

Liberty, Strict Equality and Positional Goods

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Abstract

This thesis argues for a view that I call “strict egalitarianism” as a prerequisite for the non-domination and the collective liberty of all citizens. It is argued that the goal of collective liberty could not be secured for all in societies with extensive positional inequality. Our rights would violate the constraint of joint “compossibility”. Absent a collectively imposed solution to the problem of co-ordination, positional goods see everyone lose out from wasteful social competition. Strict egalitarianism could prevent this waste, by acting as the collectively imposed solution to the problem of positional competition. This thesis considers and rejects arguments given in favour of positional competition: arguments that thick economic liberty is paramount for liberty; that competition increases prosperity overall; that positional competition is optional and not strictly required as anyone can “opt out” if they choose. By contrast, it is argued that strict egalitarianism would free us from living in a constant state of competition for greater economic wealth, which causes people to lose focus of things that would create a more fulfilling life and frees us from domination.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Introduction

Rousseau (1762: 19) argued that prior to the inception of civil society humans were perfectly free beings with an “unlimited right to anything which [tempted them] and which [they were] able to attain”. This meant humans were free. They were able to do and have whatever they were physically able to do and have, with an abundance of resources to be shared by all, unrepressed by the societal structures that are now in place and as such, all were able to live within a complete state of liberty. Even though the inception of civil society has removed this perfect state of freedom, the idea of liberty has always been a part of human nature and so to no longer value liberty as part of being a human could be said to “renounce being [a human], to surrender the rights of humanity and even its duties” (Rousseau, 1762: 10). We were all – originally – free beings. Freedom entails the ability to choose for yourself how you wish to act and live. If one is forced to act or live in a particular way, then they are not free. They are simply acting as they are forced, which, in turn, eliminates their ability to act according to their will and as such, eliminates their humanity.

With that said, there are conflicting positions on what liberty actually is, which stems from liberty being “endlessly defined and redefined to suit divergent ideological needs” (Djin, 2011: 182). The purpose of this thesis is to consider and reject capitalist notions of liberty and instead, argue for an egalitarian conception of liberty, which frees us from domination, false needs and positional competition, thereby enabling all within society collectively to experience liberty.

The first part of the thesis examines Phillip Pettit’s (2012) conception of liberty as non-domination, which consists in the notion that one lacks liberty when they are subjected to another person’s will and that person has the power to arbitrarily interfere with their choices. The second part of the thesis examines John Tomasi’s (2012: xxi) conception of liberty as “free market fairness”, which, he argues, considers both economic liberty and social justice concerns as important: as such, it provides us with a notion of liberty that can be considered as a hybrid, respecting all of our rights equally. However, I argue that Tomasi is wrong as his conception of liberty allows for extensive inequalities of economic wealth, which undermine

the fair value of political liberty. Thirdly, this thesis examines the role played by positionality in capitalist societies. It argues that positional competition is collectively self-defeating, causing domination, social anxiety and false beliefs about what it means to live a flourishing life. Fourth and finally, this thesis examines the relationship between equality and liberty, and argues that inequality negatively impacts the wellbeing of society, whereas equality ensures all can experience liberty to an equal degree. To conclude, I argue that strict equality is intrinsic to liberty because without it, domination is present and positional goods undermine the fair value of political liberty for all.

Chapter 1: Pettit on Liberty as Non-Domination

Phillip Pettit has controversially defended what he calls a “third” conception of liberty as not being dominated by another. Freedom as non-domination consists in a person lacking freedom when he or she is subjected to another person’s will, where that person has the power to arbitrarily interfere with and hinder another’s choices. This person need not actually interfere in a person’s choices, all that matters is they have the ability to interfere “to the extent that [they] have power over, uncontrolled by you, of interfering in your choices” (Pettit, 2012: 62). Therefore, freedom as non-domination revolves around relations of power, rather than actual interference in a person’s life, in much the same way as a master and a slave, whereby “even if the slave’s master proves to be entirely benign and permissive, he or she continues to dominate the slave” (Pettit, 1997: 32). This means that even if a person is able to do and act as they please, they are still subjected to their master’s will, which allows them to have this liberty. This is because the master can change their mind at any point in time and has the ability to take away this person’s liberty, which, in turn, means that they are relying on the goodwill of another. As such, when domination is present, even if a person is able to do and act as they please, the master holds all the power over the other person’s liberty and so this is not really liberty. Therefore, Pettit argues that non-domination is a prerequisite for liberty within society, because unless we are free from domination, we could not be said to truly experience liberty. Pettit puts the point in terms of modal robustness: the free person is not only free from interference in the actual circumstances, but in the relevant range of “nearby” counterfactual circumstances.

Pettit (2012: 62-63) also argues that even if one person does not wish to have the “power of interference” over any other person, for example by “persuading [themselves] that it is wrong to interfere in [another person’s] choice”, if they are in a position where they have “asymmetrical power”, then they continue to dominate those whom they have more power than, for they still have the capacity to interfere in their choices and as such, those who lack power remain subjected to the more powerful person’s will. Therefore, those with power are unable to self-regulate or free another person through simply allowing them to do as they wish. This is because their capacity to interfere places them in a position of domination, where

they can interfere if they so choose, and the question of whether or not they choose to interfere, ought not be asked of them. As such, Pettit (2012: 63) argues that domination “can only be contained by external checks that remove or replace the interference option or put it cognitively off the menu”, thereby removing a person’s capacity to interfere with any other, which, in turn, provides a powerful safeguard against domination, by not only ensuring that a person is free to choose, but also that their choices do not depend on another person’s goodwill.

To ensure that a person has freedom of choice, Pettit (2012: 69) explains that not only ought we “guard against [a person’s] choice being subject to the will of another”, but also a person must have access to the necessary resources to facilitate their choices. This is because if one lacks the necessary resources to facilitate their choice, then they will lack the capacity to exercise freedom of choice. However, in order to ensure that a person’s freedom of choice is facilitated, resources may have to be taken from others to ensure that those who lack resources are also able to act according to their choices. However, as argued by Pettit (2012: 70), within non-domination resources could not be given in a charitable manner because then “you have to depend on the goodwill of another for getting the resources”, which, in turn, subjects you to their will. This point is endorsed by Brecher (2017: 100) who notes that since “charity is not morally required; it cannot avoid being a problem for the recipient of charity. Why? Because people receiving charity are thereby put into a position of dependency”. In order to avoid this dependence on others, Pettit (2012: 70) suggests that by giving people “claims under general rules to the resources needed”, people would have an entitlement to the resources they receive and as such they would not depend on the goodwill of others. Therefore, resources would have to be distributed by a state like entity that could ensure people are given the resources they need in order to exercise freedom of choice without domination. This state is under our collective democratic control: the recipient of principled entitlements is not, therefore, dominated by any specific other, nor by the people as a collective. In the background here is the distinctive republican thought that a just regime of law is freedom enabling and not a constraint on liberty at all.

However, gaining the resources required to enact freedom of choice without subservience to the goodwill of others would require a state like entity to redistribute

resources from those who have a greater number of resources and share them amongst those with fewer resources. Libertarians, such as Nozick (1974: 33), argue against redistribution of resources, on the grounds that: "There are only individual people, different individual people, with their own individual lives. Using one of these people for the benefit of others uses him and benefits the others. Nothing more...". Ensuring that all are able to have access to the necessary resources for the freedom to exercise choice through redistribution would directly interfere with and therefore impinge on the individual liberty of people who, some would argue, have no reason to sacrifice their own resources for the sake of others. Moreover, a libertarian such as Nozick could suggest that, if the state has the power to take from individual members of society without their permission, then this places the state itself in a position where it is able to coerce and dominate individuals within society. However, this returns to the issue of when we can collectively bind each other through law in a way that does not threaten our freedom.

Pettit (2012: 149) recognises this problem and notes that "freedom as non-interference cannot support any plausible conception of [state] legitimacy", taking this point, however, to be a critique of libertarianism. This is because, if we are to have a state, then some level of state interference is necessary, as not only do we need to establish laws that protect individuals from domination and thereby coerce people through the enforcement of such laws, but we also need to have a provision of resources for people to exercise freedom of choice. All we need, to secure recognition of this point from the libertarian, is the point that even she is committed to her list of basic liberties being realised simultaneously for all. From this minimal requirement, Pettit thinks we can force the acknowledgement that some resources that would need to be taken from the more well favoured and redistributed so that other people's choices are not limited to an unacceptable degree. Therefore, it could be argued that even though people may experience a degree of interference, non-interference is not a guarantor of liberty, but rather, some degree of interference by the state is necessary for ensuring that more than just a few are able to experience liberation from domination and exercise freedom of choice. As such, where non-interference fails to give a state legitimacy, Pettit's argument for non-domination allows for state legitimacy, as this kind of interference is not domination. Indeed, properly understood, if the republican puts in place a regime of just laws, they do not interfere with the actions of others at all.

To illustrate how non-domination can exist without interference, Pettit (2012: 152) gives the example of a person who wants to drink alcohol less often and so gives their friend “the key to the alcohol cupboard with instructions not to heed a request for the key except at 24 hours’ notice” as a means to help control their drinking. In this way they have consented to being refused their key and as such, have their freedom interfered with. However, this interference is through their own will and is not, therefore, a form of domination because of its primary source. Therefore, Pettit (2012: 153) argues, by analogy, that:

If the people governed by a state control the interference practised by government – if they control the laws imposed, the policies pursued, the taxes levied – then they may not suffer domination at the hands of their rulers and may continue to enjoy their freedom in relation to the state.

This is because when the people are the joint and collective authors of the state’s laws and policies, they have decided how the state shall operate and as such, the people are being governed by their own will. This, in turn, gives the state the legitimacy it needs to enforce laws and collect taxes, which may lead to what seem to be “interference and coercion” from a libertarian perspective, but which does not, in fact, dominate the people. We can view these cases as ones of “self-binding”; collectively authored laws bind all of us, jointly and severally, in a way that is expressive of our liberty.

According to Pettit (2012: 153) the legitimacy of state control comes from power being “equally shared amongst citizens [...without] any evidence of an alien will at work in their lives”. That is to say, it is the people themselves who decide how they shall be governed, through a system of popular control, in which each citizen is given “equal share in [the] system” (Pettit, 2012: 168), so as to not be able to feel hard done by if decisions were to go against their personal preferences. Therefore, the people need to be involved in the popular control of government because “if they have little or no part in the exercise of that control; the interference of government will continue in that case to be imposed on them by an alien will” (Pettit, 2012: 167). However, even if every person plays an active role in trying to influence government, popular control still has its problems, an example of which being Mill’s (1859: 9) “tyranny of the majority”, in which the minority come to be ruled by popular

opinion, unable to live according to their own ideals and desires, but rather, are chained to, and unable to escape from, the will of the majority, which imposes itself upon the minority.

Pettit (2012: 167) recognises this problem and therefore stipulates three conditions “that popular control of government must satisfy if it is to guard against the domination of the state”. The first condition is that “it should be individualised appropriately, giving each an equal share in the control of government”. This is important because it ensures that every person has an equal opportunity to influence the direction of government and so no person is placed under the domination of any other individual, as all have equal influence.

