understanding of the *right*; actually, it calls for this. The misunderstanding turns on two senses of ‘good’. In the broad sense, it means anything valuable which we seek; in the narrower sense, it refers to life plans or ways of living which are so valued. Procedural liberalism cannot have a common good in the narrow sense, because society must be neutral on the question of the good life. But in the broader sense, where a rule of right can also count as ‘good’, there can be an extremely important shared good.⁴⁹

Although this is an important concession, which is broadly in line with the argument I developed in the previous section, there are two further issues raised by Taylor (but not touched upon by Skinner) which might end up dividing liberals and republicans. The first relates to Taylor’s emphasis on ‘patriotism’ rather than the sense or duty of justice. The second arises with Taylor’s claim that liberals who endorse a republican analysis of the maintenance of liberty may be forced to abandon their doctrine of neutrality.

In the next two sections I shall explore each of these issues in turn. Skinner’s republican critique of contractarian liberalism has been shown to be a failure, but it remains possible that a reformulation of instrumental republicanism can offer a more trenchant critique of liberals. I shall, in effect, be reading Taylor’s essay as offering (among other things) just such a reformulation. I will contend that Taylor’s reformulation of instrumental republicanism does not represent an improvement on the liberal attitude towards civic virtue and active citizenship. The two refinements I will discuss can lead to genuine disagreements between liberals and republicans, but in each case, I shall show, liberals would be right to reject the republican view.

4. CIVIC VIRTUE AND PATRIOTISM

In my discussion of Skinner, I argued that liberals can and do accept at least some form of the instrumental republican claim that civic virtue is a condition of the preservation of liberty. Rawls, for instance, thinks that a necessary condition of the maintenance of liberty is that citizens possess an effective sense of justice and that they recognize a duty to support and further just institutions. That Rawls affirms these doctrines is sufficient to show that he does not subscribe to any complacent invisible-hand doctrine about the maintenance of liberty.

Republicans might respond, however, by arguing that what they mean by civic virtue cannot be reduced to either a sense of justice or a duty to be just. Whereas Rawls wants to focus the citizen’s love and commitment on *abstract principles* such as freedom and justice, the republican thinks that the citizen’s loyalty and identification must be directed towards some particular political

⁴⁹ Taylor, ‘Cross-Purposes’, p. 172.

community. This refinement of instrumental republicanism is quite clearly discernible in Taylor's discussion. For Taylor, civic virtue is essentially 'patriotism' and thus is 'based on an identification with others in a particular common enterprise'. According to Taylor, patriotism means that 'I am not dedicated to defending the liberty of just anyone, but I feel the bond of solidarity with my compatriots in our common enterprise'.⁵⁰

With this idea of patriotism in mind, then, one way of refining the republican critique of contractarian liberalism might be as follows. Since it is naive to think that enough people could ever be motivated by a general commitment to justice and freedom for all, it becomes necessary, if liberty is to be secure, that people at least be motivated by the more feasible other-regarding commitment of patriotism. The mistake made by liberals is that they complacently assume that people will have an effective sense of justice and thus systematically overlook the indispensability of patriotism. In short, liberals ignore the necessity of patriotism for the maintenance of a free society.

I am not sure that Taylor intends to make exactly this criticism of contractarian liberals – he contrasts patriotism with the 'apolitical attachment to universal principle ... that is central to modern ethics of the right'⁵¹ and not (explicitly) with the Rawlsian idea of a sense of justice – but it is worth pursuing in any case because it seems a natural republican response to my attempt to defend contractarians in Section 2 above. Is it a good objection against contractarian liberalism that it ignores the importance of patriotism?

A problem with the objection as it stands is that the contrast between patriotism and a commitment to abstract principles of freedom and justice may turn out to be overdrawn if the latter is identified with the Rawlsian 'sense of justice'. This is in part because liberals like Rawls do not assume that our sense of justice is directed at 'just anyone' (as Taylor puts it) but rather only at those people with whom we are engaged in what Rawls terms 'a co-operative venture for mutual advantage'.⁵² Although a sense of justice that is directed towards citizens of other countries is (rightly, in my view) not ruled out by this formulation, Rawls's emphasis on what he calls the 'basic structure' suggests that our primary concern is likely to be with our fellow citizens.

