

Republicanism and/or Relational Egalitarianism?

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Abstract: What is the relationship between republicanism and relational egalitarianism? According to Andreas Schmidt, republicanism, in particular Pettit's theory of republicanism, is able to capture some relations as objectionable which relational egalitarianism cannot, to wit, relations of mutual domination. This shows that relational egalitarianism is inadequate. In this paper, I explore the relationship between republicanism and relational egalitarianism and argue, first, that Schmidt is wrong. Relational egalitarianism, on a plausible understanding, does object to relations of mutual domination. I then argue that relational egalitarianism, unlike republicanism, is able to capture why some relationships involving racism are objectionable. I end the paper by arguing that we should not see the views as competitors: republicanism, on a plausible understanding, provides a necessary condition of what it means to relate as equals (i.e. non-domination), whereas relational egalitarianism provides necessary and jointly sufficient conditions of what it means to relate as equals.

Keywords: republicanism; relational egalitarianism; racism; mutual domination; Schmidt

1. Introduction

According to republicanism, a community in which some people suffer from domination is objectionable (Pettit 1997; 2012). According to relational egalitarianism, a community in which people relate do not relate as equals is objectionable (Anderson 1999; Scheffler 2003; 2005; 2015; Schemmel 2011a; 2011b). The following community is objectionable to both:

Slave Society: In Slavenia, half of the population are masters who each have one slave.

Republicanism objects to *Slave Society* because the slaves suffer from domination: their freedoms depend on their master's will (Schmidt 2018: 177). Relational egalitarianism objects to *Slave Society*

because the people in the community do not relate as equals (Lippert-Rasmussen 2018: 4-5). The masters regard and/or treat their slaves as moral (and social) inferiors despite their moral equality.

These views also reach the same verdict in cases which are more similar to contemporary societies. Patriarchal relationships, in which the man, qua earning the highest income, controls where they live and the distribution of domestic tasks, etc., are objectionable according to republicanism and relational egalitarianism (Pettit 1997: 5; Scheffler 2015: 24-25; Schmidt 2018: 198).

Although this shows that there are objectionable relations that both views capture, republicanism and relational egalitarianism are distinct positions. The relationship between republicanism and relational egalitarianism is not always clearly spelled out, but it is sometimes assumed that they are competitors. In this way, republicans seek to show that they are able to capture objectionable relations which relational egalitarians are unable to capture, and vice versa. A recent argument with this aim is put forward by Schmidt (2018). He argues that republicanism, in particular Pettit's theory of republicanism, is able to capture some relations as objectionable which relational egalitarianism cannot. That is true of cases in which two agents "hold equal power over each other yet are both precariously dependent on each other's will" (Schmidt 2018: 189). Schmidt refers to these as cases of *mutual domination*. He presents two examples—one involving two parties who have powerful information about each other (*Powerful Information*); the other involving ten people trapped in a room from which only one person can exit (*Collective Prison*)—to argue that relational egalitarianism cannot judge relationships of mutual domination to be objectionable since they are not inegalitarian. Because relationships which involve mutual domination are obviously objectionable, and because relational egalitarianism cannot capture the fact that such relationships are objectionable, Schmidt concludes that relational egalitarianism is incomplete.

The first aim of this paper is to argue that Schmidt is wrong. I argue that on a plausible understanding of relational egalitarianism, *Powerful Information* and *Collective Prison* are objectionable for relational egalitarians qua relational egalitarians. This argument speaks to the relationship between relational egalitarianism and republicanism: republicans have not succeeded in demonstrating that the scope of republicanism is more plausible than the scope of relational egalitarianism (Section 2). The second aim of this paper is to make the reverse claim of Schmidt. I will argue that relational egalitarianism is able to identify as objectionable unequal relations—in particular, relationships in which one party is a racist and regards the other as a moral inferior—which are unobjectionable on Pettit’s account of republicanism (Section 3). The last part of the paper parts ways with Schmidt. I argue that relational egalitarianism and republicanism should not be seen as competitors. A plausible understanding of republicanism has a different aim than relational egalitarianism: it seeks to provide a necessary condition for realizing equal relations, to wit, that relationships must not involve domination. Relational egalitarianism, on the other hand, seeks to provide the necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for realizing equal relations. For this reason, relational egalitarianism and republicanism should not be seen as competitors in the sense of providing the best answer to what relating as equals requires; relational egalitarians need the republican understanding of non-domination since it is a necessary condition for realizing relational equality. Thus, this paper aims to put republicanism and relational egalitarianism in their proper places.