The second condition is that “it must also count as being robust over changes in the will of controlled government, or indeed of any party other than the controlling people” (Pettit, 2012: 167). This means that the government must show its non-dominance by its willingness to change its practices in line with the consensus of those it governs. Moreover, this willingness to change ought not to be driven by the goodwill of the government, but rather, it ought to be “grounded in the actual or perceived potential for widespread resistance – people’s presumptive power of rebellion” (Pettit, 2012: 173). This is because relying on the goodwill of the government allows for domination of the people by the government, in much the same way as the benevolent master who allows their slave to have ever greater freedoms but is still subjected to their master’s will. Whereas, the ability to resist the government removes its ability to act against the will of the people, through fear of an uprising and as such, presents us with a more robust way of keeping the government’s powers in check.

The third, and final, condition is that the government must be “efficacious in the sense of being intuitively sufficient to guard [...] people against having to see the coercion of the state as the work of an alien will” (Pettit, 2012: 167). This would ensure that even when the popular control of government has gone against an individual’s preference, this can only be thought of as “tough luck [...] It was not the dominating will, as it would, for example, under a colonial administration” (Pettit, 2012: 177). Therefore, these three stipulations would make it so individuals would “not have a reason to feel resentment at how the state performs” (Pettit, 2012: 177), as every person would have had an equal opportunity to play a part in the direction of government.

However, Pettit (2012: 212) acknowledges that there may be cases when individuals can rightfully feel resentment about popular control that continually goes against their preferences, possibly due to their “creed or colour, race or sexual orientation”. This is the problem of so called “sticky minorities”: if the same identifiable group continually loses out it may not be enough to say that they have repeatedly been subject to “tough luck”. Instead, it may be the case that those in the minority will not have a fair chance within a system of popular control due to factors over which they have no control. As such, Pettit (2012: 214) argues that there ought to be a system of “individualised contestation” in place that allows those who feel marginalised to challenge the status quo through hearings that give them the opportunity to “make the case for why majority voting on those issues ensures that they do not share equally with others in controlling for the direction taken by government”. This would ensure that the minority are treated with greater fairness and feel less dominated by the majority.

It could, however, be argued that the ability to challenge the popular consensus undermines Pettit’s own notion of popular control, as it gives those who are in the minority the ability to contest majority rule. In addition, there may be those who share the same background as the majority and yet are also still politically in the minority. To say these people ought to simply accept this as “tough luck” and those from minority backgrounds ought to be able to challenge the popular consensus could be said to undermine the views of those who do not share the popular opinion, whilst not differing racially or sexually, as noted by McCormick (2011: 152), “Pettit often seems to suggest that only individuals and minorities need recourse to contestatory practices”, even though there may be cases when a larger group feel the need to contest the policy maker’s decisions.

Therefore, one could suggest that if we are to have a society in which popular control is able to be challenged, then the ability to challenge the status quo ought to be available to every person regardless of their background. This point is endorsed by Rawls (1971: 197), who notes that if we are to have restrictions that are in place to protect the minority, then these same restrictions must “apply to everyone and that the constraints introduced are likely over time to fall evenly upon all sectors of society”. As such, all ought to be able to challenge majority rule, regardless of whether or not they are considered to be from a minority.

However, if the ability to challenge popular control is opened up on such a large scale, then the amount of challenges may be unworkable. Therefore, it may be the case that challenges to popular control would have to be reserved for those who are predisposed to vote differently to the majority, as this would at least guard against a discriminatory version of popular control.

With that said, Pettit (2012: 215) appears rather cautious about the dangers of popular control and states that “to canonize majority rule – to give it sacred unquestionable status – would be to deny the possibility of recursion and, inevitably, the possibility of reforming the system itself”. This is because, it may be the case that the majority do not act in the interest of their fellows. Without the ability to contest failing policies or practices that hurt the minority, societal development may be hindered, which means once a policy has been decided upon, the matter will be closed and always in favour of the majority. Moreover, Pettit (2012: 209) argues that the “direction imposed must be equally acceptable to all”, which means that every person must feel as if their influence has made a difference and that they too played a part in shaping the direction of government. To illustrate this point, Pettit (2012: 209) gives the example of “a group of individuals pushing on a giant billiard ball”. Obviously, the greater the number of people pushing in a certain direction the more it will follow those people’s willed trajectory. Although, those who push in a different direction will still have an impact on the general direction, even if only slightly. Such an illustration vividly shows how democracy can work according to the peoples’ wills. However, Pettit’s argument for contestatory practices could be said to undermine the direction of the billiard ball, or the government, even though all had some impact on its trajectory and as such, may undermine the will of the people. Moreover, as noted by Rawls (1971: 197):

Whenever the constitution limits the scope and authority of majorities, either by requiring a greater plurality for certain types of measures, or by a bill of rights restricting the powers of the legislature, and the like, equal political liberty is less extensive.

As such, limiting the power of the majority within the democratic process could be said to undermine equal political liberty, as those who are in the minority may see their individual

votes carrying more weight than the individual votes of those in the majority and as such can be viewed as having greater individual value.

In response, Pettit might argue that we need to separate two issues: whether or not there is likely to be a problem posed by sticky minorities, and the institutional response to that, and the range of those institutions. If the “tough luck” test seems unsatisfactory because some identifiable group repeatedly finds its members subject to so-called “tough luck” then we need an institutional remedy to that problem. However, that remedy is presumably open to all citizens seeking redress against majoritarian decisions that go against them.

Pettit’s position can be contrasted with Rousseau’s (1762: 18) argument that the general will, or will of the majority, ought to have unquestionable status and “whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be constrained to do so by the whole body; which means nothing else than that he shall be forced to be free”. This conception of control would give majority rule and not allow for those who feel powerless to contest policies that they feel unfairly penalise them. Pettit (2012: 209) argues against this notion of control and states that “collective control would be consistent with the domination of individuals who fail to go along with the collectively expressed views and views of the group”. This means that Rousseau’s ideal removes the ability for minorities to contest laws and policies that they feel to be unfair, because “far from every law being a fair target for civic critique and challenge, each comes draped in an authority and majesty that brooks no individual opposition” (Pettit, 2012: 15). Hence, majority rule is absolute and as such, those in the minority would be unable to experience freedom as non-domination. Therefore, Pettit argues that Rousseau’s conception of democracy is not sufficient for freedom as it allows for domination by the majority.

However, in light of this point, it could be argued that Pettit is not a democrat as he fears the overall will of the people having excessive control equivalent to tyranny. This point has been put forward by McCormick (2011: 148), who notes that “[Pettit] considers the idea that majority rule accurately approximates popular will to be a threat, perhaps even the greatest threat, to liberty within democracies”. As such, rather than entrusting policy making to the general public, Pettit instead seeks to entrust “policy making to wise, impartial and common good-loving elites who speak for the people, rather than entrusting it to the people

themselves” (McCormick, 2011: 156), which, in turn, takes power away from the people and places it into the hands of a few. However, McCormick gives no evidence that Pettit is opposed to decision by majority vote per se, with additional safeguards.

In defence of McCormick, it could be argued that Pettit is naïve about history, as republics have often become empires, which dominate those they perceive as inferior. Consider, for example, America’s treatment of Japan after the Pacific War, which, whilst considered to be a republic, “left [Japan] few options other than uneasily placing itself within the domain of the American empire” (Furuya, 2015: 22), which, in turn, allowed for domination to permeate. Of course, this could be avoided by making citizenship universal, thereby making every citizen non-dominated. However, power would still be within the hands of the few, unless the general will were to encompass the democratic system.

Moreover, even though there may be instances where it could be argued democracy leads to a tyrannical majority, the wisdom that comes from the collective opinions of the majority is generally thought to outweigh any errors in judgements that may occur. For example, within the jury system we depend on the wisdom of the crowd to come to a collective unanimous decision, even though jurors are not experts in the cases they are judging, we accept the jury’s decisions because, in the vast majority of cases, they give us a reliable and correct judgement. However, with regards to non-domination, if a certain type of person is more likely to be judged unfairly, due to their “creed or colour, race or sexual orientation” (Pettit, 2012: 212) then an appeal process ought to be in place. To illustrate this point, consider the racial bias that juries may have due to stereotypes that exist within society: “Black people look much the same, do not respect the law and are sexually promiscuous; Muslims are terrorists or terrorist sympathizers; Jews are greedy; Asians are devious liars” (Daly and Pattenden, 2005: 681). Such stereotypes lead to the accused not having fair trials, which, if proven, may give them the right to appeal a jury’s verdict. This point is supported by Gross, Possley and Stephens (2017: 2), who note that “many of the convictions of African-American murder exonerees were affected by a wide range of types of racial discrimination, from unconscious bias and institutional discrimination to explicit racism”. As such, even in cases where the wisdom of the crowd is seen as paramount, the right to appeal still exists for those who may have been treated unfairly, as their can exist

systemic bias and prejudice against certain groups of people. Therefore, it could be argued, the right of appeal ought to also exist within a democratic society over policies that may unfairly penalise those in minority groups.

However, Pettit argues that non-domination consists in the notion that others ought not be able to arbitrarily interfere with another person's choices. Rousseau's conception of a general will, however, does not give the majority the power to arbitrarily interfere with another person's choices, but rather, has as its core that every member of the collective is equal and will make decisions based on the collective interest of all concerned:

Each giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody; and as there is not one associate over whom we do not acquire the same rights which we concede to him over ourselves, we gain the equivalent of all that we lose, and more power to preserve what we have (Rousseau, 1762: 15).

There may be an equivocation here between sovereignty and democracy. Sovereignty may well be, of its very nature, a unity. However, the mechanisms of democracy are open to interpretation by republican institutional design and may well involve such "divisions" as the separation of powers or constitutional checks on majority rule. As such, Rousseau's conception of an unquestionable general will does not penalise any who partake in this form of democracy, as that which benefits one benefits all and that which harms one person, harms every person. Therefore, the general will acts for the good of the whole and as such, does not consist of harmful or arbitrary inference through the will of the majority. This, in turn, frees people from those who may wish to do them harm and from tyrannous majorities, as every person acts with every other person's interests in mind. However, it is an open question whether an uncontentious premise – that sovereign power be unitary and undivided – is leading to more controversial conclusions, namely, that democracy ought to be direct and grounded on unanimity. Pettit clearly thinks that this would be a non sequitur.

It could be argued that Rousseau's conception of the general will, in which we act for every citizen's interest, is an ideal and as such would not work in practice. This is because people may choose policies that are beneficial to themselves only, as noted by Lowe (1999:

65) “there is no reason for individuals to feel responsible for the manner in which their beliefs and behaviour contribute to generating a social context for others”. In capitalist societies this kind of behaviour towards one another is evident. In this thesis I will focus, in particular, on the fact that many within society endlessly compete for positional goods and services, by expending greater time, effort and finances to maintain or improve their relative position (Hirsch, 1976). As such, they do not act for the interest of all, but rather act in ways that they perceive to be of their own best interest, even though these actions are collectively self-defeating.