More importantly, the contrast seems overdrawn because it is far from clear that patriotism can itself be entirely divorced from a commitment to abstract principles. As Taylor emphasizes, a feeling of patriotism involves a sense of being engaged in, and committed to, a 'common enterprise' which is typically

⁵⁰ Taylor, 'Cross-Purposes', p. 166; see also p. 176.

⁵¹ Taylor, 'Cross-Purposes', p. 166.

⁵² I take it that this is what Rawls has in mind when he says that a sense of justice 'leads us to accept the just institutions that apply to us and from which we and our associates have benefited', *A Theory of Justice*, p. 474. See also *Political Liberalism*, Lecture 1, Section 3; and Allan Gibbard, 'Constructing Justice', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 20 (1991), 266–9.

defined in terms of particular values, ideals and goals.⁵³ ‘In the case of the United States’, for instance,

there is a widespread identification with ‘the American way of life’, a sense of sharing a common identity and history, *defined by a commitment to certain ideals, articulated famously in the Declaration of Independence, Lincoln’s Gettysburg address, and such documents*, which in turn derive their importance from their connection to certain climactic transitions of this shared history.⁵⁴

An American patriot, on this view, would seem to be somebody who feels a bond of solidarity with his or her fellow citizens as a result of the fact that they are all engaged in a common enterprise of putting forward and defending certain ideals – ‘American’ ideals such as liberty and equality. On this understanding of patriotism, it is hard to see any serious disagreement between republicans and contractarian liberals like Rawls: all concerned seem to agree on the main point – namely, that there must be ‘commitment to certain ideals’ such as liberty and equality if a free society is to be maintained.

To this an insistent republican critic might respond that simply pointing to the conceivability of a liberal or constitutional patriotism does not by itself resolve the issue of feasibility raised earlier. Just as it was naive to think that enough people would ever be motivated by a general commitment to justice and liberty for all, it may also be unrealistic to think that a liberal patriotism would ever attract sufficient support to guarantee the maintenance of liberty. What is feasible, by contrast, is a patriotism that is tied to particular historical institutions, traditions, culture, language and/or ethnicity, and this can certainly not be assimilated so easily to the Rawlsian sense of justice. The deeper republican objection, then, is that liberals ignore the indispensability of this form of patriotism – what I shall call *non-liberal patriotism* – for the maintenance of liberty.

At this point, I think that liberals would be wise to stand their ground rather than attempt to take on board the republican point of view. Part of the reason for this is that I am sceptical about whether liberal patriotism is really as unfeasible as the objection assumes. Here, one need only think of the American case mentioned by Taylor, or the strong commitment of Canadians to their new Charter of Rights and Freedoms, or, as Joel Feinberg has pointed out, the inspiration one feels in reading some of the great liberal texts such as Mill’s *On Liberty*.⁵⁵ To the extent that these examples suggest that liberal patriotism is feasible, it is false that non-liberal patriotism is indispensable to the maintenance of a free society.

⁵³ Taylor, ‘Cross-Purposes’, pp. 174 and 178.

⁵⁴ Taylor, ‘Cross-Purposes’, p. 174 (italics added).

⁵⁵ Joel Feinberg, *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law: Volume 4: Harmless Wrong-Doing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 111. Feinberg also argues (pp. 111–12) that American patriotism is a case of what I am calling ‘liberal patriotism’.

Moreover, one might question whether non-liberal patriotism is really likely to be instrumental to the preservation of a free society. Consider two examples. In the first, the common enterprise that animates citizens' patriotic zeal is the fight against communism. Such a patriotism might not only fail to prevent the suppression of many civil liberties, or attacks on the lives and liberties of citizens of other countries, it may positively encourage them if victory against communism seems to be at stake. To that extent it is hardly instrumental to the maintenance of liberty. In the second, non-liberal patriotism does a further disservice to the preservation of liberty by discouraging people from transferring their loyalty and support to institutions which are better equipped than their own political institutions to confront threats to their liberties. For instance, if Britons were less attached to their political traditions and institutions, then they might be more inclined to identify with European institutions, international trade unions, the UN, or groups such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace. It is conceivable that identification with these institutions would enhance their effectiveness, allowing them to secure British liberties more successfully than present arrangements.

