



# **Republicanism and Basic Income: The Articulation of the Public Sphere from the Repoliticization of the Private Sphere**

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## Contents

Abstract .....	v
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Civic virtue and property in republicanism .....	4
2.1 The sociology of republican politics and the Athenian democratic experience.....	4
2.2 From Athens to modern times: the question of property today.....	8
3. Republicanism, a theory of freedom and government.....	10
3.1 “To be ruled by none, if possible, or, if this is impossible, to rule and be ruled in turns” .....	10
3.2 Civic virtue and the development of personal identity.....	12
3.3 Civic virtue and the guarantee of <i>libertas</i> .....	14
3.4 The scope and the meaning of republican freedom as non-domination. The horizons of basic income.....	16
4. Basic Income and republican freedom as non-domination.....	17
4.1 The articulation of the public sphere from a repoliticization of the private sphere .....	19
4.2 From basic income to republican political institutions .....	21
4.3 The universalization of citizenry and “universalization of property” .....	25
References .....	29



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## Abstract

The republican tradition revolves around the statement of freedom as non-domination, which must be seen as that freedom enjoyed by those who live in the presence of others and, by virtue of certain social and institutional structures, nobody may interfere arbitrarily in the decisions that they might make. Hence, republicanism promotes the institutional devices by which citizens may obtain material and economic security and, in accomplishing this security, ensuring that formal freedoms become a reality and that individuals may successfully face the task of articulating and carrying out their own life plans. Basic Income thus constitutes an extremely valuable mechanism for achieving these goals because one condition of full citizenship is the universal and unconditional guarantee of the right to existence that it would establish.



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## 1. Introduction

Republicanism is a longstanding tradition of political thought that first arose from the Socratic *ethos* and certain political aspects of the Athens of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC after which it was to be the object of successive reformulations. Republicanism, first in Europe and subsequently in America, has always opposed obscurantism, tyranny, oppression and inequalities based on arbitrary interference. From the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, this tradition became increasingly invisible with the codification of liberal thought. Republican ideals were only present in some of the various manifestations of political socialism of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, though the limits and vicissitudes involved ended up eclipsing them. Now, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, more attention is being paid to republicanism both in the academic milieu and in circles outside academia.

The core idea of the republican tradition is to approach the concept of freedom, “republican freedom as non-domination”, without overlooking the ideals of equality and fraternity so that it is a programme of thought and action that opens up fruitful ways of analyzing the economic, political and social challenges now facing mankind. The fact that republicanism promotes the institutional mechanisms by means of which citizens may obtain the material and economic security that ensure that formal freedoms become a reality, and that individuals would thus be equipped to face different forms of domination, must be taken into account. And this is of even greater importance in societies where the logic of the market and private accumulation impose a significant degree of inequality in terms of distribution of income and wealth. Basic Income (henceforth BI) is an extremely valuable instrument for achieving these goals because one condition of full citizenship is the universal and unconditional guarantee of the right to existence that it would establish.

It should be noted that any materialization of the republican ideal of freedom, understood as self-government, opposition to tyranny, and more recently conceptualized from the standpoint of the notion of freedom as non-domination, entails certain demands on social and political reality, among which the guarantee of security of income must be emphasized. A BI for everybody may be

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understood as the guarantee of material sufficiency and therefore of the socio-economic independence necessary to reduce the levels of domination that affect people belonging to the most significant groups of social vulnerability - wage-earning workers, women, etc. - and thereby to open up greater areas of freedom so that they might carry out their respective life plans.<sup>1</sup>

The main aim of this paper is to highlight the importance given by the republican tradition to the role played by property - understood as socio-economic independence - as the basis of its attempt to construct a robust notion of civic virtue which might then open up the doors to a social and political order that would make the republican ideal of freedom as non-domination a reality. Liberal thought, heir to the typically Roman distinction between the public and private spheres assumes that the latter consists exclusively of relations between individuals with equal rights before the law who merely establish strictly voluntary contracts. Power, in the liberal point of view, becomes apparent only within the sphere of public affairs. Republicanism, however, assumes that civil society - the private sphere - is profoundly asymmetrical in terms of distribution of resources and social privilege, which means that it is permeated by power relations. The republican public sphere must therefore be understood as an extension of the private sphere wherein the relations of dependence and domination that affect the participants in the processes of political decision-making have been abolished. Civic virtue is a mere chimera unless there is material independence.

First, we shall explore the link that the republican tradition has established, from Aristotle onwards, between the possibility of civic virtue and property - and here we will need to discuss what kind of “property” we are talking about. This will be done by analyzing the views of the political theorists of the time concerning the most significant phenomena that rocked Athenian political and social life during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. We shall then go on to examine

<sup>1</sup> The notion of “group of social vulnerability” is precisely defined in footnote 19.



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whether conclusions might be drawn from these considerations and applied to the circumstances that define present-day societies.

Second, we shall analyse the key points that shape republican ethical and political thought, with special attention to its “proprietary” nature. We shall particularly attempt to throw light on the link between its notions of freedom – the republican *libertas* -, civic virtue, political participation and property, with a view to understanding what Philip Pettit, one of the leading current theorists of republicanism, means when he points out that “if a republican state is committed to advancing the cause of freedom as non-domination among its citizens, then it must embrace a policy of promoting socio-economic independence” (Pettit, 1997, pp. 158-159). Next we shall analyze how far a BI might constitute the materialisation of these postulates.

Third and finally, once we have looked into the question of why it might be affirmed that BI constitutes a highly valuable tool for fostering republican ideas, we shall go on to detail the essential features of the political institutions that republicans aspire to. We shall indicate the measure in which a BI might facilitate the basic elements necessary for the articulation and reproduction of these political institutions. In brief, in this final section we shall discuss to what extent the socialist assumption of the central role of property in articulating a non-vacuous notion of citizenship (and it is common knowledge that political socialism objects to the liberal dissociation between the public and private spheres) permits us to make a connection between this political tradition and the tradition of the democratic republicanism that once again irrupted on to the political scene in 1789. It is well known that contemporary civil law universalizes the condition of citizenship, at least on paper. Given this fact, a consistent republican politico-institutional order would need to seek a mechanism for “universalizing property” - material independence, “self-ownership” - in order to ensure that this condition of citizenship goes rather deeper than mere legal stipulation with no real effects. Presenting BI as a suitable mechanism for achieving this goal of the necessary universalization of property means relating this measure to the core of the socialist tradition, which is the attempt to “repoliticize” the private sphere, assuming that it is permeated by power relations,

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and facing this reality as an unavoidable condition for articulating an authentically democratic political sphere, which is understood, all things considered, as an expression of the most genuine democratic republicanism.