Consider Robert Frank’s (2011) example of interview candidates at an investment bank who want to be perceived to be wearing, not just an expensive suit, but the most expensive suit. Each of the candidates acts according to their own interests and so each tries to expend greater resources than the other, but no person is in any better of a position than they would have been otherwise, and all lose out from the higher level of expenditure. However, this also shows that if people were to act in ways that consider every participant’s interests on equal terms with their own, all could be in a better off position, as they would not have unnecessarily expended more than needed. However, there is no single source of authority that could move all of the interviewees from a sub-optimal equilibrium to an optimal equilibrium and, in any case, there is none whose authority is binding on the “participants”.

For each person to consider their fellows’ interests on equal terms with their own a system of equality is paramount. This is because if we had an equal society, people would be able to act as a collective, as that which benefitted one person would benefit all. Moreover, within a society where we see each other as equals, we also able to see each other “as co-operators rather than competitors” (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010: 57), who are there for each other and wish to help one another. By contrast, high levels of inequality cause great social divides: “We tend to choose our friends from among our near equals and have little to do with those much richer or much poorer” (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010: 51). As such, it could be argued, when people act for self-interested reasons, they do so because they are unable to feel any sort of connection with others in society. Moreover, even when it comes to those who are their equals, because we live in a positional society, people act for their own

advancement, rather than the advancement of the collective. This need not be selfishness: a person who seeks to advantage their own children, perhaps by moving closer to a prestigious school, is positionally competing as a matter of what Hirsch calls a “defensive necessity”.

As such, a major factor in people’s choices to act in their own interest is because people see their fellow citizens as competitors. However, if all were equal, all could feel “more secure, [...with] less to worry about, they see others as co-operators rather than competitors” (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010: 57). Thus, equality would ensure that Rousseau’s conception of a sovereign general will, where all act for one another, could work in practise, as all would be able to act for the interest of each other, without the anxiety or fear of losing their place or feeling inferior to their fellows. As such, the risk of domination by the majority becomes less apparent. For the remainder of this thesis I will focus on the relationship between this republican conception of the general will and its implication for equality in the context of a capitalist society. I will begin my discussion with a philosopher who is optimistic that liberty and justice can be secured within a society with a capitalist economy.

Chapter 2: Tomasi on Robust Economic Liberty

John Tomasi (2012: xxi) supports a conception of liberty he refers to as “free market fairness” which, he argues, unlike libertarian and high liberal thought, consists of both economic liberty and social justice. He argues for this distinctive position on the basis that libertarians conceive of private economic liberties and property rights as moral absolutes and as such the number of hours we choose to work, what we earn, and how we choose to use our resources is of nobody’s concern other than our own. Therefore, according to libertarians no government or powerful entity ought to be able to interfere with a person’s labour or earnings. For example, Nozick (1974: ix) argued that state redistribution of wealth through taxation would “violate a person’s rights not to be forced to do certain things” and in doing so would treat one person merely as a means to another person’s ends and people ought not be “sacrificed or used for the achieving of other ends without their consent. Individuals are inviolable” (Nozick, 1974: 31).

By contrast, high liberals are primarily concerned with social justice based on principles of equality, thereby enabling each of us to live equally free lives, in which we can all share in prosperity, with inequalities in wealth only justified insofar as they serve to raise the position of the least well favoured in society (Rawls, 1971). Therefore, our economic liberties would have to be regulated and wealth redistributed, which could be said to limit the freedom of the more well favoured within society. Tomasi (2012: xxv) aims at creating a hybrid of both libertarian and high liberal thought by combining “a concern for private individual economic liberty with a commitment to social justice”. In this chapter, I firstly contrast Tomasi’s conception of liberty with libertarian thought. Secondly, I contrast Tomasi’s conception of liberty with high liberal thought. Thirdly, I explore Tomasi’s conception of “free market fairness”. Finally, I argue that Tomasi’s conception does not lead to liberty within society as wealth accumulates at the top, which creates inequalities of power, diminishing the liberty of those who have less. Positionality is central to how this process works.

Tomasi’s (2012: 22) conception of free market fairness argues for the idea of “thick economic liberty”: the ability to own, work, buy and sell in whatever way one chooses. This is

because thick economic liberty allows for self-authorship of one's life, as it places economic decisions into the hands of the individual and as such, gives them the freedom to decide how much they wish to save for their retirement, how much they wish to spend on their children's education and a range of other economic choices that shape a person's life. Even though such choices may expose people to risks that may leave them worse-off, "by that very fact offers them the chance for accomplishments genuinely their own" (Tomasi, 2012: xiii). As such, being able to come to decisions that lead to your own success or failures is part of what it means to live a free life directed by your own choices.

However, unlike libertarian thought, Tomasi (2012: 91) argues that economic liberty is only on a par with our other basic liberties, rather than an overarching moral absolute. As such, a person's economic freedoms "may properly be regulated and limited in order to maintain other basic liberties". For example, taxes may be collected from a person's earnings to provide help or financial assistance for the least well favoured within society. This is because, he argues, "we honour the importance of self-authorship when we insist that our institutions leave no one behind" (Tomasi, 2012: xiv). Therefore, every person ought to be able to have, at the very least, a decent standard of living with their basic rights protected, as without such protections some would simply lack the ability to have any sort of meaningful life that they could direct according to their own ideals. Thus, Tomasi rejects libertarianism on three grounds: it tries to interpret all rights on the model of property rights; it is absolutist about rights; and it fails to take seriously the requirement of "compossibility" – the idea that everyone's rights should be jointly realisable together. This final point brings Tomasi's position very close to Pettit's, but without the latter's commitment to consequentialism. Tomasi, like Rawls, takes justice to be a basic and irreducible concept whereas Pettit does not.

Nozick argued that taxing one person to help another would treat the individual merely as a means to another person's ends and people ought not be "sacrificed or used for the achieving of other ends without their consent. Individuals are inviolable" (Nozick, 1974: 31). This is because, he held, we are all individual people who ought to be able to live our own individual lives, free from interference, and to use a person for the sake of another "does not sufficiently respect and take account of the fact that he is a separate person, that his is the only life he has" (Nozick, 1974: 33). In addition, he argued that taxation of earnings for the

sake of others “is on a par with forced labour” (Nozick, 1974: 169), As such, if we are to regard economic liberties as moral absolutes, Tomasi’s (2012: 109) notion of a “tax-funded safety nets for citizens in great need” could be viewed as a restriction on the liberties of the more well favoured in society, which certainly goes against the libertarian tradition of the state only acting to protect a person’s property rights and not for the sake of protecting the wellbeing of the least well favoured within society. However, Tomasi thinks this is an ethical error: a concern with the worst off is, as Rawls argued, intrinsic to justice.

Tomasi (2012: 241) also supports a notion of “formal equality of opportunity” on the basis that “every citizen, regardless of birth status or economic class, is owed high quality health care and education as a matter of justice”; he thereby follows Rawls in grounding these values of good health and education on the principle of fair equality of opportunity (not the difference principle). Moreover, Tomasi (2012: 245) argued that “if people are uneducated and unhealthy, they will be unable to secure many of the desirable positions that are (formally) open to them in society”. However, rather than depending on the state to provide these services, his ideal relies on “market mechanisms in pursuit of a superior system of education and healthcare for all” (Tomasi, 2012: 242). This is because he argues that such a system increases the range of relevant choice that a person can have in selecting their preferred service. This, in turn, gives the individual a greater amount of control and influence over their own life. Nozick (1974: 265) argued against measures to achieve equality of opportunity on the basis that it can be achieved only in two ways: “by directly worsening the situations of those more favoured with opportunity, or by improving the situations of those less well favoured”. He argued this would be unjust, as it would impinge on a person’s individual rights and both methods would in fact worsen the situation of the more well favoured. The reason for this is that in order to give the less well favoured an equal opportunity, resources would need to be taken from others to pay for the social goods. Therefore, those from which “holdings are taken in order to improve the situation of others” (Nozick, 1974: 265) would be worse-off, due to the resources they are entitled to being seized by the state for the sake of others.

However, some who are considered libertarians do show some support policies that protect the least well favoured and encourage equal opportunity within society. For example,

Milton Friedman (1962: 86) argued that a “stable and democratic society is impossible without a minimum degree of literacy and knowledge” and as such, proposed that education ought to be accessible to every person and paid towards by the state by “giving parents vouchers redeemable for a specified maximum sum per child per year if spent on approved educational services” (Friedman, 1962: 89). He also took the view that such a system would lead to “wide variety of schools [to] spring up to meet the demand” (Friedman, 1962: 91). With the same line of thinking this system could also be applied to health care, with providers competing for patients and vouchers provided by the government to cover basic care. As such, rather than “free market fairness” being a ground-breaking and pioneering conception of liberty, it could be argued that such ideas have already existed within the libertarian tradition, even if not held by the strictest libertarians.

Tomasi’s conception of liberty is further from the high liberal position than the libertarian position, which stems from his emphasis on the importance of economic liberties being given the same moral weight as our other basic liberties: “Market democracy views the economic rights of capitalism as on a par with the other basic rights and liberties” (Tomasi, 2012: xvi). However, in support of social justice, Tomasi (2012: 91) does not view one’s economic rights as an overriding right and notes that such rights “may be properly regulated and limited to maintain other basic liberties” and, importantly, the equal basic liberties of others.

As such, Tomasi acknowledges that our rights and liberties cannot be entirely based on economic rights alone and so, much like high liberal thought, would allow for intervention to protect our other basic rights, so long as our economic rights were still being respected on equal terms, as basic rights in themselves. As such, it could be argued, Tomasi supports social justice, but from an inegalitarian position, where differences in wealth are unimportant because “we benefit the poor by choosing social institutions that generate the largest possible bundle of goods under their personal control” (Tomasi, 2012: xvii), and not by limiting the wealth of the most well favoured or ensuring that we are able to live on equal terms with each other. This converges with a Paretian conception of justice where, provided the worst off live at a decent sufficient standard, further improvements to the situation of the better off are not only desirable, but mandatory. The major departures from Rawls are that

Tomasi neither regulates the “top end” of any distribution, not the relationship between the best off and the worst off, nor the systematic interconnection between the interests of all socio-economic groups in Rawls’s conception of a society as “just throughout”.

Unlike high liberals, Tomasi (2012: 27) does not support “a substantive conception of equality based on an equal sharing of goods”. This is because, he argues, people ought to be free to make their own economic decisions and experience risk in making those decisions because this brings our life greater meaning. Moreover, he explains that “insulating people from economic risks [...] denies citizens opportunities to feel the sense that they have done something genuinely important with their lives” (Tomasi, 2012: 80). This is because protections against risk remove our ability to feel as if we are making substantially free choices, which bear great responsibility and could cost us dearly and so make us feel even more accomplished when we make the right decisions. However, this is also true for people who enjoy gambling, who may feel “the bigger the risk, the bigger the reward”, which, in turn, brings enjoyment and excitement when one is winning, but also misery when one loses. Of course, it could be argued, we ought to be making responsible economic decisions and so if we lose then it is our own fault. Furthermore, we should not take this responsibility away from the people because many “define themselves by their financial decisions they make for themselves and their families” (Tomasi, 2012: 79). As such, it could be argued, our ability to have choice over the economic aspects of our lives is paramount for us to act as self-authors, who weigh up our options and make responsible decisions.