2. Mutual domination, republicanism, and relational egalitarianism

Schmidt (2018) argues that republicanism is able to capture cases of problematic dependence which relational egalitarianism is unable to capture. If he is right, his argument entails that relational

egalitarianism is inadequate. In setting up his argument, Schmidt starts by stating the following normative concern which is fundamental to republicanism:

Will Dependence: “there is something objectionable about social relations in which one person *A*’s freedoms, and her being able to exercise them, depend on another person *B*’s will over whether *A* should have those freedoms or not.” (Schmidt 2018: 178; see also Simpson 2017: 30)¹

This concern distinguishes republicans from liberals as the latter take option–freedom as central for being free. You are free according to the liberal conception insofar as there is an absence of constraints imposed by other people (Schmidt 2018: 176-177). This is not sufficient for republicans. According to them, one must not only have a sufficient number of options from which to choose; one must also “possess those options independently of other people’s wills” (Schmidt 2018: 178). This is why the slave with the kindly master is unfree according to republicans (but not according to liberals).² Although the master does not interfere with his slave’s options, the master could interfere with the slave’s options if he were to change his mind.³ The slave is not free since his options depend on his master’s will; he suffers from domination. Schmidt focuses on Pettit’s influential theory of republicanism which, he points out, is an example of strong republicanism, according to which

¹ Thus, this criterion, Schmidt (2018: 178) explains, may also be described in terms of modal robustness: “To be independent of another person’s will relative to a set *S* of freedoms requires that I have *S* across a set of nearby possible worlds in which the other person changes her will over whether I should have *S* or not.” For more on republicanism as modally robust, see Pettit (2012: 67; 2015).

² For arguments as to why a proper formulation of the liberal conception of non-interference can capture the concerns of republicans, see Carter (1999) and Kramer (2003).

³ According to Kolodny (2019: 97), republicans assume the following *Can do Test* to determine whether *X* has the power to invade *Y*: “Imagine that *X* were to will to invade *Y*. Hold fixed, to the extent possible, everything else, including all other actual wills, besides *X*’s. Then ask whether *X* invades *Y*. If so, then *X* has the power to invade *Y*, otherwise not.”

“republican freedom is an all-things-considered value for normative political theory” (Schmidt 2018: 181). On Pettit’s account of republicanism, freedom as non-domination is a matter of both intensity and extent. A person stuck on a lonely island is perfectly free from domination (intensity), but he might have a low degree of freedom compared with someone who lives in a rich society as he does not have many options (extent). Following Schmidt, I will focus on this understanding of republicanism in what follows.⁴

With this republican framework in hand, Schmidt points to a range of cases which involve domination and are thus unjust. Two of these cases are:

Powerful Information: “through an accident data leak, you receive information about your co-worker. But your co-worker also receives information about you. You are both aware that the other person has such information. The information is so powerful that you could use it to get your colleague fired and vice versa.” (Schmidt 2018: 188)

Collective Prison: “Ten people are placed in a room, the only exit from which is a huge and heavy locked door. At various distances from each lies a single key. Whoever picks up this key... and takes it to the door will find... a way to open the door and leave the room. But if he does so he alone will be able to leave it. Photoelectronic devices installed by a gaoler ensure that it will open only just enough to permit one exit. Then it will close, and no one inside the room will be able to open it again.” (Schmidt 2018: 186; from Cohen 2011: 159)

⁴ I elaborate on Pettit’s account of republicanism when arguing, in Section 4, why republicanism and relational egalitarianism should not be seen as competitors.

Powerful information is objectionable because the co-workers dominate each other; each of them is able to get the other fired if he wants to. Even though there is equality in this case, it is objectionable because they both suffer from domination. They lack what Schmidt terms preventive and abortive control. The former is the form of control which makes me able to prevent other people from interfering with me, whereas the latter is the ability to remove a constraint after it is in place (Schmidt 2018: 180). As an example of preventive control, Schmidt introduces a case where I, to rein in my snacking, give my partner the key to the snacks cabinet. I can get the key back on 24 hours' notice. I have preventive control in this case since I could refuse to give my partner the key to the cabinet in which case he would be unable to interfere (Schmidt 2018: 179-180). To illustrate abortive control, Schmidt points to a case in which I voluntarily agree to become a slave and give away future control over this power. Since I do not have continuing control in this case, I do not have abortive control (Schmidt 2018: 180).