## **2. Civic virtue and property in republicanism**

### **2.1 The sociology of republican politics and the Athenian democratic experience<sup>2</sup>**

The Athenian plebeian revolution, led by the free poor men's party of Ephialtes and Pericles, and which triumphed in 461 BC, gave rise, thanks to the "Ephialtes' reforms", to a new political order that allowed significant reinforcement of the democratic mechanisms that Cleisthenes' Constitution of 508-507 BC had envisaged. Cleisthenes' Constitution had already provided the Athenians with the elements that ancient Greeks deemed necessary for full democracy and, though certain socio-economic privileges were still required for the holding of public office, all citizens had the right to vote in the sovereign assembly. Ephialtes' reforms went still further. In effect, the reforms of 461 BC implied certain modifications in the structure of political institutions so that they became decidedly more democratic. First, the political tasks carried out by members of juries and the council that prepared the order of the day of the assemblies were remunerated. Second, mere attendance at the assembly was also remunerated so that even the poorest citizens could play an effective, real part in the public life of the *polis*.

The plebeian revolt, then, is remarkable for the real inclusion - and not just on paper - of poor people - non-owners - in the deliberative processes that took place in the agora, as well as for the establishment and strengthening of typically Athenian democratic mechanisms: the rotation of public positions, decision-making by drawing lots, and other innovations. Herodotus himself praised this

<sup>2</sup> The classicist Ste. Croix (1988) has provided us with a detailed historical analysis of the period to which we shall refer below.

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democratic system of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, that opposed monarchy and oligarchy, stressing that in it “[leaders] must account for the power they exercise, and all deliberations are subject to public scrutiny”.<sup>3</sup> Only fifty years later, however, the democratic regime was undermined as a result of both internal and external difficulties - the war against Sparta, for instance, was a heavy burden - and eventually collapsed with the oligarchic *coup d'état* of 411 BC.

This does not mean that “Athenian democracy” constitutes a historical period that is confined exclusively to these fifty years. In fact, the old democratic Constitution remained in force until 322-321 BC, when Antipater, the regent of Macedonia, after stifling the Greek revolt against Macedonian domination that broke out with the news of Alexander’s death (this revolt being proudly referred to by the Greeks as “the Hellenic war”), compelled the Athenians to replace it with another Constitution of a markedly oligarchic nature. However, it was during the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC when the Athenian political institutions were at the height of their democratic vigour. Hence, the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC constituted a real testing ground for the next century’s political theorists, whose thought is marked by these highly significant events. This is particularly the case with Aristotle, the real founder of the republican political tradition.

Aristotle’s favourable opinion of the processes of public deliberation allows us to highlight the fact that the earliest republicanism approved of introducing mechanisms for promoting the democratic participation of people, and fostering what we would nowadays call “participatory democracy”.<sup>4</sup> However, it should be said that Aristotle’s dictum on deliberation refers to these mechanisms only as mechanisms *per se*, that is, regardless of the nature of their “users”. Aristotle, then, understands the deliberative process as the transformation of a certain set of previously existing values and interests into a shared decision, which has been possible thanks to rational analysis of that set of prior values. In this sense, it might be said that individuals are virtuous insofar as they show their willingness,

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Domènech (1998).

<sup>4</sup> The epistemic virtues of deliberative processes are clearly emphasized in his *Politics* (III, 11).

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once persuaded, to relinquish their previous interests, always with a view to promoting the common good. Moreover, this exercise offers the possibility for individuals to mould their own characters, themselves and reciprocally.

The Aristotelian critique of the institutions of deliberative democracy appears with the possibility of opening them up to free people who lack their own resources, individuals who are non-proprietors and thus bound to others by ties of socio-economic dependence. Ownership thus appears as an essential requirement for enabling individuals to contribute towards ensuring that the processes of public deliberation achieve good results. First, property is understood as socio-economic independence and thus as self-ownership endowing individuals, who are free from possible blackmail stemming from someone else's socio-economic privileges, with the necessary independence of judgement for promoting the best interests of both themselves and the community. Second, property, to the extent that it permits basic needs to be covered, enables individuals to leave strictly reproductive work - temporarily or permanently - and to cultivate virtues, creating for themselves excellent characters, both individually and mutually, through the practice of autotelic, non-instrumental activities. In short, material independence appears as a necessary condition for civic virtue.<sup>5</sup>

Aristotle, the true “sociologist of the Greek politics” (Ste. Croix, 1988), at once philosopher and social and natural scientist with a deep inclination to exhaustive and precise empirical investigations, did not overlook the fact that the socio-economic conditions affecting individuals profoundly determine their political behaviour. As Ste. Croix (1988, p. 100) indicates, “far from being an anachronistic aberration, the concept of economic class as a basic factor in the differentiation of Greek society and the definition of its political divisions fits surprisingly well with the approach of the Greeks themselves to this reality; and Aristotle, the great authority on the sociology and the politics of the Greek *polis*, is always working with a class analysis as his starting point, which is to say, on

<sup>5</sup> A detailed account of the Aristotelian analysis of the link between virtue and property can be found in Domènech (2002).

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the assumption that individuals will behave in the political sphere, as in any other field, according to their economic situation”.<sup>6</sup>

Technically speaking, oligarchy is the government of very few people – the *oligoi* – while democracy is the government of the majority or the *demos*. However, in one of the outstanding passages of his *Politics* Aristotle disregards the mere numerical difference between oligarchy and democracy, which he sees as incidental, to stress that the real determining factor of the difference between democracy and oligarchy stems from poverty and wealth respectively.<sup>7</sup> He goes on to argue that he would still talk in terms of “oligarchy” and “democracy” even if there were many rich people and only a few poor. In short, the aristocrat Aristotle opts for oligarchy over democracy – an oligarchy made up by virtuous people – starting out from the assumption of the importance of material independence for the cultivation of public virtues. Nonetheless, Aristotle would not disapprove of a government of the majority if, and only if, that majority could be constituted by owners – or, in other words, by self-owners.