Moreover, the removal of such choices could be said to remove part of our personhood, as we are unable to self-direct our own or our family’s lives. In addition, Tomasi (2012: 80) argues that in a society where people are “heavily insulated from economic risks, for example, by being assured that their children were well provided for whether or not they themselves contribute”, they lose their sense of pride and achievement in their accomplishments and the satisfaction from knowing that they were the ones who provided for their families.

The problem here is the wider framework of Tomasi’s ideas and what kind of liberal he represents. There is an entire family of liberal views, from John Stuart Mill to Joseph Raz,

that are unapologetic about grounding their form of liberalism on a specific conception of what it is to lead a good life. For Mill and for Raz a grounding on an ethical ideal of autonomy is central to their versions of perfectionist liberalism. Rawls, by contrast, claimed to be a liberal neutralist whose views were compatible with a plurality of reasonable conceptions of the good. Tomasi's committal remarks about what it is to lead a good life, and the importance to it of experienced risk, seems to suggest that he belongs in the "perfectionist" or ethical liberal camp. Both this point, and his Paretian view of fairness, would place him in disagreement with Rawls.

Furthermore, within a society where our economic choices dictate our position, Tomasi's interpretation of pride and achievement is true only for the winners. This also leads to the poorest in society feeling as if their poverty is a "result of personal failure" (Shildrick, et al., 2012, 168), which, in turn, has demoralizing effects on their status as persons. This point is endorsed by Wilkinson and Pickett (2018: 99) who note that for the poor "their inability to keep up, to buy the latest goods, seems to mark them out as failures. Second-rate goods are seen as marking out second-rate people", which, in turn, has damaging effects on their self-esteem. Moreover, many within society do lose out, with UK poverty levels at 14 million (Barnard, 2017), and are unable to live happy flourishing lives, full of fulfilment and achievement. As such, even though economic liberties could be conceived as "enabling devices that allow diverse interests to be peacefully coordinated without recourse to coercive, collective procedures" (Tomasi, 2012: 84), we could also consider them as disabling the poorest who are unable to afford to make the economic choices that bring freedom, which leads to demoralizing feelings of failure and a diminished sense of self-esteem. Tomasi would presumably respond that there are other reasons why our capitalist institutions are not working to bring the worst off up to a sufficient standard of human flourishing. But the issue is the role played by comparisons made by the worst off, in their social position, and the better off, in their social position – especially when it comes to positional goods.

Tomasi agrees with the high liberal aspiration that we ought to improve the lot of the least well favoured within society. However, he differs in his ideas about how we bring this notion to fruition. For example, in the high liberal tradition, it is argued that society ought to be structured according to egalitarian ideals, with inequalities only justified in so far as they

raise the position of the least well favoured in a society that is “just throughout” (Rawls, 1971). This is because such a system creates a society in which we can all experience equal freedom and no person is left behind. In contrast, Tomasi (2012: 236) argues that the best way for improving the conditions of the least well favoured is by through “affirming a thick conception of economic liberty” because without this affirmation, the potential for economic growth is reduced. This is because taking people’s economic choices out of their own hands and allowing for over reliance on the state to provide for citizens equally, removes the motivation for people to work hard and achieve as much prosperity as possible. This could also be considered as “misplaced paternalism on the part of the state” (Thomas, 2017: 290), in which the state creates a risk-free environment by catering for all its citizen’s needs, which, in turn, removes their ability to live according to their own self-authorship. Moreover, “market democracy regimes pursue high-growth policy that seeks to maximize the wealth personally” (Tomasi, 2012: 236), which means that we all work harder and earn more money, thereby increasing overall prosperity and allowing for those who work the hardest to feel the greatest accomplishments.

Therefore, Tomasi’s conception of social justice allows for substantial inequalities of wealth, because rather than these inequalities having a negative effect on the wellbeing of others, they instead give us the ability to act as responsible self-authors and allow for each person to maximize their own personal wealth, including the least well favoured in society through “creating the conditions for a robustly growing commercial society” (Tomasi, 2012: 232) where we are motivated to compete for ever greater fortunes, and this, in turn, raises every person’s position. As such, an unrestricted right to generate as much wealth as possible will generate more wealth in society than an equal distribution of wealth, thereby maximizing “the wealth personally controlled by the least advantaged citizens” (Tomasi, 2012: 298) and leaving every person better off.

Tomasi is wrong. We currently live within a society not far off the one envisioned by Tomasi. In the UK we have a GDP of \$2.622 trillion (World Bank, 2017), a commercial “free market” and the least well favoured are supported by a social welfare system. As such, we live in a prosperous society with a lot of wealth to go around and some support for the poorest. However, this high level of wealth is not distributed to the benefit of all citizens: “The

richest 10% of households hold 44% of all wealth. The poorest 50%, by contrast, own just 9%” (Equality Trust, 2018). As such, even though we live in a prosperous free market society, wealth is not shared amongst citizens, but rather it accumulates in the hands of the wealthiest. Tomasi’s argument for freedom for the individual to accumulate infinite wealth also gives them the power to corrupt democracy. This is because material wealth has a direct relationship with power, with the richest in society able to lobby government, control media outlets and dominate high positions in the workplace. Even though Tomasi may not be in favour of this, his ideas allow this and given what we know about the history of capitalism this result is unsurprising.

This means that policies are shaped according to that which benefits the wealthy, false beliefs are superimposed by the use of media outlets and the workers are forced to do as their bosses command. Therefore, substantial inequalities of wealth also lead to substantial inequalities of power, as when “some people have more power than others, they necessarily have it at the expense of others, because it is power over those others” (Norman, 1995: 19) which, in turn, reduces the freedom of those who have less. As such, the wealthiest in society are able to dominate the less well favoured. Moreover, even if we accept that Tomasi’s conception of liberty leads to a more prosperous society where we are all better off than we would have been in the past, free market fairness allows for substantial inequalities in wealth that leave those at the lower end not feeling any better off, which is by cause of the role played by positionality. In order to show that Tomasi’s free market fairness is actually self-stultifying, I will develop an account of the importance of positional goods by examining the crucial work in this area by Fred Hirsch. Hirsch’s account, influential on more recent work such as that by Wilkinson and Pickett, connects my critique of Tomasi to the Rousseau-ian argument for strict equality presented in the previous sections.

Chapter 3: Positional Goods in a Capitalist Economy

According to Fred Hirsch (1977: 27), the positional economy relates to all forms of “goods, services, work positions, and other social relationships that are either (1) scarce in some absolute or socially imposed sense or (2) subject to congestion or crowding through more extensive use”. In this chapter, I will argue that positional competition rests on false beliefs about what is necessary for flourishing life: however, the engine of capitalist consumption depends on this false belief being ideologically imposed and reinforced. Moreover, I will argue that the role played by positionality in capitalist societies is endemic: competition over positional goods escalates and consumes peoples’ lives, and each of us individually exerts greater, time, effort and resources to maintain our relative position within society in a way that is collectively self-defeating. To begin this chapter, I analyse the role played by positional goods and how this creates a competitive environment in which people are motivated by false beliefs and the need to dominate. Secondly, I analyse the impact of positionality on our career aspirations and how this can lead to our lives being dominated by the need to work, thereby giving organisations the power to dominate us via our false needs. Thirdly, I argue that positionality is damaging to the cohesiveness and wellbeing of society. Fourthly, I examine the effect of positionality on the fair value of political liberty and whether its impact could be said to undermine our status as free and equal citizens. To conclude this chapter, I argue that positionality results in people being motivated by the will to dominate, social anxiety and false beliefs about what it means to live a flourishing life and as such, negatively impacts the wellbeing of society.

Positional goods are symbols of status, which derive their value according to how they increase the perception of a person’s relative position in society. Examples include: “luxury cars and yachts, private jets, expensive hotel suites, and tickets to exclusive sports events” (Thomas, 2017: 50), as well as goods that are limited in number, such as scenic land and rare pieces of art, which once owned by an individual are no longer be accessible to others within society. This creates a competitive environment where “one man’s gain is another’s loss” (Hirsch, 1976: 117), which, in turn, causes social anxiety, as we are forced to compete for these goods to ensure that we do not automatically lose out and are no longer able to attain

those goods. This has led to a society of winners and losers in a zero-sum game where “what the winners win, losers lose” (Hirsch, 1976: 52). As such, positionality places people in a constant state of competition to attain greater wealth and resources than their fellows, “not so much from real need, as [it is] to put oneself ahead of others” (Rousseau, 1755: 119). Therefore, the motivation for positional goods rests on the false belief that we ought to be better placed than our fellows, rather than our actual needs being met and as such, bring us no real fulfilment.

Moreover, in the positional environment, competition for dominance is not held on equal terms, as “positional goods come first into the hands of the early rich, at a time when the income of others remains absorbed by their still unsatiated demand for material goods” (Hirsch, 1976: 36). Therefore, those in advantageous positions are able to dominate the positional environment and retain their relative position because as demand increases so does the value of the goods they possess, which places them in a position of power. Moreover, those in the lower positions are rightfully anxious, because they will find that as demand increases, so does the required effort to attain positional goods, making it much more difficult to advance or even retain one’s relative position within society. So, while there is an argument to be made that positionality might arise in an already egalitarian society, Hirsch is clear that the actual history of our own societies is that positionality originates in inequality which it then compounds. It takes an inegalitarian distribution and leads to mechanisms that worsen this inequality over time.

In response to the negative effects caused by a person being forced to compete, one could argue that competition for positional goods improves the overall prosperity and quality of life for all within society and as such, even the losers win. As noted by the OECD (2017), competition “improves a country’s performance, opens business opportunities to its citizens and reduces the cost of goods and services throughout the economy”. Therefore, it could be argued, competition is a key driving force behind innovation and reduced costs of material goods, which were once perceived as luxurious, now being available on the mass market, with examples such as stockings and cars. They were originally products for the rich as only they could pay for the technological investment that produced these novel goods at high consumer prices. This means that rather than the winners taking away from the losers, they instead

open up new pathways for choice, with an increased general level of prosperity and material goods, that were once limited to the wealthiest, now being accessible to many within society:

The country house of Victorian times was confined to a tiny portion of the population, those in aristocracy and upper middle class. The country cottage today is a symbol of the successful modern middle-class professional (Hirsch, 1976: 33).

Therefore, it could be suggested that when considering the long historical view, the wealthiest play an important role in driving social change, as the desire to emulate the wealthy has resulted in people from a variety of classes being able to afford luxurious goods, opening up the market so that many items have become commonplace consumer goods.

However, even though it may be the case that luxury goods that were once limited to the wealthy are now accessible to a far wider group, positional goods remain finite and new positional goods are continually created in order to retain positional differences. For example, we may now all have access to cars, but this led to expensive alternatives, such as Rolls Royce cars and Ferraris, which bring higher positional status at even greater costs. Therefore, even if material goods become more affordable, positional goods do not and the costs rise for all. While it is true that a poor person in an affluent Western society may have a mobile phone or a television, there remain major differences between the kind of phone and television they can afford compared to the comparable products of the rich. As such, “more wealth of the kind attainable by all paradoxically means an increased scramble for the kind of wealth attainable only by some” (Hirsch, 1976: 26), as many more will come to desire the positional goods that cannot be enjoyed by all. This, in turn, drives up demand for positional goods, which increases their value for the early rich, giving them even greater relative wealth, power and status, placing them in ever higher positions, which are virtually impossible for those who are new to the competition to achieve: “The old rich make capital gains on positional assets they acquired early, and these gains make it harder for the new rich to rise on the relative wealth scale” (Hirsch, 1976: 36). As such, competition for positional goods is not fair or equal, as the early rich will always have the advantage. Moreover, as the wealthiest do not advertise their position out of need, it can be considered as simply a manifestation of their desire to convey their dominant and prosperous position within society.