It might seem unfair to cite such isolated examples against non-liberal patriotism since it is possible that examples might be produced against liberal patriotism as well. But there is a general point that these examples are meant to illustrate. Because the object of their allegiance is defined in terms of liberty, liberal patriots respond to the suppression of liberties with a sense of outrage, and to opportunities to secure liberty further with a sense of eagerness. Provided that various collective action problems can be overcome, these responses should lead them to act in ways (e.g. voting, demonstrating, etc.) that help to establish and maintain a free society. By contrast, with non-liberal patriotism, the causal mechanism linking citizen motivation with the preservation of a free society remains unclear, since the object of citizen allegiance differs from the result that republicans claim patriotism will achieve (the maintenance of a free society). The suppression of liberties and opportunities to enhance the security of liberty are not in themselves motivating for non-liberal patriots: they do not react to these situations with the same sense of outrage or eagerness as liberal patriots.

5. PATRIOTISM, NEUTRALITY AND JUSTICE

I now want to consider a final reformulation of the republican critique of contractarian liberalism. The instrumental republican might respond to my treatment of non-liberal patriotism with the following argument. It might be true that non-liberal patriotism is not necessary for the maintenance of liberty, and that under some circumstances it may even be counter-productive in this respect. But it is nevertheless the case that in certain societies (perhaps not all) a significant proportion of citizens do, as a matter of fact, strongly identify with goals such as the maintenance of culture and language, the preservation of traditions and customs, and so forth. In such societies, it is vital that the state do what it can to preserve and promote the culture and traditions in question,

for, if it does not, and there is an erosion of culture and traditions, then there may well be a backlash against the state which would endanger the free institutions that it embraces.

This way of formulating the republican objection brings me to the second issue arising from Taylor's discussion of republicanism that might divide liberals and republicans – the issue of neutrality. Towards the end of his article, Taylor argues that taking seriously the republican analysis of the conditions of the viability of a free society might, in the context of some societies, force liberals to abandon their doctrine that the state must be neutral on the question of the good life.⁵⁶ If the republican analysis is correct, then the state cannot be neutral between patriots and non-patriots or between those who value political participation and those who do not. Nor can it be neutral about the maintenance and flourishing of the specific historical institutions, culture and traditions that are an integral part of citizens' patriotic allegiance. A liberal regime that was neutral in these respects would, according to Taylor, be self-undermining.

Taylor illustrates this apparent conflict between neutrality and the viability of a liberal society by referring to the continuing controversy about language and culture in Quebec:

A society like Quebec cannot but be dedicated to the defense and promotion of French culture and language, even if this involves some restriction on individual freedoms. It cannot make cultural-linguistic orientation a matter of indifference. A government that could ignore this requirement would either not be responding to the majority will, or would reflect a society so deeply demoralized as to be close to dissolution as a viable pole of patriotic allegiance. In either case, the prospects for liberal democracy would not be rosy.⁵⁷

Although the passage is not without ambiguity, Taylor seems to be arguing for the cultural-linguistic policies in question by warning that liberal democracy might collapse if they are not adopted. He goes on to conclude that these reflections about the maintenance of liberty in a society like Quebec should lead us to raise serious questions about the contractarian model of liberalism. Contractarian liberalism breaks down because it tries *both* to maintain a commitment to neutrality *and* to ensure its own survival. In a society like Quebec, these objectives pull in opposite directions: the only way to guarantee the survival of liberal institutions is to abandon neutrality.⁵⁸

How should liberals respond to this formulation of the instrumental republican critique? I think two points need making in response to Taylor's argument. The first is that liberals who affirm a doctrine of neutrality (like Rawls) do not generally understand that doctrine in the way that Taylor's criticism implies. The second is that, even putting aside this misconstrual of the notion of neutrality, at best Taylor's example shows that it would be expedient

⁵⁶ Taylor, 'Cross-Purposes', pp. 176–7, 181–2.

⁵⁷ Taylor, 'Cross-Purposes', p. 182.

⁵⁸ Taylor, 'Cross-Purposes', p. 182.

for liberals not to insist on neutrality in this case; it does not show that neutrality is not a requirement of justice (which is essentially what liberals like Rawls maintain). Let me try to elaborate on these claims further.