So Aristotle, an aristocrat in the Athens of the 4th Century BC, does not go into normative considerations on the possibility of opening up the set of owners – the group of self-owners – to include the whole citizenry, regardless of sex, origin or social condition. Rather, Aristotle, the philosopher and social scientist, does not find ontological-existential reasons for denying individuals the possibility of using all the political rights that a Constitution might envisage, as long as they meet the necessary material conditions for being considered as full citizens. It is indisputable that the position of Aristotle the aristocrat is far from being that of nineteenth- and twentieth-century liberalism which sees citizenship as being a reality once political rights have formally been guaranteed, independently of the living conditions of these so-called citizens. Aristotle, in undertaking his study of democracy as a form of government, points out that “the true friend of the people

<sup>6</sup> Translated from the Spanish edition.

<sup>7</sup> *Pol.*, 1279b-1280a.

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should see that they are not too poor, for extreme poverty debases democracy; measures should therefore be taken so as to bring them lasting prosperity”.<sup>8</sup>

## 2.2 From Athens to modern times: the question of property today

Republican emphasis on property has been a constant since Aristotle’s times. The civil dependence of non-owners – of wage earners, for instance – on rich people or owners which makes the former into mere instruments of the latter’s thirst for wealth, has been viewed by all the different kinds of republicanism as the clearest sign of the impossibility of free civil society, and as the most unequivocal symptom of the decline of republican freedoms. Madison, to give one example, stressed, as did the majority of those present at the 1787 Philadelphia Convention, that complete political and civil equality is incompatible with free political life when a large part of the citizenry lacks property and must therefore engage in civil relations of dependence on others (Domènech, 2002).

A republican look at today’s world makes us take this reality into account. It has been said that the first requirement for republican freedom is a certain level of material independence. The idea seems to be quite simple. In order to live – and, needless to say, reasonably well – it is necessary to have access to a – finite and limited, in the words of republicanism<sup>9</sup> – set of external resources or goods. If these resources are not fully guaranteed, individuals will be forced to do everything in their power in order to obtain them, accepting someone else’s domination, selling their labour power – their freedom — and even suffering their own alienation.<sup>10</sup> Material independence, then, is a condition for political freedom. However, private property is distributed in a highly unequal and asymmetrical way. This is why certain forms of patrician republicanism were moved to exclude dependent individuals, or non-self-sufficient individuals –

<sup>8</sup> *Pol.*, 1320a.

<sup>9</sup> *Pol.*, 1256b.

<sup>10</sup> It is worth mentioning that the Marxist theory of alienation – and self-realisation – has a clear basis in the republican tradition.

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slaves, women, poor free people – from the political sphere and citizenry, and to propose a republic of owners, great and small, whose independence enabled them to exercise political freedom.

Democratic liberalism has also opted for a simplistic solution in accepting all adult individuals into full citizenship – men and women, rich and poor people – regardless of their property, wealth or sources of income. This was done at the price of eroding the idea of freedom, giving priority to its strictly formal nature and thereby “depoliticizing” social life and removing the question of power and social domination – in the factory, at home, in the political party or in any other institution of civil society – from the political agenda (Francisco and Raventós, 2002). In fact, with nineteenth-century liberalism, economic science stopped being “political economy” and economic relations were no longer seen as relations of power and domination but rather as aseptic and apolitical relations of voluntary exchange.

In contrast, democratic republicanism – both classical and modern – has opted for a more complex approach. Democratic republicanism is not satisfied merely with rights and formal inclusion since its main concern is freedom as non-domination, which will be explored in more detail below. This explains why democratic republicanism, from Jefferson to Marx, has consistently sought to “repoliticize” social life, or in other words, to include again on the political agenda the serious problems of domination – of lack of freedom – affecting the most disadvantaged social groups in contemporary societies which are replete with all sorts of asymmetries of access to information, mechanisms for domination and power relations.<sup>11</sup>

Thus today, a democratic and inclusive republicanism that neither depoliticizes social life nor dilutes the idea of freedom into formal rights and that does not exclude from full citizenship those without means must promote alternative “social-republican” forms of property and all the corresponding

<sup>11</sup> Francisco and Raventós (2002) have contrasted the patrician nature of certain forms of historical republicanism with the main features of democratic republicanism – both classical and modern.

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institutional measures that would provide all citizens of the political community with material and economic security. Such security would make formal freedom a reality and individuals would then be able effectively to confront the various forms of domination existing in both civil and political society.

Today then, the “universalization of citizenship” demands the “universalization of property”. Since we are dealing with an idea of political community which, far from being limited to a small group of owners, includes almost all the inhabitants of our countries (with the serious exception of immigrant residents without political rights), it is necessary to articulate new measures so as to universalize this “condition of ownership” that republican theorists have correctly defined as the first step in allowing individuals to exercise political freedom. In short, without a well-founded idea of “self-ownership”, or the real possibility of articulating one’s own life plans and of putting them into practice, the notion of citizenship is impoverished to the point of becoming a mere mirage. Nothing less than new measures for “universalizing self-ownership” are required (Casassas, 2002).

### **3. Republicanism, a theory of freedom and government**

#### **3.1 “To be ruled by none, if possible, or, if this is impossible, to rule and be ruled in turns”**

Freedom is the essence of republicanism. The republican approach to freedom has little to do with that of the “modern” notion of freedom or “liberal” freedom. The republican *libertas* is always defined by its opposition to tyranny and slavery. Slaves are submitted to the despotic authority of their masters, who can interfere at whim in their lives.<sup>12</sup> The master dominates the slave who is thus unfree. From the perspective of domination, it is all the same to the slave whether the master is benevolent and does not interfere *de facto* in his or her life or whether he does. The crux of the problem stems from the fact that the master has

<sup>12</sup> For an analysis of the philosophical significance of this reality, see Domènech (1999).