However, as noted by Friedman (1980: 137), “life is not fair [...] but it is important to recognize how much we benefit from the very unfairness we deplore”. This is because those at the top give the less well favoured a position to strive towards and emulate. As such, people will work harder, and overall economic productivity will increase, which, it could be argued, would be to every person’s benefit as it would lead to an increase in the overall prosperity of society. Moreover, it could also be suggested that the wealthiest are entitled to their wealth, as we live within a system that generates great sums of money and so there may be those who are lucky enough to benefit from this wealth more than others. As such, we ought not condemn them for the good fortune they have experienced. However, one could respond to this point by arguing that the rich are motivated by the need to dominate and were only able to attain their great wealth through the domination of the workers below them who they are able to control others through their greater positional power. Furthermore, if the wealthiest truly did attain their wealth by luck then there is no reason to justify them being allowed to hold on to it at the detriment of others, which they do, as shown by the world’s wealthiest 1% being “on course to control as much as two-thirds of the world’s wealth by 2030” (Savage, 2018). This shows that even if unfairness generates greater prosperity within society and drives peoples to work harder, that prosperity stays with the wealthiest and so, however hard people work, their chances remain limited.

Moreover, working hard for the attainment of goods has led to many being dominated by the need to work, with many working forty hours every week for all but one month of the year, for fifty years of their lives (Taylor, 2014). As such, domination can come about through societal norms within a country, with no individual dominator of any individual. The individual is dominated by the labour market itself. Therefore, we may live in a more prosperous society, but this comes at the expense of time that we could be devoting to things that give us real fulfilment, such as family life, new experiences and other activities that bring enjoyment to our lives, as noted by Easterlin (2004: 32), “we allocate an excessive amount of time to monetary goals, and short change nonpecuniary ends such as family life and health”. Moreover, the positional environment creates a set of false needs which are not of the individuals own choosing, but rather, they are the goods that “people come to want and feel they must have as a result of social stimulation and ideological indoctrination [they] would not otherwise feel [...] attachment to or concern about” (Nielsen, 1977: 145), which means

we work towards goals that bring us no real fulfilment, other than to maintain or improve our relative positions in society or bring us social status and “spend money on junk we don’t need in order to impress people we don’t like” (Bregman, 2018: 17).

For these reasons, we live in an era of conspicuous consumption, in which we buy expensive goods, not because they bring us happiness or fulfilment, but to impress other people. This is because we are socially anxious about our relative position, which is brought about by the false belief that we must compete with our fellows or be unable to maintain our relative position:

The person who builds a \$5 million home to keep up with his neighbour’s \$6 million home would likely have been just as satisfied if he were in a \$2.5 million while his neighbour was in a \$3 million home” (O’Neill and Williamson, 2012, cited in Thomas, 2017: 51).

Therefore, positional competition creates unnecessary and excessive social waste, as we exert an ever-greater amount of time, effort and finances to buy goods we would not otherwise need or desire, as they bring us no greater fulfilment than lesser amounts would have otherwise brought.

This shows that within a positional society we base our goals and desires not according to our own standards, but rather, on how those around us are doing, as noted by Hirsch (1976: 2), “the satisfaction that individuals derive from goods and services depends in increasing measures not only on their own consumption but on consumption by others as well”. Therefore, positionality creates a society in which we do not act according to the needs that will benefit us, but instead, according to that which is consumed by others, at the expense of our own desires. Furthermore, in positional societies people become “more prone to compare themselves with others, doing well in others’ eyes and having all the trappings and characteristics of success becomes the main meaning of achievement (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2018: 49). As such, achievement is found in how we are perceived by others, rather than our ability to live flourishing lives. Moreover, the excessive social waste brought about by positionality could have been used to produce other social benefits, such as aiding the

poorest in society who struggle to meet their daily needs (O'Neill and Williamson, 2012). Therefore, positionality also results in social costs at the detriment of the poor in exchange for the mere illusion of appearing successful in the eyes of our peers.

In addition, with regards to positional goods, "what the wealthy have today can no longer be delivered to the rest of us tomorrow, yet as we individually grow richer, that is exactly what we expect" (Hirsch, 1976: 67). This means that the positional environment creates a scenario in which many have unfulfillable needs and so leads to an endless cycle of people constantly working for that which can never be attained and gives those who control the workplaces the power to "dictate the terms upon which others work for them and thus in effect the power to "force" others to be resources for them" (Reiman, 1981: 85). Positionality can of course be present in any society where we have any form of superiority, even within a family.

However, positionality is embedded within capitalist societies, structured so as to enable those at the top to control the workers. Therefore, in a positional society the workers and those at the lower end of the social and economic scale become dominated and lose all power, as they depend on the bosses to give them the work for their continual and unfulfillable needs. Thus, positionality causes exploitation as those at the top are able use the workers for their own self-interest. Moreover, an "increase in individuals' "needs" created by positional competition has a cost in time represented by the extra money that had to be earned to pay for additional needs" (Hirsch, 1976: 76), which means people need to work more than ever before as their needs keep increasing. This point is supported by Wilkinson and Pickett (2010: 70) who note that "the more we have, the more we feel we need, the more time we spend on striving for material wealth and possessions". As such, even though we work more to have more, this simply leads to us desiring an ever-greater amount of wealth and possessions, and thus the cycle of working to fulfil unfulfillable needs continues.

This cycle has placed the workers at the mercy of those who employ them, thereby turning the worker into a natural slave: "A human being who is by nature suited to be a piece of property that belongs to someone else and functions as a second-order tool" (Karbowski, 2013: 339-340). This is because capitalism treats people like tools and as such, much like

slaves, they can be considered unfree in the sense that they are used as a mere means for their boss's, or master's, ends. However, there are those, such as Friedman (1980: 246), who argue that it is a corporation's own self-interest to not treat their workers as a mere means, but rather capitalism requires that the bosses treat their workers well and "pay [them] the full value of [their] work. If [their] own employer doesn't, someone else may be ready to do so". This is because they are in competition with other corporations to get the best workers and as such, if their workers are unhappy in their current role then corporations will lose their workers to their rivals.

However, in actuality a corporation only has a duty to "protect the bottom line" (Reich, 2007: 41). This means that even if it may sometimes be in a corporation's interest to treat their workers well, this is not always the case and so good treatment is not definitively guaranteed. For example, if corporations no longer have to compete for their workers, possibly due to there being a larger amount of candidates than available jobs, a corporation's interests will change and so its managers will find ways to reduce costs and increase profit at the expense of the workforce: "Where employers last filled a low-skilled vacancy, they received a median number of 24 applicants for that vacancy" (Davies, 2017: 10). This is intrinsic to capitalism because it gives corporations the power to drive down wages and conditions. Moreover, it shows the dynamic of power within positional societies, with the workers being paid to comply with their bosses demands, no power over how they are treated and little job security: "In 2005, Deutsche Bank simultaneously announced an 87 percent increase in net profits and a plan to cut 6,400 jobs [...] Twelve-hundred of the jobs were then moved to low-wage nations" (Reich, 2007, 40-41). Therefore, capitalism removes job security and the "loss of belief that jobs provide a stable path to or guaranteed place in the [...] middle class" (Hacker, 2006: 65). This is because all that really matters to companies in a positional society is profit, with people used as mere tools to make that profit. Therefore, the worker can be considered as a cog in the machine, where they are merely used and then got rid of for the sake of greater profits, which is especially the case for those in lower position jobs.

This also shows that it is in the capitalist's interest for there to be an industrial reserve army of unemployed citizens (Marx, 1867), which enables employers to drive down wages and dictate employment terms, due to the high supply of workers from which they can pick

and choose. Moreover, the unemployed are forced to apply for these jobs by a government that has close links to, and receive donations from, a variety of capitalist corporations (Standing, 2016). This is because “anyone [...] can be sanctioned in the period between accepting a job and the day they start if they are not fulfilling their benefit requirements and actively seeking employment” (Khan, 2015). Therefore, if a person is unemployed, they cannot opt out, as they are forced to work if a job becomes available, otherwise they will be sanctioned and have their benefits stopped. In 2015, this led to 1,252,000 British citizens living in destitution: unable to “afford to buy the essentials to eat, stay warm and dry, and keep clean” (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2016: 1). This shows that many in the UK simply do not have enough to live worthwhile and fulfilling lives, as they struggle to meet their daily needs with little government support. This is because every person who is out of work is pressured to resume work as soon as possible, without the opportunity to take their time and pursue their favoured career or they will face not having any sort of income to support themselves in the commodified capitalist environment that they live within: A capitalist environment that is supported by the government, thereby giving corporations an excessive amount of political control.

There are of course exceptions to the rule and it could be argued that some people are able to opt out of the competition by choosing a life of solitude or through adapting their preferences: “regimented in response to an agent's set of feasible options” (Bruckner, 2009: 308). For example, many people may happily work and save up for eight months and then “freely” choose to go on holiday for four months of the year. As such, they may not be concerned about competing with others for wealth and make decisions according to their own volition. However, by cause of defensive necessity many are unable to opt out because if they do, they will lose out. Moreover, this “free choice” is not necessarily a free choice, as they may not actually have another choice. Take, for example, Aesop’s (n.d.) fable about a fox and its struggle for grapes:

A famished fox saw some clusters of ripe black grapes hanging from a trellised vine. She resorted to all her tricks to get at them, but wearied herself in vain, for she could not reach them. At last she turned away, hiding her disappointment and saying: “The grapes are sour, and not ripe as I thought.

This shows how people try to make the best of the options they have and as such, adapt their preferences to fall in line with what they perceive as achievable, as a means to not feel disappointed or prevented from feeling free. Therefore, this choice is not truly a free choice, but rather a limited choice that has been set within a limited constraint of options. It is a claim distinctive of Pettit's version of republicanism that a person can be made less free by a reduction in their set of options, even if the options taken away were not, in fact what the agent chooses in the actual world.

If governments within capitalist societies were really committed to the idea of full employment, then rather than sanctioning those who are out of work and forcing people to work for capitalist corporations, they could instead act as a guarantor of employment by acting as an employer of last resort (Keynes, 1980). This would ensure that people do not have to feel as anxious about finding, losing or competing for jobs, because the government would employ "all of the jobless who are ready, willing, and able to work in a public-sector project at a base wage" (Tcherneva, 2013: 80). Such a scheme, known as the Works Progress Administration, was brought in by United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt to help tackle unemployment during the great depression and put "roughly 8.5 million Americans to work" (History, 2017). In response, it could be argued that such schemes create jobs that are not actually needed and as such, resources are being wasted to supplement unnecessary labour costs. However, such a scheme could improve the infrastructure within society, as it would give the government a low-cost workforce whom they can use to build houses, schools and hospitals, which, in turn, would improve society for everyone. Moreover, rather than the government having to pay for a welfare state of unemployment, resources could be used to pay for actual employment and so would be perceived as more beneficial for all concerned. Be that as it may, this kind of employment is seen as a last resort, with low pay and little prestige in a positional world where pay and prestige are major goods people strive towards.