The co-worker in *Powerful Information* does not have preventive control over the other, and vice versa, since he does not have the ability to prevent his co-worker from interfering with him in the sense of getting him fired. Neither does he have abortive control since he cannot intervene and remove the constraint understood as the information which the co-worker possesses. Thus, this is an instance of *mutual domination* where “two agents mutually dominate each other if both hold equal power over each other yet are both precariously dependent on each other's will” (Schmidt 2018: 189).

Collective Prison is also an instance of mutual domination. Each prisoner's freedom is dependent on none of the other prisoners leaving. Each prisoner can lock the other prisoners up for life. As is the case in *Powerful Information*, the prisoners do not have preventive or abortive control. Since *Collective Prison* and *Powerful Information* involve domination, republicanism is able to

capture that these situations are objectionable. According to Schmidt, that is not the case for relational egalitarianism. He explains that relational egalitarians are capable of judging the slave–kindly master relation to be objectionable because the master is clearly superior in relation to the slave, but “liberal egalitarianism [relational egalitarianism] and other, “power equalizing” views do not cover all cases of problematic dependence. Cases like *Collective Prison* and *Powerful Information* are not adequately covered by a concern for social inferiority and subordination, because they do not involve (relational) inequality” (Schmidt 2018: 195) whereas “republicanism helps us identify cases of mutual domination, brings out what makes them problematic and suggests ways to tackle them” (Schmidt 2018: 176). Since relational egalitarianism cannot deem these cases of mutual domination to be objectionable, and since these cases obviously are objectionable, this shows, Schmidt concludes, that relational egalitarianism is inadequate.

I will now argue that Schmidt is only able to reach this conclusion because he employs a particular, and implausible, understanding of relational egalitarianism. On a more plausible understanding of relational egalitarianism, *Powerful Information* and *Collective Prison* are objectionable.

Compare the following two scenarios:

- 1) X and Y are in a relationship of mutual domination. X dominates Y and Y dominates X, and they dominate each other to the same extent.
- 2) X and Y are in a relationship which does not involve domination.⁵

⁵ Let us suppose that there are no other violations of the deontic requirement, a requirement which I introduce in what follows, in (1) and (2).

According to Schmidt's understanding of relational egalitarianism, (1) and (2) are equally just. X and Y relate as equals in (1) since they suffer from domination to the same extent and dominate each other to the same extent. They relate as equals in (2) since neither of them suffer from domination nor dominate the other. However, a plausible understanding of relational egalitarianism does not reach this verdict. We may, following Lippert-Rasmussen (2018: 170), call this view deontic relational egalitarianism.⁶ On this view, relational egalitarianism "takes the form of an agent-relative, deontic norm" (Lippert-Rasmussen 2019: 156).⁷ You, as an agent, are under the moral obligation to relate to another as your moral equal since, "as a matter of fact, we are one another's moral equals" (Lippert-Rasmussen 2018: 170).⁸ To relate to another as an equal requires that you (i) regard her as an equal, and (ii) treat her as an equal (Lippert-Rasmussen 2018: 71; see also Cohen 2013: 197). If you are a racist, you fail the deontic norm: you regard and/or treat another as a moral inferior. You fail to honour the fact that this person is your moral equal. That is true irrespective of whether you are regarded as a moral inferior by that person at the same time.⁹

⁶ Deontic relational egalitarians include, among others, Anderson (1999), Bidadanure (2016), and Schemmel (2011a). Anderson (1999: 313) says, "[Relational] egalitarians base claims to social and political equality on the fact of universal moral equality ... [relational] egalitarians seek a social order in which persons stand in relations of equality." Bidadanure (2016: 246) says, "On this [relational egalitarian] view, what is problematic in our examples [of synchronic inequalities] is precisely that these societies may not be communities of relational equals *at any point*. Phases of domination, marginalization, or segregation cannot be thought to cancel out diachronically" (see also Lippert-Rasmussen 2019: 156).

Schemmel (2011a: 366) says, "Relational egalitarianism ... is a view about social justice; its aim is to specify rights and duties that individuals have as members of society, and which normally override other social values ... The objection to [inegalitarian] relationships is not merely that they are, in some sense, bad for people, but that they constitute unjust treatment: domination involves subjection to the arbitrary exercise of power on the part of somebody else..." (see also Lippert-Rasmussen 2018: 171). For other accounts of relational egalitarianism, which also conflict with Schmidt's understanding, see e.g. Scheffler (2015) and Viehoff (2019).

⁷ According to Lippert-Rasmussen (2018: 174), deontic relational egalitarianism is "the most promising form of relational egalitarianism."