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the power to interfere whenever he wants. Republicanism understands freedom as the absence of domination, meaning the absence of even the possibility of arbitrary interference.

More specifically, this absence of domination implies “to be ruled by none, if possible, or, if this is impossible, to rule and be ruled in turns”.<sup>13</sup> To live under domination means being governed by someone else so that this someone else decides how an individual is to lead his or her life. On the other hand, those who are not dominated – those who are free – are able to govern themselves and decide for themselves how to act and, essentially, who to be. In accordance with these postulates, the republican ideal demands for government in the public sphere “positive public freedom”, or the participation of the people in collective self-government - individuals ruling and being ruled in turns, as Aristotle stressed. Otherwise, an individual or group could govern indefinitely, which would make power despotic and consequently people would lose their freedom. The freedom of individuals, who are not asocial atoms but rather “political animals”, can only be achieved within the republic, the political community or, in other words, as citizens who govern themselves, who promulgate their own laws, who jointly deliberate and make decisions on what they think fair and advisable.

But none of this is possible without an understanding of the role that a non-banal notion of civic virtue can play. In fact, freedom and virtue constitute two poles of mutual attraction (Francisco and Raventós, 2002). Even a first approach to Athenian republicanism immediately suggests a conception of the republic as a “republic of reasons”,<sup>14</sup> this being understood as a process in which people speak and make suggestions, where ideas are discussed and accepted or refused according to a principle of rationality. In this sense, civic virtue means nothing less than the disposition for detecting, or contributing towards detecting, with due deliberation, the general interests of the community, along with the will to

<sup>13</sup> *Pol.*, 1317b.

<sup>14</sup> This concept, which was coined by Sunstein (1993), has also been defined more precisely by Domènech (2000).

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promote them over time. But is republican civic virtue something that is within the reach only of the saintliest of beings? Is the notion of civic virtue compatible with the evidence of the motivational pluralism of human action or, in other words, the fact that the dispositions operating in human sociality are extremely diverse? At this point it is worth going somewhat deeper into the finer points of the republican conceptualization of civic virtue.

### **3.2 Civic virtue and the development of personal identity**

Republicans stress that the virtuous citizen is that who, participating in collective self-government, is able to impose the best law in the interests of the republic on him or her. This law is the fullest expression of the common good, of general interest, of the “universal”, as Aristotle would say. On the other hand, citizens who, as victims of vice and ethical corruption, are governed by the tyranny of their own immediate passions, lose sight of their own overall private good. What is more, those who fall into the trap of particular interests or political factionalism, who systematically put their own interests before the public interest, are bad citizens. It is clear then, that, from the republican perspective, ethics and politics go hand in hand, that private good and public good are interdependent and that virtue acts as the bridge between the two spheres (Francisco and Raventós, 2002).

The heart of the matter lies in the fact that individuals find in political praxis, which implies the cultivation of civic virtues, the way to the unfolding of their own ethical identity, which is to say of their own personal identity. As Domènech (2000) has pointed out, there is good reason for thinking that the notion of our earliest thinkers that individuals are driven by all sorts of inner conflicts and disputes, that they constitute a set of “multiple selves” disseminated in space and time, is essentially correct. Hence Aristotle considered that separate and autonomous existence or, in other words, the formation of the individual’s character, is a fundamental ethical objective and this depends, first, on individuals themselves, on their self-modelling, on their constructing themselves to the extent that they are capable of selecting their wishes and resolving their inner conflicts

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“by the harmonious integration of their different selves and their becoming more *enkratic*. This is the only case in which it can be said that someone is a ‘one and indivisible self’, or an individual. On the other hand, an *akratic* individual, an intemperate and even wicked person, ‘is not one self, but multiple selves, and he is so inconstant that he becomes another person in the same day’. All this leads the non-virtuous man to clash with himself, since the fact that his wishes and feelings are separate ‘makes a man his own enemy’” (Domènech, 2000, p. 31).<sup>15</sup> The primary task, then, is individual yet the separate and autonomous existence of individuals also requires mutual modelling, reciprocal collaboration in the identification and cultivation of individual excellence. The Aristotelian link between virtue and friendship is as follows: friendship occurs among free individuals who are seeking virtue or excellence and the formation of a good character through mutual, and therefore, self-modelling. This is why Aristotle, like most of the ancient philosophers, thought that there is symmetry in the way in which individuals treat themselves and the way they treat others. Herein may be found the deepest sense in Aristotle’s celebrated words when he stresses that man is a “political animal”. All his relations, including those with himself, are potentially political, which is to say that they are power relations, of authority and of government, and the only way for man to become a separate and autonomous individual is to cultivate his social relations.

So this is not a question of atomized individuals, like Leibniz’s “monads”, completely self-contained entities that are indifferent to all others, paradoxically devoting themselves to the cultivation of civic virtues which means regulating private good in favour of a priority common public good. Republican anthropology moves in a different direction, assuming that articulation of the self and the development of personal identity, although conditioned by certain prior ontogenetic factors, is essentially a social and collective task and it is hardly surprising, therefore (but rather “natural” that this should be the case), that

<sup>15</sup> The Greek *enkrateia* could be translated as “willpower” or “strength of will”. This then indicates the chance of bringing to bear a whole second-order rationality that regulates the primary wishes that appear in individuals. On the other hand, *akrasia* could be translated as “weakness of will”. The quotations in Domènech’s text have been taken from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*.

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individuals, in certain conditions, opt to participate in the articulation and reproduction of political institutions that may be seen as the expression of this *continuum* between intrapsychic and interpersonal deliberation. Their own identity is clearly dependent on it.