Low pay, little job security and low status employment has led to people desiring higher positional jobs, in which their skills make them, not only less disposable to the workforce, but also brings them greater economic rewards and higher social status. However, this drives up demand for higher positional jobs in the positional sector, where the number of senior positions within the workplace are limited "by the number of inferior positions"

(Hirsch, 1976: 41), as there can only be so many managers to whom employees report, with the fewest number at the top and greatest number in the lowest positions.

Moreover, as people come to desire ever greater material possessions, and as a result come to move into superior positions, those in lower positional jobs lack the money to live in comfort compared to their peers and as such, will also need to raise their relative position in order to maintain their lifestyle:

If one's own income remains unchanged while the income of other people rises, one's command over the positional sector will fall. The income that earlier supported a downtown apartment, a country home, the acquisition of elite qualifications, or simply an active life protected from the crowds, is no longer sufficient (Hirsch, 1976: 102).

Therefore, even if a person has economically done well for themselves and achieved great success, there is no end point at which a person can stop worrying about competing with others, as our relative position depends on, not just how successful we are personally, but on the success of others. This leads to an increase in demand and competition for higher positional and better paid jobs, which has also led to an increase in the amount of people investing both time and money in gaining higher qualifications to become more highly qualified, more so than there are higher positional jobs. Because of this, questions must be asked surrounding the issue of how the increased demand for such jobs can be matched to their limited availability and how more highly qualified applicants can find fulfilment in lower positional jobs.

One method for decreasing the demand for higher positional jobs would be to raise qualifications required and screen applicants according to their qualifications so that those less qualified do not meet the minimum threshold and as such, fewer are able to apply for higher positional jobs. This, in turn, would make those who are chosen "more productive, both individually and socially, that is, for the economy as a whole" (Hirsch, 1976: 45), as they would have gone through a higher degree of training from which the organisations they choose to work for are able to benefit, since they would not have to expend as many

resources in bringing their new employees up to standard. As such, we would have a higher quality workforce without the expense of extra training. However, as noted by Clegg (2017), over the last fifteen years the number of UK graduates has been steadily increasing, with 40% of the workforce being graduates in 2017, as opposed to only 24% in 2002. This has resulted in a disproportionate number of graduates in relation to positional jobs and as a result, “the job formally open to high school graduates now demands a college degree” (Hirsch, 1976: 31), since the positional sector is far more competitive due to more highly qualified applicants. This means that people are spending more time trying to attain higher qualifications and acquiring greater skills but have to settle for “employment in jobs in which they cannot make full use of their acquired skills” (Hirsch, 1976: 51). This creates social waste as the skills individual’s acquire are not being utilised, but rather, wasted and underappreciated in unskilled jobs.

Moreover, even though higher qualifications have lost relative value, the need for them has become a necessity for simply retaining one’s place. This is because if people were to “decline to join the educational upgrading” (Hirsch, 1976: 51) the qualifications that they have would no longer be good enough to compete, as “one man’s higher qualifications devalues the information content of another’s” (Hirsch, 1976: 49). This point is supported by Hacker (2006: 65), who notes that “highly educated workers are pulling farther and farther ahead [...] Inequality is real and rising”. Therefore, in order for a person to maintain their relative position and lifestyle, they cannot stagnate, but instead they must continually exert greater time, effort and resources to improve their employability credentials, with the expectation that this extra training will only enable them to remain in the same relative position. As such, screening applicants will not necessarily lead to a reduced demand on positional jobs, rather it forces people to upgrade their skills, thereby resulting in an overqualified workforce who are unable to utilise their individual skills and leaves those who do not upgrade even worse off.

Another method for decreasing the demand for higher positional jobs is by reducing the monetary attractions that such jobs entail. In this way, only those who are actually attracted to the job in itself would be likely to apply, which would therefore create a workforce who actually enjoy going to work and doing their job. This could be done through

allocating jobs by “Dutch auction, with salary levels being bid down to the point at which available positions would just be filled by applicants of suitable quality” (Hirsch, 1976: 42-43). This would reduce candidates who are only interested because of monetary incentives and could actually result in the most sought-after jobs being the least well paid and the least sought-after jobs being the best paid. In many ways, this seems like a very fair system, as it would ensure that applicants for higher positional jobs “would now consist, to a greater extent, of people predominantly attracted to the job itself” (Hirsch, 1976: 183).

To illustrate this point, Hirsch (1976) gives the example of people choosing to become university professors rather than businessmen, even though university professors require far more training and businessmen are able to receive far greater economic rewards. This sort of system would also help to “counter excess investment in the acquisition of educational credentials” (Hirsch, 1976: 184), thereby reducing social waste, as those applying for places on courses would be choosing to study as an end in itself. This, in turn, would free potential students from basing their educational decisions on monetary gains alone. Moreover, this bidding process would allow for those who find their jobs intolerable to receive the greatest compensation for their time and as such, all roles are more likely to be filled by willing and able applicants who have good reason to perform well at their jobs.

Monetary incentives could also be reduced by reducing the “significance of relative income in its command over other positional goods, that is, besides the jobs themselves” (Hirsch, 1976: 185). This could be achieved through removing certain scarce and social mobility goods from the market and making them more accessible to every person in society. Healthcare and education are two prominent examples, and these could be paid for through having a progressive tax system, where those in the highest paid positions pay the highest amounts of tax (Frank, 2011). These areas of positional competition should be “taken off the market” by being supplied as public goods of a standard comparable to the same goods produced by the private sector. This would ensure that there is enough money to give universal access to those goods and would level out society, as people would not need to work in high positional jobs for access to these social goods and people in higher positional jobs would be made to contribute more as a consequence of their good fortune.

Moreover, it would allow for people to still compete and preserve their relative positions, but such competition would happen at a lower level of personal expenditure, reducing excessive waste, which would be put into funding social goods. In response, Nozick (1974: 172) argued that the taxation of one's earnings makes the state a "part owner of you; it gives them a property right in you", since the state would own part of one's worked hours, which would result in the more well favoured merely being used for the sake of the less well favoured. However, even though the more well favoured may need to be used for the benefit of others, they are not merely being used, as they too can benefit through having less competitors for their higher positional jobs, as well as access to free healthcare and education if they so need. Nozick would still argue against this point on the grounds that our economic rights to not be taxed are inviolable and people ought not to be forced to do certain things. However, providing access to certain positional goods would reduce the negative effects of positionality and as such, be to every person's benefit. It shifts everyone from a sub-optimal to an improved equilibrium point.

Demand for higher positional jobs could also be reduced by placing organisations "under workers' control" (Norman, 1995: 8), in which every worker has a democratic say in how their organisation is run. In the positional sector organisational hierarchical structures are shaped in the form of a pyramid, with the highest positional jobs having the least workers and many having to take jobs at the lower end of the scale, with little prospect of progressing. By cause of this the majority may feel dominated by the minority who have power and control over the organisation. If hierarchical structures were removed and organisations were placed under the workers' control, with the workers having democratic control over their organisation, then they would no longer be subjected to their bosses' demands and all within the organisation could be on equal terms with each other. This is because in a truly democratic workplace the workers would take a share of the menial as well as the top-level tasks, they would benefit equally from any profits made and they would be financially and mentally fulfilled, so they would be less likely to exhibit deviant behaviour, such as bullying and domination. This, in turn, would improve camaraderie within the workplace, where each of the workers are happily willing to help each other and as such, would increase productivity "since their sense of working for themselves rather than for 'the bosses' would be a much greater incentive to efficiency, hard work, innovation and creativity" (Norman, 1995: 57).

Moreover, it would reduce the demand for positional jobs within the organisation as all would be able to benefit from having the organisation run in whichever way is most effective. Therefore, even if there were some with slightly lower positional responsibilities, the end objective would be to every workers' benefit and so this would lead to workers being more accepting of whichever positional role best suited their skills. In contrast, within a capitalist workplace people will be unfulfilled and they may look to dominate their weaker colleagues, by antisocial practices such as bullying.

Positionality has damaging effects on the cohesiveness and wellbeing of society by cause of the competitive environment it creates, since it creates a competitive environment, in which people do not want to help one another, but rather aim to outperform and overtake each other. Moreover, even if positional competition could be said to raise the overall prosperity and welfare of society as a whole (OECD, 2017), this does not mean that it improves people's happiness, as shown by Easterlin's (2004: 31) example of Americans born in the 1940s:

Between the years 1972 and 2000, as their average age increased from about twenty-six to fifty-four years, their average income per person - adjusted for the change in the price of goods and services - more than doubled, increasing by 116 percent. Yet their reported happiness in the year 2000 was no different from that of twenty-eight years earlier.

As such, even though people have become far better off financially, which could be argued is due to increased competition, their actual happiness has not increased, which means people do not feel the benefit of having an increased income.

Moreover, even though society may have rising living standards, we also have greater levels of social anxiety (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2018: 10). In part this may be because their relative wealth, compared with other people in society, has not improved, as noted by Hirsch (1976: 114) "relative position affects what we get, as well as what we feel". As such, if we feel less valuable than our fellows, we do not gain in happiness and having to compete with our fellows means we do not feel the benefits of rising living standards, but rather, feel as if we

are in a constant state of competition. Therefore, in a positional society what counts towards our happiness is not how our prosperity has improved compared to what it would have been in the past, but rather, our relative individual prosperity compared with others in current society, which forces us to compete with our fellows.

This competition creates a society in which people are driven by conspicuous consumption so that they can exhibit their material wealth and social status with the hope of raising their relative position, since those who have greater wealth are perceived as the winners yet exert greater effort to maintain their relative place and those who have less experience feelings of envy towards the more well favoured. Moreover, the least well favoured are “often forcibly reminded of their situation, sometimes leading them to an even lower estimation of themselves and their mode of living” (Rawls, 1971: 469). This point is supported by Wilkinson and Pickett (2018: 24) who note that “as people get richer, they choose to increase their expenditure more on goods and services that express status and can be seen by others, than on ones which don’t and can’t”. This shows that wealth is not simply about being able to afford more to live a better life, but instead, being able to show off one’s wealth so that they can be perceived as having greater social status. This, in turn, causes a loss of self-esteem and feelings of envy from those who are insecure about their own worth, as positional societies cause people to base their self-worth according to how well they are doing compared with others and not how well they live as a person. As such, people base their values on the attainment of material wealth, as those who have the most are perceived as the most highly valued, which we ought to emulate and those with the least lose their sense of self-worth, with less opportunities to live flourishing lives, causing jealousy and envy of the most well favoured within society.