⁸ We might ask why we are one another's moral equals. Relational egalitarians may give several answers to this question (cp. Lippert-Rasmussen, 2018: 170), and I cannot settle this complex matter in this paper. One suggestion may be that we are one another's moral equals because of the kind of beings we are as persons, i.e. rational, autonomous etc. If that were the reason, note that the deontic requirements in deontic relational egalitarianism are, at root, better termed as relating to others *as persons* rather than relating to them *as equals*. It would still be the case that you should relate to others as your moral equal but the underlying reason why you should do so is that they are, as you, persons. I thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this issue.

⁹ This is not necessarily to say that you are as blameworthy as if he had not treated and/or regarded you as a moral inferior, but it is to say that you fail to honour the fact that you are moral equals.

In describing the deontic view, Lippert-Rasmussen (2019: 155) says: “Suppose Adam dominates Bob at one point in time, but that Bob then dominates Adam at a later point in time. Relational egalitarians think this situation is worse than one in which neither of them ever dominated the other.”¹⁰ Clearly, Adam and Bob both fail the deontic norm by dominating each other at different points in time. When Adam dominates Bob, he fails the deontic norm of regarding and treating him as a moral equal; Adam regards and treats Bob as one whose freedoms should depend on his will. Just because they take turns in dominating each other does not mean that they do not violate the deontic norm: it means instead that they both violate the deontic requirement. A person with moral standing should not suffer from domination (Anderson 1999: 297, 300, 312-313; Schemmel 2011a: 366; Young 1990:9)—or disrespect (Wolff 1998; 2010), racism (Anderson 1999: 312; Anderson 2010: 59; Lippert-Rasmussen 2018: 86), sexism (Anderson 1999: 312) etc. Note, though, that the same is true if they dominate each other at the same point in time. This shows that deontic relational egalitarianism does not entail that (1) and (2) are equally objectionable: (1) is objectionable since it involves two violations of the deontic requirement, whereas (2) is unobjectionable since it involves no violations of the deontic requirement.¹¹

With deontic relational egalitarianism in hand, we are now able to see why Schmidt is wrong when he says that relational egalitarianism is unable to capture why *Powerful Information* is objectionable.¹² Both co-workers violate the deontic requirement to relate to others as their moral

¹⁰ Similarly, he argues that “from the point of view of honouring our equal moral status, we honour our moral equality when we refrain from stigmatizing each other at any given time. Changing-places stigmatization might be preferable from that point of view to a situation where the same groups of people are stigmatized all the time, but it still seems deficient in that some people are being stigmatized at any given time – something to which relational egalitarians object” (Lippert-Rasmussen 2019: 158).

¹¹ Admittedly, the deontic understanding might have other problems. Compare (3): X dominates Y for 40 years, and Y does not dominate X; and (4) X dominates Y for 20 years, and Y dominates X for 20 years. We may want to say, qua relational egalitarians, that (3) is more objectionable than (4) (Lippert-Rasmussen 2019: 158). However, it seems clearly less plausible to claim that (1) and (2) are equally objectionable than to claim that (3) and (4) are equally objectionable.

¹² Although my argument in what follows employs deontic relational egalitarianism, we may also show that Schmidt is wrong by using telic relational egalitarianism, to wit, the view that relational equality is valuable but not morally required (Lippert-Rasmussen 2018: 172). On this view, cases of mutual domination can be said to be objectionable

equal. This situation is worse than if their relationship was one of non-domination. Thus, the relationship fails to be a relationship of moral equals as understood in deontic relational egalitarianism.¹³ In a truly egalitarian relationship, there would be no domination.¹⁴

Let us then turn to *Collective Prison*. As was the case in *Powerful Information*, deontic relational egalitarianism is able to capture why *Collective Prison* is objectionable: it involves violations of the deontic requirement. Suppose two of the prisoners are Adam and Bert. Adam dominates Bert and Bert dominates Adam. This means that both Adam and Bert violate the deontic requirement in relation to the other—and thus fail to relate as equals—in the same way that X and Y in (1) above both violate the deontic requirement (cp. Lippert-Rasmussen 2019: 155). We can compare the relationship between Adam and Bert involving domination to a situation in which the relationship between Adam and Bert does not involve domination. The relationship involving domination is clearly objectionable, from the point of view of deontic relational egalitarianism, in a way that the relationship without domination is not. A relationship between X and Y cannot be *truly* egalitarian if X's freedoms depend on Y's will. Thus, deontic relational egalitarianism can point to why *Collective Prison* is objectionable because of how the prisoners dominate each other.