### 3.3 Civic virtue and the guarantee of *libertas*

A second factor that enables us to talk about civic virtue without appealing to outlandish anthropological suppositions is that individuals are conscious of the fact that the maintenance and vigour of republican political institutions constitutes the guarantee of their own *libertas*. Why can it be stated (Francisco, 1999) that, for republicanism, virtue is attainable only through the exercise of political freedom, conferred upon participating and co-deciding individuals? It is worth mentioning here the old republican idea that the active participation of citizens in decision-making processes is a necessary condition for freedom as non-domination or for ensuring that power does not become arbitrary. In other words, this *libertas* that is located at the heart of the republican axiological scheme is not possible without opening out real channels for citizens' participation in the reproduction of republican political institutions. The participation of individuals in the *polis* must be understood from this perspective as a guarantee against those arbitrary interferences that might end up by eroding the individual's capacity for making a reality of his or her own freely-determined goals. First, the deliberative mechanisms themselves constitute an epistemic filter that selects those options that arise from correctly formulated beliefs, and this means rejecting both unfounded reasons and those which are simply imposed because of certain prerogatives and positions of power. Second, the smooth running of the political institutions that emanate from – and are responsible for the well-being of – these deliberative processes and institutions whose stability depends on the constant presence of the individuals within them, makes it possible to avoid the grave

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danger of which Machiavelli warned:<sup>16</sup> without republican institutional devices, certain individuals may retain powerful positions from which they subjugate other citizens thanks to the coercive mechanisms made available by these positions and the forms of bribery permitted by their proximity to public funds.

It seems clear, then, that the republican tradition manages to articulate a robust and consultative notion of civic virtue without being based on impossible and naïvely optimistic anthropological notions. It is a fact that the “republican tradition has never denied the importance, nor even the legitimacy, of self-interest in human action, from Aristotle’s *sympheron*, Rousseau’s *amour de soi* and Spinoza’s *conservatio sui* through to Adam Smith’s self-interest. What republicanism does object to – and very realistically – is the monopoly of this kind of motivation in explanations of human action” (Domènech, 2000, p. 33).<sup>17</sup> The republican tradition affirms, rather, that the design of political institutions can bring out civic virtue, to a greater or lesser extent and in different ways. In other words, the manner in which the design of political institutions is approached has a lot to do with the possibility of creating a “climate of confidence” in these institutions and this has much bearing on their social and political success. Montagut (2001, p. 41) stresses “all participatory and respectful dynamics require a high level of confidence”. Again, she adds “social confidence is based not only on interpersonal confidence, or that between individuals, but also on the confidence of individuals in government institutions”. The fact is that the existence of expectations of cooperation from others leads each individual to cooperate too and this gives rise to a “virtuous circle” (Putnam, 1993) that makes it possible to resolve the basic dilemmas of collective action. Montagut also points out that “civic commitment constructs a communal political identity that provides citizens with experience of government and the ability to judge public affairs. Social capital thereby promotes good government and reinforces the articulation

<sup>16</sup> Needless to say, Machiavelli’s well-known *Discorsi sopra la Prima Deca di Tito Livio* constitutes not only one of the founding texts of modern political theory, but also one of the high points of the republican tradition.

<sup>17</sup> For a republican reading of Adam Smith’s thought, see Aguiar (2002) and Rae (1965).

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of demands to the benefit of all and in detriment of those that favour some members of society at the cost of others”. As we have already suggested, political participation is, at least to some extent, a very valuable mechanism for maintaining those institutions on which the possibility for individuals of carrying out their autonomous life plans depends.

### **3.4 The scope and the meaning of republican freedom as non-domination. The horizons of basic income**

Nothing that resides within the basic republican claims is possible without the guarantee of material existence. When individuals lack their own means of support, or when they are obliged to sell their labour power – their freedom — in order to survive, republican virtues, and the concomitant happiness, the real objective of Aristotelian ethics and politics,<sup>18</sup> are no longer attainable. Hence the notion of freedom as non-domination plays such an important role in the republican scheme.

From the perspective of republican freedom as non-domination it is understood that X dominates Y if and only if X enjoys a certain power over Y and, in particular, the arbitrarily-based power to interfere in Y’s affairs. To be more precise, Pettit (1997) stresses that X dominates Y insofar as he or she (1) has the capacity to interfere; (2) arbitrarily; and (3) in certain choices made by Y. Not all interference is necessarily arbitrary. Interference is arbitrary inasmuch as it depends on the will of the one who is interfering, independently of the opinions, preferences and interests of those who are subjected to this interference. Even if X never interferes in actions chosen by Y – because of X’s benevolence or because of Y’s fawning, or whatever - we still need to talk about domination if X simply has the power to interfere at whim. A slave’s master might refrain from interfering in his or her life out of kindness, for instance, but he still has the power to do so and hence there is domination. On the contrary, non-arbitrary interference is that which exists when there is basic equality between X and Y in terms of means and

<sup>18</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.

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power and Y is aware of and shares X's reasons for intervening in his or her actions. Republicanism rejects arbitrary interference and is committed to defending freedom as non-domination, this being understood as the freedom enjoyed by those who live in the presence of others and, by virtue of certain social and institutional structures, none of these others has the slightest possibility of interfering arbitrarily in the decisions that they might make. Republican freedom as non-domination is therefore a highly demanding social concept since it requires that those people who could interfere arbitrarily in the lives of others are prevented from doing so.

At this point it is appropriate to consider again Pettit's assertion that "if a republican state is committed to advancing the cause of freedom as non-domination among its citizens, then it must embrace a policy of promoting socioeconomic independence" (Pettit, 1997, pp. 158-159). This implies a defence of the republican scheme in a world in which the condition of citizenship has now been extended to almost everybody – or it has been "universalized" – which in turn implies the definition of social and economic policies aimed at the "universalization of this condition of (self-) ownership" which, as already noted, has been situated, from the true republican standpoint, as the main determining factor of the civic behaviour of citizens.

Could BI constitute the materialization of this republican aim of universalizing (self-) ownership? The main objective of this paper is to provide the basis for an affirmative response to this question.