The first point can be made quite quickly. The problem with Taylor's argument as it stands is that it assumes a conception of neutrality which liberals reject. It assumes a success or consequentialist view of neutrality, whereas, in fact, liberals typically favour a reasons-for-action or justification-based view. They are concerned that the reasons justifying their policies should not appeal to the truth or superior value of any particular conception of the good.⁵⁹ Taylor's proposed republican policy of promoting a particular culture and language does not appeal to their superior value but only to their property of contributing to the preservation of liberty; thus there is no departure from neutrality properly understood.

Nevertheless, I think Taylor is right to suggest that liberals would be concerned about the republican defence he offers of the policy in question. The problem is not with neutrality but with the restriction of liberties and denial of opportunities which the policy entails for members of the minority culture. If liberals could be convinced that the protection of a cultural-linguistic framework is a matter of justice, then they might be willing to endorse the policy in spite of these implications. But I think they would reject Taylor's *republican argument* for the policy in question.

This brings me to the second response I want to make to Taylor's argument. Taylor's scenario is one in which a group of people are likely to bring about the collapse of liberal democracy unless the government adopts the policies which they favour. Whether this collapse is triggered by widespread apathy, or by support for anti-democratic groups and parties, it clearly involves individuals failing to support the institutions of liberal democracy and, to this extent, failing to fulfil their duties as citizens. For this reason, I think, someone like Rawls would place Taylor's scenario in the domain of what he calls partial compliance theory: it arises only because of the ineffective sense of justice of certain members of the community. The doctrine of neutrality, by contrast, belongs to full compliance theory.⁶⁰ For someone like Rawls, then, Taylor's objection fails because it illicitly presents as a counter-example to a full compliance doctrine a situation of partial compliance. At the very least, Taylor owes us an explanation of why Rawls's distinction between full and partial compliance theories of justice ought to be rejected.

Taylor's argument has a certain intuitive pull because we think that anyway the preservation of language and culture is an important objective, perhaps even

⁵⁹ See Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 114–15, for a good discussion of this distinction. Rawls explicitly endorses the 'reasons-for-action' conception of neutrality in *Political Liberalism*, Lecture V, Section 5.

⁶⁰ For the distinction between full and partial compliance, see Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 245–8.

a matter of justice.⁶¹ This may well be so. But to see that the republican argument adds nothing to the justice of the proposals, imagine the analogous argument in the case of a racist majority. Perhaps this majority regards some group of recent immigrants as taking their jobs away and will become disenchanted with liberal politics if the political system does not respond to their demands for special treatment. It could conceivably be prudent, from the point of view of the preservation of liberty, to give in to their demands, but we surely do not think that this is a good argument for the justice of the resulting arrangements. This would be to confuse justice with appeasement.⁶² As far as justice is concerned, liberals are correct in insisting on the primacy of rights, and republicanism is an unappealing view to the extent that it dissents.

6. CONCLUSION

This article has argued that instrumental republicanism is caught in a dilemma. To the extent that it differs from liberalism, by recommending the appeasement of injustices, or by favouring a non-liberal form of patriotism, it is a view which liberals should reject. But, in so far as it agrees with liberalism about these issues, and thereby gains in plausibility, it ceases to offer a distinct alternative to the liberal view of citizenship and civic virtue and ends up attacking a straw man.

I conclude that if liberalism is guilty of ignoring the goods of citizenship and public service, then it is not for the reasons suggested by the instrumental republican account. And, if republicans are right to think that our neglect of citizenship puts at risk the liberties which we enjoy (and I suspect they might be), then this is not in virtue of the fact that we live in liberal societies.

⁶¹ For an interesting attempt to develop a theoretical framework which can accommodate these kinds of considerations in a liberal theory of justice, see Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), especially chaps. 7–9. See also Charles Taylor's own discussion in 'Shared and Divergent Values', in *Reconciling the Solitudes* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), pp. 155–86, especially pp. 175–6.

⁶² This point is nicely made by Joseph Carens, 'Immigration and the Welfare State', in Amy Gutmann, ed., *Democracy and the Welfare State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 229. As Carens puts it in discussing the possibility of a 'backlash' against permissive immigration policies, it is 'surely important ... to distinguish between a necessary tactical concession to a deep-seated and powerful prejudice and a legitimate defense of an important and honourable value'.