Not only is deontic relational egalitarianism able to point to why *Collective Prison* is objectionable because of how the prisoners dominate each other; it is also able to point to another type of relationship in *Collective Prison* in which the deontic requirement is violated. Schmidt takes

because they are bad: a state of affairs in which two people dominate each other is worse than a state of affairs in which two people do not dominate each other.

¹³ Another way of showing Schmidt to be wrong would be to adopt *sufficientarian relational egalitarianism*, to wit, “a situation is just only if everyone relates to one another as sufficient, where a sufficient is one whose standing is sufficiently high” (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2018: 9). One might argue that in case a person is dominated, his standing falls below the threshold, and the situation is thus objectionable. This is the case for the parties in *Powerful Information*: by being dominated, their standings fall below the threshold.

¹⁴ In defending why mutual domination is objectionable, Schmidt (2018: 189) says, “I depend on another person's will. That the other person also depends on mine does not cancel out my dependence. Two wrongs do not make a republican right.” We have now seen that the same is true on deontic relational egalitarianism: two wrongs do not make a deontic relational egalitarian right.

the example from Cohen who uses it as an argument for why each individual proletarian is individually free to leave the proletariat and become a member of the capitalists although the proletariat as a collective is unfree. Thus, the case also speaks to the relationship between the proletariat as a group and the capitalists as a group; it shows how the capitalists as a group collectively make the proletariat unfree. And, in republican terms, how the capitalists dominate the proletariat as a group in making their freedom depend on their will. Illustratively, Cohen (2011: 161) says, “So each [prisoner] remains free to leave. Yet we can envisage members of the group communicating to their jailer a demand for freedom, to which he could hardly reply that they are free already (even though, individually, they are).”

According to relational egalitarians, groups, and not only individuals, must relate as equals. Anderson (2010: 16) expresses this view when she says, “The relational theory of inequality locates the causes of economic, political, and symbolic group inequalities in the relations (processes of interaction) between the groups, rather than in the internal characteristics of their members or in cultural differences that exist independently of group interaction” (cp. Anderson 2009: 132). Similarly, Voigt (2018: 438-439) says, “While the exact requirements of relational equality have not yet been spelt out in much detail, the kinds of phenomena that relational approaches single out as problematic typically include hierarchies of certain kinds, oppression and stigmatization of particular individuals or groups” (see also Schemmel 2011b: 124). Indeed, it would be morally arbitrary to delimit the relational egalitarian ideal to inter-individual relations inasmuch as the same concerns—such as domination and racism—may be present in inter-group relations as well. This means that a society does not satisfy the relational egalitarian ideal as long as groups do not relate as equals (even if we assume there are no unequal inter-individual relations).

Since group standing matters to deontic relational egalitarianism, we are able to identify another relationship in *Collective Prison* in which there is a violation of the deontic norm. The prison

guards—which is, as we have seen, an analogy to the capitalists—as a collective dominate the prisoners (proletarians) as a collective. But a relationship between moral equals is, as we have seen, objectionable if it involves domination. By dominating, the prison guards as a collective fail in living up to the deontic requirement of not relating to the prison collective as a moral unequal. Thus, we may conclude that according to deontic relational egalitarianism, there are two types of objectionable relationships in *Collective Prison*: (i) the relationship between prisoners; and (ii) the relationship between the prisoners as a collective and the prison guards as a collective. This means that relational egalitarianism *can* point to objectionable relations in *Collective Prison*.¹⁵

One may object to my argument in this section in the following way: “You argue that if X and Y are to relate as equals, they must treat and regard each other as equals. If X and Y regard and treat each other as equals, they do not dominate each other. However, the problem with your argument is that X and Y may treat and regard each other as equals yet X may still dominate Y. Suppose X is a husband in a 19th century marriage: he regards his wife as his moral equal and treats her as such. Due to the noxious laws of coverture in this society, however, X dominates his wife. If he were to change his mind, he would always be able to stop his wife doing what she wanted to do. This shows that you can dominate someone despite treating and regarding her as an equal. Moreover, this extends to other cases as well: we can easily imagine cases in which individuals treat and regard each other as equals but where this takes place in an institutional context in which it is impossible for some individuals not to dominate others, say, because the laws grant dominating power to some. Thus, X and Y may treat and regard each other as equals yet X may dominate Y. But since they live up to the demands of