#### **4. Basic Income and republican freedom as non-domination**

At this point we need to analyze to what extent the implementation of a BI could favour the normative requirements of republican theory. Since it is committed to the cause of freedom as non-domination, republicanism stands for the socioeconomic independence of all citizens. Its main objective is to ensure that citizens are independent of charity – both public and private – and free from the possible arbitrariness of employers. Without socio-economic independence,

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the chances that individuals might enjoy freedom as non-domination are greatly reduced, both in terms of scope and intensity. It should be taken into account that the establishment of a BI would mean the achievement of a very significant socioeconomic independence, much greater than that held by significant numbers of citizens in present-day societies, in particular the so-called “groups of social vulnerability” – wage-earning workers, the unemployed, women and, in general terms, lower-income groups.<sup>19</sup> The implementation of a BI would expand the possibilities for republican freedom as non-domination, first in terms of scope since citizens would be free in more spheres of their lives within which freedom is presently vetoed and, second, in terms of intensity for the currently consolidated spheres of freedom would be reinforced.<sup>20</sup>

What are these spheres of – republican – freedom that a BI might open up? It seems reasonable to think that only from a position of material independence one might choose freely. Thus, only material independence would permit a woman to choose not to be maltreated by her husband; a young person might choose to turn down a meagre salary or precarious job; an unemployed person might opt for non-remunerated work that could benefit society and thereby avoid the social stigma of being on the dole – where it existed; a poor person might aspire to a decent life; while a worker could choose from a range of gratifying occupations, even if it

<sup>19</sup> A “group of social vulnerability” is a set of people sharing the possibility of being submitted to arbitrary interference by the same mechanisms, or as a result of the same causes or reasons. There are many groups of social vulnerability, for instance, those consisting of poor people, women, homosexuals, certain immigrants or wage-earning workers. It is worth quoting here a passage from one of the Marx’s last writings, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1981): “[...] if the only thing that a man has at his disposal is his labour power, he will inevitably become, in any social context and stage of civilization, the slave of those men owning the material conditions of work. And he will be unable to work and, therefore, to live without their permission to do so” (translated from the Spanish edition). The republican echoes of this statement are, again, very clear: the assumption of the need for ownership so as to construct a solid and non-banal notion of freedom is evident. It is well known that the salaried worker’s essential “vulnerability” did not go unremarked in Marx’s analysis.

<sup>20</sup> Yet we must go beyond that. The republican aim is to ensure that specific policies that provide citizens with specific needs do so in terms of basic rights and not at the discretion of a government or group of government employees (Francisco and Raventós, 2002; Raventós, 2000). The aim, then, is to avoid the establishment of other forms of domination whereby government institutions respond to citizens’ needs. In other words, it is necessary to establish the highest possible guarantee of the provision of these socio-economic resources. It has even been indicated that constitutional guarantees of BI would add scope and intensity to freedom as non-domination (Raventós, 2000).



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were for less pay (Raventós and Francisco 2002; Red Renta Básica, 2002). Thus independence increases freedom and a sufficiently generous BI would universalise a reasonable degree of independence.<sup>21</sup>

It should not be overlooked, however, that the proposal of a BI, taken from republican postulates, while it might play a crucial role in the spheres under discussion, does not stop there. A reduction of the asymmetries of power characteristic of work markets and the concomitant increase of freedom as non-domination of the workers constitutes in itself a highly valuable goal but, at the same time, it should be seen as an underpinning for further social and political ends: the construction of a republican social domain. The effects of BI on the work market should therefore be analysed, as noted above, with reference to the significance that ownership – of oneself – has in the articulation of republican political institutions. To put it in other words, this would constitute an analysis of the reinforcement of freedom as non-domination, as the fruit of introducing BI, and it should be carried out in the awareness that this “repoliticization of the private sphere” that goes into effect from the moment that there is an attempt to reconsider the basic socioeconomic conditions that affect the participants in the exchanges of civil society, is oriented towards the “articulation of a public sphere” that is full and vigorous.

#### **4.1 The articulation of the public sphere from a repoliticization of the private sphere**

It has been stated from very beginning. The Aristotelian critique of democratic institutions appeared when the possibility was raised that these institutions might be occupied by any individuals who were free but lacking their own resources, by individuals who were not proprietors and thus restricted by bonds of socio-economic dependence on other people. Ever since the times of Aristotle, republicanism has denied that there is any sense in conceiving of a citizenry that lacks material independence. This is the essential condition for

<sup>21</sup> A detailed analysis of the mechanisms whereby the aforementioned social groups would have expanded republican freedom as non-domination is beyond the scope of this paper which aims to focus on matters that are strictly confined to normative philosophy.

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being able to develop the civic disposition stored in individuals. Without material independence citizens – if they might be called such in this case – as prey to the factional interests that are fed by the forms of servitude to which they are submitted, would not be capable of giving priority to the common good over private gain or of understanding that they are required to engage in a task that is constitutively human consisting in fostering the interests of the republic with the prior understanding that one’s own freedom is positively and reciprocally related with that of the citizenry as a whole.

It is in this sense that BI has been presented as a privileged instrument for promoting republican freedom as non-domination or, in other words, for correcting, at least partially, the asymmetries of power characteristic of civil society and thereby to confront the task of constructing the public sphere on solid foundations. Far from conceiving the republican tradition as a political theory with which certain economic principles might be related, it should be presented as true political economy, which is to say as a body of doctrine that, starting out from an investigation into the impact of socio-economic conditions on human motivations, reflects upon the best way of articulating political institutions that would be capable of guaranteeing the freedom of the citizens as a whole. Ste. Croix stated it very clearly (1988, p. 95): “Aristotle’s analysis of political activity in the Greek city started out from an empirically demonstrable premiss that he shared, not only with other Greek thinkers, but also with [the republican] Marx, this being that the main factor that determines the political behaviour of the majority of individuals is economic class, as this is still the case today”.<sup>22</sup> The aim, therefore, is that which has already been stated: to “repoliticize the private sphere” – in the sense of accepting and confronting the levels of power that operate therein – “in order to articulate the public sphere”.

Why do we need to speak of “repoliticization”? As noted above, the discontinuity between the private and public spheres, between individual and social ethics that is at work within liberalism is, in good part, heir to the line of

<sup>22</sup> Translated from the Spanish edition.

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demarcation drawn between public and private spheres in Roman civil law. At this point, we should point out the significance of the process of progressive neglect by economic science, after David Ricardo, of the question of power, of the bonds of economic dependence between individuals, which had previously been of central concern in classical political economy. The latter set out from an analysis of the relations of production and was also concerned with theorizing on good government while still sharing republican concerns about the *continuum* between the public and the private spheres and also using a notion of freedom that was frequently close to the republican idea so that this freedom was one that embraced more aspects than its mere formal guarantee.