This is “collectively disadvantageous as the individual who envies another is prepared to do things that make them both worse off, if only the discrepancy between them is sufficiently reduced” (Rawls, 1971: 466). As such, positional competition creates a system in which both the winners and losers “lose from the struggle” (Hirsch, 1976: 117) with both suffering from greater stress, social anxiety and envy over their relative positions. This would also cause a reduction in productivity, as those who lack self-esteem, such as those in the lowest positions, will lose interest and motivation in all that they may have otherwise desired

or held to be worth attaining and therefore, feel as if “nothing may seem worth doing, or if some things have value for us, [they] lack the will to strive for them” (Rawls, 1971: 440). Whereas, if there were less competition within society, people would feel “more secure [with...] less to worry about, they [would] see others as co-operators rather than competitors” (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010: 57). This, in turn, would lead to both improved productivity and mental wellbeing, as people would no longer feel bound by their positional status and would feel free from the social anxiety and stress that comes with competition. As such, happiness levels would increase, and society would not simply be better off in terms of prosperity, but individuals within society would feel better off.

The fair value of political liberty, consisting in an equal opportunity “to take part in and to influence the political process” (Rawls, 1971: 197), is paramount for protecting the integrity of the political process because it ensures that every citizen has equal power and influence in the direction of their government. If this were not the case, we would have citizens who are dominated by those with greater power and influence. However, as noted by Rawls (1971: 199) “inequities in the economic and social system may soon undermine whatever political equality might have existed under fortunate historical conditions”. This is because, even if we all have free speech, those who have greater wealth and power within a positional society, also have a greater voice and as such greater influence over the political process. Consider Rupert Murdoch, a wealthy businessman who owns a range of media outlets. It could be suggested that by cause of the positional environment he has been able to accumulate great wealth and ownership of media outlets. This has made him far more able to influence the general public, as he has many more means of communicating his message. Moreover, as argued by Rawls (1971: 197-198) “If the public forum is to be free and open to all, and in continuous session, everyone should be able to make use of it”. However, a far greater voice could be said to drown out the speech of those around them and as such, could be viewed as an impediment to the free speech of those who have less as they are less able to contribute to the public forum. This shows that within the positional environment, the government has failed to “ensure the fair value of political liberty” (Rawls, 1971: 198), as there are those who have a far greater voice than others. Therefore, through having an unequal society with regards to wealth and ability to influence, we also have an unfair political process, in which those who have a greater amount of resources, also have greater power and they

have that power at the expense of others “because it is power over those others” (Norman, 1995: 19). If political liberties are not equal, there will be those who are able to dominate and as the positional environment does not facilitate equality, positionality imposes on the liberty of the less well favoured within society.

A further area in which the positional environment acts as a threat to liberty is through corporations, with their high wealth, status and power, being able to influence government policy. Capitalist corporations “have invested ever greater sums in lobbying, public relations, and even bribes and kickbacks, seeking laws that give them a competitive advantage over their rivals” (Reich, 2007: 41). They are able to do this because of the vast amounts of power and money they have at their disposal. This undermines a fair political process, as wealth is used to influence governmental decisions, which ought to be made in the interest of all within society, not for the wealthy capitalists who place profits above people. For example, in 2017 Google “spent \$5.93 million between April 1 and June 30” (Shaban, 2017) in its effort to gain the support of the United States government. This in the same year that it had been hit by the “European Union’s antitrust chief [...] with a record \$2.7 billion fine [...] for abusing its dominant position” (Birnbaum and Fung, 2017). By obtaining the support of the United States government Google does not receive the same level of scrutiny that they receive away from home, even though civil liberties are considered of paramount importance to the US constitution. However, through Google’s immense power, they are able to “use the coercive apparatus of the state and its law [...] to assure themselves of a favoured position. (Rawls, 1971, 199). This gives powerful companies within the positional environment the ability to consolidate their powerful position and have far greater influence, because when funds are “solicited from the more advantaged social and economic interests, the pleadings of these groups are bound to receive excessive attention” (Rawls, 1971: 198). As such, their wants will hold far more influence over political policy, as political parties come to depend on the donations of such groups, which reduces the influence of the less well favoured and as such, undermines the fair value of political liberty.

In summary, the capitalist positional environment encourages the motivation for domination. This motivation comes about through people’s desire to emulate the wealthiest within society, who are perceived as characters that the masses ought to strive towards.

Moreover, through striving for higher positional status, people will also strive to have those who are below them, as for one to have higher status, that higher status entails a higher position at the expense of others. Therefore, those in the highest positions consider being able to dominate as paramount, as it gives them the ability to retain their relative position and also brings them ever greater power. They maintain this dominant position by undermining the fair value of political liberty through means such as channelling their resources in ways that bring them greater influence within society, which, in effect, reduces the status of other people within society and brings themselves even greater power and dominance. The desire to dominate others and compete with one's fellows for positional goods is brought about by the capitalists who have a vested interest in ensuring the masses continue trying to fulfil unfulfillable needs, as it forces people into an endless cycle of work. Therefore, they create false beliefs about what is needed to live a flourishing life, so that one's life can be consumed by work. This creates social anxiety and stress, as to be able to consume the goods that people are led to believe they desire they have to compete with their fellows to retain their relative position. If they choose not to, or are unable to compete, they automatically lose out and so they are unable to realistically opt out of the competition without adapting their preferences. Therefore, the capitalist positional environment traps citizens in an endless state of working to fulfil unfulfillable needs, given to them by capitalists who wish to dominate and repress all within society. As such, in order to free people from this state of repression, society ought to move away from positional environment and in its place, have a society built around a system of equality, in which all are able to live equally free lives.

Chapter 4: Policies that Reconcile Equality with Liberty

The compossibility requirement has been central to this essay: for liberty within society it is paramount that all are able to experience liberty. If some lack liberty then society as a whole can be said to lack liberty, as those people form part of society. Moreover, as noted by Reich (2007: 94), “one individual's free act is a limit on the freedom of another and thus every free act is potentially coercive in its effect on the freedom of others”. Therefore, it is important to ensure that liberty is shared by every person to an equal degree to prevent those who have less from having their freedom limited. This notion of liberty can be referred to as an equal state of liberty.

But how can liberty be shared by every person to an equal degree so that they are able to experience equal liberty? Forming society so that all are equal, with regards power, material wealth and education would give us a state of equal liberty, in which “the more people share equally in power, wealth, and educational opportunities, the more they will also share in freedom” (Norman, 1987: 134). This is important because it ensures that all are able to remain equal, without fear or deference to those who may have otherwise had a greater share of these liberties in an unequal society.

Equality of power ensures that people are able to experience liberty without deference to others. Moreover, when one person has a greater share of power than another, “they necessarily have it at the expense of others, because it is power over those others” (Norman, 1995: 19). This means that those who have less power have their liberty diminished by those who have greater power. As such, unequal relations of power would allow for domination, as it would subject one person to the will of another. If we consider Pettit's notion of freedom from domination to be important, then power ought to be equalised so as to make sure that no person is in a position to diminish any other person's liberty. However, equality of power cannot solely be achieved through equal power in the political sphere, since the weight of a person's vote can feel rather insignificant when considering the large scale of modern-day societies. Rather, “a great deal of power in society is located outside the formal political system” and in the workplace, where the bosses have the power “to hire and fire

workers, power to decide the conditions of their work, and so on” (Norman, 1987: 108), which means those with higher positional status are placed in a position of dominance over the workers they control. If, however, workers were placed in control of their workplace, the workers would experience a significant increase in the power they have over their working lives, free from capitalist masters who dictate workplace conditions. Unlike contestation, actual control of the workplace would remove the fear of domination, as the workers themselves would be those with the power, not merely gifted to them by their employers.

That is not to say that there cannot be those in more senior positions who are responsible for making important decisions, as there may be those who are more equipped to deal with managerial tasks than others by virtue of their skills, abilities or qualifications. But rather, “those who make [decisions] must be effectively answerable to the wider democratic body” (Norman, 1987: 109), who share in the common ownership of the workplace and as such, can be considered as equal members who live and work on equal terms with each other. This would in effect remove the element of domination from seniority in much the same way as Pettit’s example of the alcoholic who chooses to allow their friend to have power over their alcohol consumption, because the workers would be able to choose to have those in positions of seniority. Moreover, common ownership would tackle job insecurity, improve productivity and the welfare of the workers, as they “appear to adjust labour costs in response to negative demands shocks by decreasing wages and hours, rather than decreasing employment”, have an estimated 6-14 per cent productivity advantage over conventional firms and give the worker “increased control of working life” (Jump, 2018, 88-89). Therefore, common ownership not only reduces domination within the workplace, but also leads to a better and more productive workforce.

An egalitarian conception of material wealth does not necessarily entail that every person must earn exactly the same as each other. Consider, for example, those who have greater needs than their fellows, such as the elderly or disabled, who would incur greater medical expenses than the fit and able bodied. If every person earned the same, then those who have greater needs and expenses would be far worse off than their fellows and therefore would be less able to live an equally fulfilling life. Rather, an egalitarian conception of material wealth entails “the pooling of surplus resources by means of taxation” to ensure that all

within society have access to free provision of certain social goods, including a good education system, healthcare services, and a benefit system for those unable to work. This, in turn, would reduce the reliance on wages, by ensuring that such goods are “accessible to all, irrespective of their income, occupation, or social position” (Tawney, 1931: 122). Moreover, removing these social goods from the market and making them accessible to all helps to counter the damaging effects of positionality, as it ensures that even those in the lowest positions have their basic needs provided for, without the constraint of being so poor that they cannot afford to meet even their basic needs and also gives people at least a basic opportunity to improve their relative position within society.

In addition to a free provision of social goods, a universal basic income in which every citizen has an unconditional living allowance would greatly increase people’s liberty within society. This is because it would provide people with more than simply meeting their basic needs and would give them the opportunity to not have their lives dictated by their work. Indeed, it would give people real choice about the kind of career they wish to pursue and the number of hours they wish to work, no longer dependent on their place of work for income. There is of course the concern that if people do not need to work, they will stop, as their motivation for working becomes less apparent. For example, there may be those who choose to live on this basic income without seeking gainful employment. It could be argued that this is exploitative of those who choose to work, as those who decide against working are taking more than their fair share of leisure and those in work are providing the tax to pay for such a system. However, those in employment would be doing so through their own volition and as such, are not really being taken advantage of as it is their own choice to work. In addition, many find fulfilment in working hard to provide for their families and as such, even if they received an unconditional income which guaranteed some stability in their lives, the extra income they gained could be saved or spent on goods they actually want, rather than simply meeting their basic needs.

Moreover, as noted by Reed and Lansley (2016), studies during the 1970s in the United States and Canada have shown that the reduction in the number hours people work would be minimal with only a 5% drop in the level of primary earners and these reductions would be “compensated in part by other useful activities, such as searching for better jobs or

working in the home [...and] among the youth [...] almost all hours spent not on paid work [going] into more education” (Bregman, 2018: 39). This shows that people want to be productive citizens and they do not work simply because they must, but because, at least in most cases, they want to. This point is endorsed by Kaplan (1987), who noted that lottery winners who found fulfillment in their jobs tended to stay in work and only those who did not find their work fulfilling tended to stop working if given the chance. Moreover, “one of the perks of a basic income is that it would free the poor from the welfare trap and spur them to seek a paid job with true opportunities for growth and advancement” (Bregman, 2018: 44). Therefore, such a scheme would increase the liberty of those have become dependent on the state, which means less state intervention with regards to monitoring a person’s quest for work, freeing them from being forced to apply for jobs they may not want and face the stigma that comes with having to attend the unemployment office.