¹⁵ Another way of showing why *Collective Prison* is objectionable for relational egalitarians is to point to the fact that it involves exploitation. The capitalists as a group exploit the proletarians as a group (even though it might be the case that no individual capitalist exploits any proletarian). But since exploitation, at least when involuntary, violates relational equality (Anderson 1999: 313), *Collective Prison* is objectionable for relational egalitarians qua relational egalitarians.

relational egalitarianism by regarding and treating each other as equals, relational egalitarianism, unlike republicanism, does not seem able to object to relationships of this kind.”¹⁶

I have the following response. Suppose that it is true that in the marriage example, X and Y regard and treat each other as equals. They are living up to their individual relational egalitarian duties. However, from this it does not follow that the relationship between X and Y is unobjectionable from the point of view of relational egalitarianism. To see why, we must note that how institutions, such as the state, treat individuals may affect how individuals are able to relate to each other in this society (cp. Anderson 1999). In the 19th century institutional context, the state treats women as morally inferior to men. The state enforces laws that grant husbands dominating power over their wives. In that way, the state fails to treat its citizens as moral equals. That is objectionable because the state should treat its citizens as moral equals, and because it thereby makes it impossible for a husband and a wife to be in a non-dominating relationship. The marriage between X and Y is thus an inegalitarian relationship and is for this reason objectionable. However, the reason it is objectionable is not that the husband or the wife violate their relational egalitarian duties—they do not, we assume—but instead that the state treats women as moral inferiors to men and thus makes it impossible for a marriage between a husband and a wife to involve non-domination. Exactly how, in general, institutional contexts may affect relationships between individuals on relational egalitarianism is a complex issue that deserves more attention than I have the space to provide here, but what I have said shows that relationships may be objectionably inegalitarian, even when the individuals in the relationship treat and regard each other as equals, because the institutional context makes it impossible for the parties to be in a non-dominating relationship. Thus, relational egalitarians are able

¹⁶ I thank an anonymous reviewer for pushing me on this.

to deem relationships objectionable even when the individuals in these relationships treat and regard each other as equals.

I thus conclude that Schmidt is wrong in arguing that republicanism, as opposed to relational egalitarianism, is able to capture that *Powerful Information* and *Collective Prison*—as examples of mutual domination—are objectionable. On a plausible understanding of relational egalitarianism, deontic relational egalitarianism, they are objectionable, either because the individuals fail to treat and regard each other as equals by dominating each other and/or because the relationship involves domination due to the institutional context in which the relationship takes place.

3. Republicanism and (in)egalitarian relationships

We saw that Schmidt, although unsuccessfully, argues that relational egalitarianism, as opposed to republicanism, is incapable of capturing why relations of mutual domination are objectionable. In this section, I will argue that republicanism fails to fully capture what it means to be in an egalitarian relationship; that deontic relational egalitarianism, unlike republicanism, is able to capture why relationships involving racism, where one party regards the other as a moral inferior, are objectionable.¹⁷

In describing why domination is objectionable, Pettit (1997: 5) says:

“[T]hey [those who suffer from domination] find themselves in a position where they are demeaned by their vulnerability, being unable to look the other in the eye, and where they may even be forced to fawn or toady or flatter in the attempt to ingratiate themselves ... Freedom involves emancipation from any such

¹⁷ This is not a criticism of Schmidt since he emphasises that he remains agnostic as to whether republicanism can account for everything relational egalitarians care about (Schmidt 2018: 195, n. 41).

subordination, liberation from any such dependency. It requires the capacity to stand eye to eye with your fellow citizens, in a shared awareness that none of you has a power of arbitrary interference over another.” (Pettit 1997: 5; see also Pettit 2012: 82)

When X dominates Y, Y is unable to look X “in the eye” and X is unable to look Y “in the eye”; there is an inequality in how they relate to each other. When X and Y are in a relationship which does not involve domination, they have “the capacity to stand eye to eye” as fellow citizens. From these remarks, it seems clear that Pettit believes that it is a necessary and sufficient condition for an equal relationship that there is no domination. As Kolodny (2019: 108) explains, “Pettit’s test of nondomination – that one can “walk tall amongst others and look any in the eye,” “not have to bow or scrape, toady or kowtow, fawn or flatter” – is not obviously a test of immunity to the power of others, but instead a test of equal standing with others” (see also Schuppert 2015: 447). We may express Pettit’s view in the following thesis:

The Republican Relationship Thesis: X and Y relate as equals if and only if X does not dominate Y, and Y does not dominate X.