One should analyze, then, to what point a republican approximation to the proposal of a BI permits a recovery of the “political, “proprietary” spirit of economic science prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is highly probable that this would be one of the main contributions that a republican perspective could make to the normative social science of our times which is more concerned with questions pertaining to the subjective evaluations that individuals might make of society’s goods – their own or those of others – than with the influence exerted by the socio-economic base and power relations on the relations between individuals.

## **4.2 From basic income to republican political institutions**

Though they take ethical and philosophical postulates as their starting point, republican ideas are ultimately directed towards the political process. The republic’s imperative of self-government and its rejection of despotic or tyrannical principles require that decision-making must necessarily respond to a process that is deliberative by nature. Where there is tyranny or a despotic government, decisions are taken from a position of absolute power, immediately and uncontestedly. In contrast the political decisions taken by a collective of citizens in a free republic are “mediated” and “contestable” decisions (Pettit, 1997)<sup>23</sup>,

<sup>23</sup> It is the principle of “contestability” that, according to Pettit, must guide a political system that aims to minimise domination. However, it should be pointed out that this assertion is not incompatible with

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which is to say they are – and here it is worth returning to the formula employed earlier – the result of a process of deliberation in which proposals are made and discussed and ideas are talked about, accepted or rejected according to a principle of rationality. It follows that the domain of oratory has been central for the republican tradition. “In a republican nation”, writes Jefferson, “whose citizens are to be led by reason and persuasion and not by force, the art of reasoning becomes of first importance”.<sup>24</sup>

Again, this deliberative political rationality is geared to the good, not of any particular individual or faction of the *demos*, but of the republic as such. This is also the logical result of the process of deliberation itself, for deliberation is not the negotiation of pre-established interests but rather it is to participate in a process in which reasons are given with respect to matters of general – and not particular – concern. Through reasoning it is hoped to convince others of the soundness of one’s own position. Anything else would be to force or impose – in short to dominate. Deliberation, which is a requirement of republican freedom, imposes two conditions on the political process itself.

§ The preferences of individuals should not be exogenous to the political process (Sunstein, 1988), and they should not be fixed by a supposedly selfish or sinful human nature that is given priority over an immutable social life and is therefore unfit to be the basis of interaction between individuals. On the contrary, the political process is understood as a “constitutive” element of the preferences themselves, as a setting where it is possible to modify them on the basis of the best reasoning that is proffered in the process of deliberation.

§ The regulative ideal of the political process should be the “consensus” that results from deliberation, and not the balance of interests that

consensus continuing to be the basic regulative ideal in a republican deliberative process. “Consent” and “contestability”, then, are not necessarily opposing principles (Francisco and Raventós, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> Cited by Richard (1995).

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might be derived from a process of negotiation. To deliberate intrinsically means to aspire to convince.

Furthermore, for deliberation and consensus to be possible, an additional condition that affects the political process also seems necessary: the condition that Francisco and Raventós call the “dispersion” or “non-accumulability” of political power. It is here that two of the main lines of classical republican thinking converge: the doctrine of “separation of powers” and that of “checks and balances”. First, as is known, the doctrine of division of powers states that a concentration of the three great powers of state – legislative, executive and judicial – in the same hands inevitably leads to tyranny. Second, the doctrine of checks and balances is inspired, in the heart of the republican tradition, by the same anti-tyrannical principle. As the Founding Fathers of the 1787 United States Constitution saw it, power without checks and balances tends to become all embracing. Thus, democratic republicanism that is free of the elitist and anti-majority biases of the republicanism of certain historical periods must strive for the institutional materialization of the principle of the dispersion of political power to be designed in such a way that the interests of the better organized groups of social and economic power cannot undermine it. In particular, in the present-day process of globalization, it is extremely difficult to prevent these economic interests from colonizing the political process, even in political frameworks where, to some extent, systems of checks and balances and separation of powers have been included. There are always fissures that are unforeseen in institutional engineering through which the buying and selling of favours and traffic of influences might slip. So the only reliable formula for avoiding or minimizing this colonization is democratic reinforcement: to ensure that democracy is effectively participatory, to see that a robust and well organized citizenry exercises self-government controlling the political class by means of effective mechanisms of accountability and obliging the political process to respond to its needs. This means opening up spaces for deliberation, generating a mesh of associations, and so on (Francisco and Raventós, 2002).

Once again, it should be made clear that citizens without guarantees of a certain level of material sufficiency, of economic security, which BI guarantees

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by definition, are ill-furnished to engage in political action and democratic participation. Without the right to material existence, there can be no full citizenship. This is to say that a guaranteed basic material level constitutes the condition – which, while it may not be sufficient, it is at least necessary – for the possibility of full citizenship. The great appeals for a strengthening of democracy and citizens’ participation may frequently be brilliant intellectual and political exercises, and they are almost always well-intentioned but, in the absence of a guarantee of material existence, there is not the slightest possibility of access, at least by a good part of the citizens, to the improvements that are called for.

The basis for such an assertion has been outlined above in our discussion of republican ideas. In a few succinct words and going straight to the point, Gargarella (1995a, pp. 146-47) states, “it seems reasonable to think that those people who lack the material resources for ensuring their daily subsistence must have greater problems when it comes to participating in politics. To put it crudely, it does not seem inappropriate to conjecture that the poorest people must have less time, less power of negotiation, less intellectual capacity than rich and better-educated people”. If citizens can enjoy the security of a stable and constant income it should be possible to foster their disposition to participate in deliberative processes. In short, a BI, given that it confers on the members of a political community levels of economic independence that are not in the least discreditable with respect to those of other individuals, would make it possible to increase autonomy of judgement (where individuals could contribute their best reasoning towards the processes of deliberation and to govern themselves effectively according to criteria of rationality in making decisions so that it would be possible then to discard questions of opportunity raised by economic dependence on other participants in the political process) and the responsibility of citizens (where the choice of personal projects would be more autonomous so that individuals would be in a position to justify their preferences and their proposals, always with the promotion of the common good as their end). This is simply to suggest the fact that a BI would make the cultivation of civic virtue and the disposition for the development and reproduction of republican institutions that must guarantee freedom as non-domination for the citizens as a whole, a much

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less fanciful proposition. Of what kind of citizenship can we speak when, of all the citizens of the United States, the richest 1 per cent controls 70 per cent of all the wealth generated since the mid-1970s (Frank, 1999)?