A universal basic income would also increase a person’s capacity for choice by giving people “more time and more bargaining power in the labour market” (Reed and Lansley, 2016, 10), allowing them to focus on pursuing a career of their own choosing, without government interference forcing them to apply for jobs they have no interest in doing. Therefore, such a scheme would meet both “the left’s demands for fairness; where the regime of interference and humiliation are concerned, it would give the right a more limited government than ever” (Bregman, 2018: 45). This means all could be provided for, without feeling dominated by the state, “which allows greater freedom, and builds self-respect, in which all lifestyle choices are equally valued, and people are not judged by such decisions” (Reed and Lansley, 2016, 13). This is because people would not be obligated to fulfil certain requirements and could pursue a life of their own choosing, rather than being forced to take any job that becomes available. As such, much like Tomasi’s notion of fairness, a universal basic income can be viewed as a hybrid notion of liberty, which considers both libertarian and social justice concerns. There may of course be instances where people choose not to work, which is especially the case if, as argued by van Parijs (2000), universal basic income should be as high as sustainably possible. For example, if the state could afford to give an unconditional income of £40,000 for every citizen, many people would simply choose not to work and as such would take more than their fair share of leisure. Therefore, knowing how to balance how high the universal basic income ought to be is a challenge, as it would need to

be high enough so that people are not forced into menial jobs, but also not so high as to remove the incentive to find gainful employment. Even though this balancing act presents a challenge, it does remove constraints over people's lives which force them to work in menial and unfulfilling jobs for 40 hours a week and as such, provides a better alternative than a benefits system which traps people who lose their benefits through finding work and so too removes the incentive to find employment.

However, even though a universal basic income can be considered a good starting point, it does not go far enough, as the amount of material wealth one has is a "key determinant of both political influence and personal liberty" (Williamson, 2009: 434). This is because if a person has a greater amount of material wealth then they also have greater political influence and liberty, which gives them greater power than others. For example, the wealthiest in society are able buy political influence through large donations to political parties (Kennedy, 2006). This places them in a position of power where they are able to shape government policy as a means to maintain or advance their relative positions within society, at the expense of the least well favoured: "In the UK, the wealthiest 1% have seen their share [of wealth] increase to nearly a quarter of all the country's wealth, while the poorest half have less than 5%" (Oxfam, cited in Neate, 2017). A universal basic income would not prevent this, as people could still earn significantly greater sums than their fellows and as such, still have access to greater powers than others. Moreover, "inequalities of wealth tend to be caused by inequalities of power" (Norman, 1987: 111) and as such, if power was shared equally, we would not have vast inequalities of wealth. Therefore, rather than just a universal basic income, it becomes apparent that greater equality of material wealth is also necessary to limit the potential power of those with the greatest amounts of material wealth.

With an equal sharing of power, people could choose to apportion an "equal distribution of benefits and burdens" (Norman, 1987: 115) to ensure that those in the least sought-after jobs benefit accordingly and as such, when considering the benefits and burdens of a job, benefit equally. For example, if a person's job entailed strenuous activity for long and unsocial hours, they could receive greater material benefits than one who worked in a comfortable position, so long as such differences were agreed upon by the collective sharing of equal power, rather than a powerful elite dictating the terms of employment. Moreover,

with the free provision of social goods, the inequalities of material wealth resulting from greater benefits for those in the most burdensome positions would have a less damaging effect on the cohesiveness of society, as all would have their essential needs met. However, differences in material benefits could not be vast, as that would eventually undermine the equal sharing of power. Rather, with reduced inequality and free provision of social goods, a person's goals need not be based on monetary gains. Instead, people could have moral incentives for choosing the least sought-after jobs (Carens, 1981), in which they come to be perceived as a socially dutiful citizen who cares about the wellbeing of society and as such benefit from the esteem these roles bring. This is where positionality may be effective, but in reverse, where those who choose the least sought-after jobs are held in the highest regard by virtue of their commitment to the betterment of society at the expense of their own wellbeing.

Educational equality can be considered as paramount for the achievement of equal opportunity by "giving everyone a chance to achieve success, whatever his or her background or origins" (Norman, 1987: 120). As such, when considering the positional environment, it allows for a level of social mobility that would not be possible without educational equality. That is not to say, however, that every person would academically benefit equally from educational equality, but rather it supposes that "each individual has an equal need to develop his or her abilities in order to lead a worthwhile life" (Norman, 1987: 124) and as such, every person ought to have the same access to educational resources as any other person. Moreover, as Norman (1995: 110) notes:

As we acquire education and experience, we thereby come to understand our world and are increasingly able to conceive of alternatives to the present situation, and to think rationally about ways of realising alternatives.

Therefore, it is not only necessary for giving a person the skills to develop, but also for helping them to better understand how they wish to develop. As such, it vastly increases a person's ability to experience liberty, as it can give them the opportunity to have an informed and achievable choice over how they wish to direct their life.

Moreover, education can be considered a positional good that ought to be removed from the market. This is because “if education can be privately purchased, it will be bought by the wealthier, more powerful, and more influential sections of society” (Norman, 1987: 125-126). As such, separation between private and state schooling would act as a social divider between classes, in which the better off have little to do with the worst off and as such, have less understanding of those from different backgrounds to themselves and as such, are less likely to trust them (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). This would have damaging effects on the chances for progression of those using state schooling within the positional environment, since those in positions of power will choose to work with and hire those from similar backgrounds to themselves and as such, presents state schooled children less opportunities. In addition, a lack of “wealthier, more powerful and influential sections of society” (Norman, 1987: 126) using state schools would result in them suffering through not having families with the power to force a good standard of state schooling, as there would be fewer resources devoted to this cause. Of course, if every person had equal power and equal material resources this would not be such a problem, and in this case, people ought to be able to choose whether state-controlled education is right for them. However, as noted by Norman (1987: 126), “anything approaching perfect equality of power and of wealth is immensely difficult to achieve” and since such an ideal has not yet been realised, there ought to be educational equality provided by the state, with every person having an equal opportunity to acquire their own developmental needs to direct their lives according to their own choices.

In response to having an equal state of liberty, it could be argued that so long as our basic liberties are maintained, and economic liberties regulated, then there is no reason to commit to an equal state of liberty. Moreover, ensuring that an equal state of liberty is maintained would remove a person’s ability to live according to their own self-authorship, in which the decisions a person makes and the risks they take have a direct impact on how well they live, with the individual person feeling genuinely responsible for the shape and direction of their own life. Therefore, removing this responsibility would in effect remove one’s sense of pride and fulfilment in their own accomplishments and remove their ability to feel like self-authors of their own lives (Tomasi, 2012). However, an equal state of liberty would not remove a person’s sense of fulfilment or motivation for working hard, but rather, people

could find fulfilment through social-duty satisfactions, in which their hard work benefits all within society equally. Moreover, people will act in ways that will “win the approval or esteem of others and will avoid doing those things which bring disapproval” (Carens, 1981: 98). As such, our goals would not be based on how much money we could earn for ourselves, but on how we could raise the standard for all within society.

Furthermore, a society which had greater equality would help to improve the wellbeing of all its citizens and as such, would be to every person’s benefit, even those who would have otherwise been better placed than their fellows. This is because inequality causes divisions in society, which result in “envy and scorn brought on by the status concerns that pervade our society. Income inequality, now at historically high levels, aggravates these status divides” (Fiske, 2011: 1). This not only harms those at the lower end of the social scale, as these feelings “are bad for well-being – whether you scorn or are scorned, envy others or are envied” (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2018: 87) and as such can affect every person. This is because these divisions cause distrust between citizens who become wary of each other and unable to work together and feel others to be their rivals, rather than their comrades. Moreover, even those who are successful are anxious with regards to maintaining their relative position and being perceived as successful in the eyes of their fellows and those with less “their inability to keep up, to buy the latest goods, seems to mark them out as failures. Second-rate goods are seen as marking out second-rate people” (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2018: 99). Therefore, inequality negatively impacts all within society and diminishes every person’s liberty by forcing them to compete with each other, feeling forced to maintain their relative position or simply losing out and live in a society where they are unable to trust one another. Recognising every person as having the same status would enable us to treat each other as equals who help one another rather than envy each other. This, in turn, would liberate people from an endless cycle of competition and make it so we no longer have a society of winners and losers, but rather a society in which all are able to help each other succeed in their chosen paths and encourage one another for the wellbeing of all within society, sharing equally in the fruits of labour.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have argued that non-domination is paramount for liberty within society because it guarantees citizens unequivocal equal liberty. Moreover, removing the possibility of domination is a prerequisite for the achievement of real liberty because otherwise people would be reliant on those with power allowing them to experience liberty. However, other than supporting a notion of legitimate contestatory politics in which people share in democratic control and influence, Pettit does not give much insight into how non-domination can be fully ingrained within society so that citizens can truly live on equal terms with each other.

Much like Pettit, Tomasi supports a notion of being able to live on equal terms with one's fellows and he argues that we do this by respecting all of our rights equally, with a thick conception of economic liberty. Respecting all of our rights, including our economic rights, ensures that every person is able to have a sense of self-authorship over their lives with a sense of freedom that he suggests we would not have if unable to make choices that may either lead to great success or failure. As such, this risk could be said to respect our autonomous ability to make mistakes and financially flourish through our own hard work. However, Tomasi is not concerned by the fact that vast inequalities of wealth create the possibility for domination and undermine the fair value of political liberty, in which we can all equally share in political power. As such, Tomasi's conception of freedom fails to ensure that every citizen is able to live a life free from domination. Moreover, the capitalist ideals present in Tomasi's conception of freedom actually encourage domination, as it places us in a competition for goods that could have otherwise been shared.

Positional goods also contribute to domination and as such are an impediment to liberty. This is because they place us in a position where we feel forced to compete or lose out. Moreover, those at the top of the social scale dominate those at the bottom who are reliant upon their bosses for their wages and need such wages in order to emulate those at the top. This also undermines the fair value of political liberty as some are more powerful than others. By trying to move up we face a competition for jobs, status and education that

we hope will free us from our dominant bosses. This leads to social waste as we all exert greater time, money and effort to improve our relative position, but most are not any better off, as every person's competitors advance just as much. Even if we reach the top, we still suffer from status anxiety from trying to maintain our place and so are never truly free from positional competition. As such, no one really wins as we are all worse off and even though society may be financially better off, we do not feel any better off, as what matters is our relative position.

The solution advanced in this thesis is that our egalitarian goal should be strict material equality. This ideal does not, in practice, mean treating everyone the same. Those with significant needs may require disproportionate resources and there is no objection in principle to compensatory incentives for work that is difficult, dangerous, or requires lengthy training. However, beyond those exceptions society's social product should be socialised and put at the service of egalitarian ends. These include extensive provision of public goods to lessen the force of positional pressures. In Carens' utopian proposal, positionality now takes on a positive role as the reward for making a greater contribution to society by, for example, achieving a great deal in one's employment is not based on monetary gain, but the esteem of one's fellow citizens.

Equality frees us from domination and enables us to collectively experience liberty. It ensures that we all share equally in power with an ability to shape our lives according to our own ideals, without impediments to freedom created by those who would have otherwise had a greater share of power. It also improves the wellbeing of society as we can view our fellows as comrades rather than competitors and as such, are able to work together for the betterment of all within society.

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