I will now argue that non-domination is not a sufficient condition for an egalitarian relationship where X and Y relate as equals. Consider the following example:

Racist Worker: A racist worker, X, regards his co-worker, Y, who is a worker at the same level as himself, as a moral inferior. He does not treat her as a moral inferior for opportunistic reasons; he knows that if he did, he would likely lose his job.

The relationship between X and Y does not involve domination. Remember, as Schmidt says, that on Pettit's theory, there is domination in a relationship where "one person *A*'s freedoms, and her being able to exercise them, depend on another person *B*'s will over whether *A* should have those freedoms or not" (Schmidt 2018: 178). In *Racist Worker*, Y's freedoms, and her being able to exercise them, does not depend on X's will, and vice versa. Being at the same level at work, X does not have the power to restrict her freedoms. For instance, he cannot force Y to do overwork even if he wanted to. The same is true, let us assume, in the other spheres of their lives. Following *The Republican Relationship Thesis*, we can conclude that since the relationship between X and Y does not involve domination, X and Y relate as equals.

Deontic relational egalitarianism is able to explain why the relationship between X and Y in *Racist Worker* is not an equal relationship;¹⁸ why, that is, two persons may not relate as equals even if they do not dominate each other. Remember that to relate as equals according to relational egalitarians, two persons must (i) *regard* each other as equals (attitudinal component), and (ii) *treat* each other as equals (behavioural component) (Lippert-Rasmussen 2018: 71). Although X lives up to the behavioural component, he regards Y as a moral inferior qua her race and fails to live up to the attitudinal component. X cannot stand eye to eye with Y, metaphorically speaking, since he regards her as his moral inferior; in his own eyes, he stands as a superior in his relation to Y. Y may falsely

¹⁸ Telic relational egalitarianism is also able to explain why the relationship between X and Y in *Racist Worker* is objectionable. The state of affairs in which X regards Y as a moral inferior is worse than the state of affairs in which X does not regard Y as a moral inferior. See note 12.

believe that they are able to stand as equals—from how X acts, she cannot infer that he regards her as a moral inferior—but that does not make it the case that they relate as equals. Thus, deontic relational egalitarianism is able to capture the fact that the relationship between X and Y is not an egalitarian relationship. Pettit’s republicanism, qua what I have termed *The Republican Relationship Thesis*, cannot capture the fact that X and Y are not in an egalitarian relationship.¹⁹ Republicanism, at least in Pettit’s theory, cannot capture the fact that relationships may be unequal because of how people regard each other.

It would be implausible for Pettit to claim that this is not a problem for republicanism because we do not want our theory of justice to capture failure of equal regard. This is implausible because we believe it to be a considered moral judgment that racism is an injustice. And racism is per definition at least partly a matter of how people regard each other. Indeed, failing to treat as an equal people whom one does not regard as an equal is clearly worse than failing to treat as an equal people whom one does regard as an equal (Lippert-Rasmussen 2018: 72-73). Moreover, the difference between an opportunistic racist and a non-opportunistic racist—where the former is one who hides his racist beliefs for purely self-regarding reasons—is not that the former does not commit an injustice

¹⁹ I argue in the next section that Pettit should give up on *The Republican Relationship Thesis*. My argument in this section—that *The Republican Relationship Thesis* fails to capture inequality in some relationships—differs from other arguments for why republicans fail to capture everything that relational egalitarians care about. Garrau and Laborde (2015: 58) argue that Pettit’s republicanism fails to capture two forms of vulnerability which threaten equal relations: (i) long-term structural vulnerability, and (ii) social disqualification. With regard to (i), the problem for Pettit’s account is that it is agent-centred and not focused on structures and is thus unable to capture the fact that norms may also lead to domination; consider, for instance, the norm that women are expected to do most of the domestic work. With regard to (ii), a person may be socially marginalized—she may be unemployed—without suffering from domination, but social marginalization may still be problematic, Garrau and Laborde argue (2015: 63), since “stable networks [with social support] ... are necessary to face the uncertainties of existence.” Thus, individuals may be vulnerable in a sense that entails that they do not relate as equals to others due to structural factors and social disqualification. It is not completely clear to me why people necessarily relate as unequals to others if there is social disqualification. Assuming that social disqualification leads to (or is equivalent to) social isolation, the person may stand in no relations (and thus also no unequal relations). My argument is different from Garrau and Laborde’s argument because it applies even if there is not structural vulnerability and social disqualification. We may assume in *Racist Worker* that Y is not structurally vulnerable nor does she suffer from social disqualification (she is employed, has a stable network, etc.). Still, if X regards Y as his moral inferior, they do not relate as equals. Schuppert (2015) also makes an argument for why Pettit is unable to capture some forms of vulnerability, including structural domination. My argument is different from this argument in the same way that my argument is different from Garrau and Laborde’s argument.

while the latter does; it is merely that it is easier to tell that the latter commits an injustice. We can see this by imagining a change in the norms of society such that it would be beneficial for the racist not to hide his beliefs. Under these circumstances, he would treat the other as a moral inferior. This shows that not being a racist is modally demanding such that one must continue to regard and treat people as moral equals even in cases where it would be beneficial not to do so.