#### **4.3 The universalization of citizenry and “universalization of property”**

As noted above, republicanism’s “proprietary” concerns have been a constant since the times of Aristotle. The great republican tradition, that of freedom, which, since Aristotle’s times, has rejected all political forms of tyranny, without overlooking the tyranny that settles into the very interstices of social relations, has clearly called for material independence as a criterion of full citizenship, this giving it its highly “proprietary” nature. To go no further, a democracy of small – and large – producers was Jefferson’s dream, a dream that the modern industrial world swept away in creating a huge army of individuals who are excluded from the property of capital – and of the earth – and this is at the root of the great transformation so formidably described by Karl Polanyi (1944) as the creation of an army of wage earners, of “free” workers. As Raventós and Francisco (2002) say, it is no accident that nineteenth-century liberalism should have ended up separating the ideal of citizenship from the condition of independence. Modern liberalism universalized civil and political rights without taking the property and wealth of individuals into account but, with this operation it created not only a vulnerable and dependent citizenry – that is also dependent on state protection – but it also gave juridical and constitutional legitimacy to social inequality between citizens who were formally free. In contrast, the proposal of a BI, in recovering the ideal of independence for everyone, links up with the republican tradition of freedom. From this standpoint, BI must be understood as the right to social existence, as a universal assignment that enables citizens, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, to be effectively free citizens (Raventós and Francisco, 2002).

Republicanism, whether it be democratic or aristocratic, has therefore understood that, in the *polis*, or in the heart of a social system regulated by republican political institutions such as those described above, man is capable of

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self-realisation – of making his own nature a reality, to put it in Aristotelian terms – because only in the *polis* is it possible that the division of labour allows the needs of individuals to be covered and, it is on this basis that the precise, rational, inter-subjective encounter takes place whereby individuals might discern what they are and what they want to be. Here we are concerned with establishing the limits of such a *polis*. This issue, pertaining to the limits of the *polis* – and, it follows, of citizenship – is what makes it possible to establish that, historically, there have been radically democratic and profoundly aristocratic republicanism. It also makes it possible to see how one should approach an application of republican ideas in a world, today's world, whose axiology supposedly bestows the condition of citizenship on almost the totality of individuals.

Today, it is only by resorting to weird, unsustainable and even aberrant psychological-social, anthropological or historical-political considerations that it is possible to argue for the deprivation of citizens' rights for any segment of the members of a society. In fact, hardly anyone would contemplate depriving part of the population of the rights and guarantees enshrined in the law. Citizenship is seen as universal. If the aim is to provide this notion of "citizenship" with all the vigour which an exploration of the postulates of the republican tradition reveals it might have, a coherent consideration of republican normative ideas requires that formulas should be articulated with a view to "universalizing the condition of ownership" – of themselves and their own lives – as well for these supposed citizens.

This is also the basic intuition of the nascent socialism that appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as an extension of the radical democratic ideas, which, at least for a while, inspired the French Revolution of 1789. If nineteenth-century legal systems were progressively bestowing on all individuals, without consideration of social extraction, the same civil, and subsequently political, rights, why couldn't these same individuals also enjoy full freedom in the civil sphere? Why did they have to continue to be dependent on others in order to live? Why did they have to live



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only with the “permission” of the owners of the means of production?<sup>25</sup> Why, to use Marxist terminology, did they have to be “alienated” in civil terms if, at least on paper, they enjoyed the same rights that the well-to-do classes enjoyed? The “proprietary republican” nature of political socialism was, at least during its genesis, clear enough. The immense mass of the dispossessed generated by capitalism as a result of the “great transformation” – especially the demographic transformation – consisted of men that had been freed from the feudal yoke but not from proprietors and who, as good republicans, called for full civil freedom because they were well aware that, without it, the much-vaunted civil and political freedom and equality offered to them *de jure* by liberalism were meaningless. They understood the importance of property when it came to talking about true political freedom. In essence, this was the central intuition that fuelled democratic socialist – and one might add “republican” – political thought, and this was a hard blow for the general line of the normative discourse of liberalism, and also for the more intransigent forms of political elitism, a blow that was frequently met with the harshest of responses.

The Kantian idea that everyone should be fully responsible for his or her own destiny is frustrated when circumstances beyond the control of individuals determine the kind of life they must lead (Gargarella, 1995b). It is highly probable that one of the main tensions in modern moral philosophy arises from the instability of some ideals of autonomy and responsibility that have been expounded at the limits of a negative and strictly formal conception of freedom and this has eroded the real space for the realisation of these ideals.<sup>26</sup> If it is true that, after Kant, moral philosophy once again began seriously to consider the possibility, contemplated in ancient philosophy and neglected after its decline, that the individual creates him- or herself (Domènech, 1989), it is no less exact to say that this possibility vanishes in the absence of certain social and economic guarantees that are now being strangled by the modern-liberal conception of liberty, anchored as it is in a strictly formalist concern with eliminating

<sup>25</sup> See footnote 19.

<sup>26</sup> The analysis of Philippe Van Parijs (1998) is in keeping with these considerations.

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interferences which may act as obstacles to voluntary contracts. In this sense, an institutional system that assumes as its own a non-trivialised notion of this – very modern – autonomy would need to attend to the socio-economic circumstances of individuals in such a way that the life of each one of them would be the product of their own choices alone. In other words, it would mean careful treatment of the notion of “freedom as non-domination”. Proposing a BI at this point would have a great deal to contribute.

“To articulate the public sphere from the repoliticization of the private sphere”, is then the true task and measure of a BI. This means assuming the existence of power relations that traverse civil society and then providing the weakest parties in these relations with the necessary resources so as to cope with the processes of decision-making in an equality of conditions. On this goal depends the success of the functioning of a number of political institutions oriented towards attaining the common good – the promotion of freedom as non-domination for the citizens as a whole – on the basis of the disposition of the members of the political community to come together in these institutions, to foster them and reproduce them from a position of rationality and good judgement that is made possible by the absence of domination. In short, the doses of civic virtue that is necessary for the proper functioning of republican political institutions depend on it.

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