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Republicanism and Socialism

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Republicanism

Republicanism is the tradition of Rome, the Renaissance and the English, American (& French) Revolutions,

It emphasizes an ideal of the undominated Person amongst-persons.

And it supports a distinctive tradition of the protective but undominating state.

Socialism 1

Socialism is the tradition of politics associated with industrial workers.

The key idea is that industrial workers may be subject to wage-slavery.

This extends to other workers, to women, and to those generally marginalized.

Socialism in this sense is progressive.

Socialism 2

What remedies does socialism support?

These vary, depending on the empirical analysis of the problem that is adopted.

Communist version: the means of production must be publicly owned.

Social-democrat: the operation of the economy must be socially regulated.

Socialism 3

Thus socialism is characterized by:

1. The socialist complaint. Workplace and other subjection can be enslaving.
2. The socialist remedy. The state has to play a role in liberating the subjected.

How does republicanism relate to each?

The complaint 1

The description of industrial workers as wage-slaves is republican in origin.

Although a centerpiece of European socialism, it occurs in US in early C19.

This is significant and explains the tight link between the traditions.

The complaint 2

Republican freedom —> same protection against the control of others, on the same basis & in the same choices.

Protection against the control of others is not just protection against interference.

I control you in using non-deliberative means to increase the probability that you will choose to my taste or my ideals.

The complaint 3

Such control may involve:

1. interference by blocks, burdens or deception as to blocks and burdens;
2. invigilation with a view to interference on a need-for-action basis;
3. inhibition and self-censorship elicited by perception of invigilation.

The complaint 4

And so protection against such control requires a balance of power.

The law and culture must provide the endangered with countervailing powers.

These may come about under the law, via restrictions on the endangering or resources for the endangered.

And/or via a culture of solidarity.

The complaint 5

The power of employers can clearly give them hostile control over workers.

And so it can deny them the full enjoyment of republican freedom.

Thus the socialist complaint of wage slavery bears a republican articulation.

This is unsurprising, since the metaphor of slavery is inherently republican.

The complaint 6

If freedom is cast as non-interference, the complaint cannot be articulated this way.

Suppose employers do not interfere but exercise control via invigilation/inhibition.

In this case there is no violation of freedom as non-interference.

Thus republicanism serves socialism well, where the liberal tradition does not.

The remedy 1

Not only is republicanism capable of registering the socialist complaint.

It can also endorse, in principle, the socialist, state-based remedy.

This point is best introduced by seeing how the other tradition fails here too.

The remedy 2

Suppose that freedom requires non interference, not non-domination.

In that case every coercive act of the state is, as such, hostile to freedom.

It takes away from freedom in what it does, even if it does more good than harm.

Thus the state should be recruited for any cause only in the very last resort.

The remedy 3

Things look very different if freedom is construed as non-domination.

For interference will not be dominating if it is controlled ultimately by the interferee.

Ulysses's sailors don't dominate but interfere.

So the state might restrict domination in the workplace without dominating itself.

Thus it might provide the desired remedy.

The remedy 4

When will the state not dominate?

When it is subject to equally shared control on the part of an inclusive citizenry.

It will always interfere in people's lives but it will do so, subject to their equal control.

But when will the state be subject in this way to the equally shared control of all?

The remedy 5

When it is forced to advance:
the common good, as commonly perceived
and authorized.

This perceived, authorized good will impose
fixtures of common acceptance; paradigms of
common pride and shame; terms of common
deliberation.

The remedy 6

Take the US today.

The fixtures include the constitution, the federation, accepted legal judgments...

The paradigms include slavery, civil rights, freedom of speech...

The terms of deliberation valorize meritocracy, democracy, disaster relief...

The remedy 6

Such perceived, authorized constraints limit government on an evolving basis.

And they do so within a process of popular vigilance, discussion and contestation.

They ensure that government has to outlaw various policies and to break would-be ties on the basis of suitable procedures.

They mean that government is not 'arbitrary'.

The remedy 7

Suppose that there is a good case to be made for the socialist complaint.

In that case, arguably, the terms of common deliberation will support the remedy.

And so that remedy may be pursued by the state without any domination occurring.

Socialism will be legitimate.

Conclusion

Understood in this way, socialism is not an imposition on the rich by the poor, in Aristotle's phrasing of the danger.

It is an instance of the rule of all by all, under common terms of association.

And it is an instance of an intervention by the state that belongs in a larger package.

It is not factional politics.