4. The relationship between republicanism and relational egalitarianism

We have now seen that Schmidt fails to establish that relational egalitarianism, unlike republicanism, fails to capture why relations of mutual domination—as exemplified in *Powerful Information* and *Collective Prison*—are objectionable. We have also seen that relational egalitarianism, unlike republicanism, is able to capture that relationships may be unequal and thus objectionable because of how people regard each other; that non-domination, contrary to what Pettit argues, is not a sufficient condition for an equal relationship.

Up to this point, I have, in line with Schmidt, assumed republicanism and relational egalitarianism to be competitors. In this section, I drop this assumption. Relational egalitarianism and republicanism are not competitors: a necessary condition for people to relate as equals on a plausible understanding of relational egalitarianism is that they do not dominate each other. We may instead say that relational egalitarianism has a different aim than (a plausible version of) republicanism.

Pettit argues that republican freedom as non-domination provides a necessary and sufficient condition for what justice requires:

“The republican principle is extremely modest in characterizing justice by the requirements of equal freedom alone ... Contemporary theories of justice all give importance to freedom but take equal freedom to require so little that its

requirement has to be supplemented from other sources – as, for example, Rawls’s second principle – in order to fix the demands of justice.” (Pettit 2012: 123)²⁰

It is implausible to regard republican freedom as non-domination as the only thing that justice requires. As we have seen, a society with no domination may be a society in which some are regarded by others to be their moral inferiors; a society, that is, in which racism is prevalent. This is clearly not a society which realizes the ideal of relational egalitarianism. Indeed, “[r]elational egalitarians object to belief sets, e.g. ideologies such as racism or sexism, at least in part because of how those who subscribe to such belief sets regard others, independently of how their subscription to the relevant belief set manifests itself in the way in which they treat others” (Lippert-Rasmussen 2018: 73; cp. Cohen 2008: 349).

At the same time, it is clearly implausible to say that people relate as equals in a society in which some relationships involve domination (as we have seen in Section 2). Thus, republicanism is clearly useful in providing a necessary condition for what it means to relate as equals. This shows why (a plausible understanding of) republicanism has a different aim than relational egalitarianism; relational egalitarianism is a view of what relating as equals requires. It is a view which seeks to provide the necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for what it takes to relate as equals. For this reason, relational egalitarianism and republicanism should not be seen as competitors in the sense of providing the best answer to what realizing equal relations requires; relational egalitarians need the republican understanding of non-domination since it is a necessary condition for realizing relational equality.

²⁰ See also: “if we pay the price of securing freedom as non-domination in a suitable measure, we will have paid enough to secure social justice and political legitimacy” (Pettit 2012: 127).

At other times, he is more ambiguous: “There are three important lessons that the traditional image of the free person [the *liber*] teaches us about how we might concretize the ideal of freedom as non-domination as a target of justice” (Pettit 2012: 82). This claim is compatible with the view that non-domination is a necessary condition for realizing justice since claiming that non-domination is ‘a target of justice’ leaves open that there might be other targets of justice as well.

5. Concluding remarks

Republicanism, including Pettit's theory of republicanism, objects to relationships of mutual domination where each party's freedom is dependent on the other party's will. It has been argued that relational egalitarianism is unable to capture that relationships involving mutual domination are objectionable. I have argued that this is false. Relational egalitarianism on a plausible understanding—deontic relational egalitarianism—is able to capture that relationships involving domination are objectionable. Additionally, some relationships—in particular, relationships in which one party is a racist and regards the other as a moral inferior—is objectionable according to relational egalitarianism but not according to Pettit's theory of republicanism.

It is more fruitful to take republicanism to deliver a necessary condition for what it means to realize a society in which people relate as equals. After all, a relationship which involves domination is clearly not a relationship between equals. Relational egalitarianism, on the other hand, seeks to provide the necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for what it means to realize relate as equals. In this sense, the aims of relational egalitarianism and republicanism, on plausible understandings hereof, are different.²¹

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