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Chapter 12

Republican Theory and Political Trust

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THE REPUBLICAN way of thinking about citizenry and government has long given prominence to the notion of trust. We are told that government is a trust with which the people invest those in power; this theme is prominent among the "commonwealthmen" (Robbins 1959) who dominated eighteenth-century England and America and was most explicitly formulated by one of their heroes, John Locke ([1690] 1965). And we are told that there is no prospect of decent government unless those in power prove to be of a trustworthy disposition; this theme recurs in the emphasis among all republicans, classical and modern, on the need for civic virtue (Burt 1993).

This chapter outlines and defends a characteristically republican picture of the role of political trust—that is, trust in government—connecting that picture with the traditional republican way of thinking. When I speak of the republican way of thinking, I do so with a degree of idealization. I refer to the distinctive habits of thought found in the long republican tradition that goes back at least to Cicero and that encompasses Machiavelli at the time of the Renaissance, Harrington at the time of the English Revolution, and a wide spectrum of English, American, and French thinkers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—thinkers as various, for example, as Algon Sydney and Joseph Priestley, Tom Paine and James Madison, the Baron de Montesquieu and Jean Jacques Rousseau (Oldfield 1990; Pocock 1975; Skinner 1983, 1984).

I associate the republican way of thinking, in particular, with habits of thought that are dictated by the view that the point of government is to promote liberty among the citizenry—however narrowly the citizenry is conceived—and that liberty requires, not noninterference, but nondomination (Pettit 1996, 1997). Under this view of liberty, a person will be free just to the extent that no one can interfere at will—no one can interfere on an arbitrary basis—in her affairs. However restrained she may be by a fair rule of law, she can look others in the eye without need of fear or deference.

The chapter is in five sections. First, I distinguish between two sorts of trust, one impersonal, the other personal. Next I argue, in line with the republican tradition of thought, that people have no choice but to trust or distrust, on a personal basis, those in government. In the third section I go on to show that according to traditional republicans this need not be bad news, because the public authorities may well be virtuous and trustworthy. Does that mean that republicans have to have a blind faith in the trustworthiness of the public authorities? I argue not, showing in the fourth section that the tradition identifies a rational, even self-interested form of trust-responsiveness that ought to boost the trustworthiness of those in power. The final section rounds off the chapter with a discussion of something that must seem paradoxical in light of these arguments: the traditional republican emphasis on the need for citizens to be vigilant or distrustful in their scrutiny of government. I argue that this paradox is readily resolved and that republicanism offers us a coherent and appealing perspective on the role of political trust.

Trust, Personal and Impersonal

The word *trust* is used in relation to a great number of phenomena (Pettit 1995). It may be used in relation to relying on people or on things, for example; or to relying on a person or thing to act in a certain way or just to be of a certain sort. In the sense that is relevant to the relation between people and government, it involves relying on people—the authorities—and relying on them to behave in a certain way. Reliance of that kind may be a detached, inductive reliance, of course, or it may be the reliance of someone whose welfare depends on whether the person relied upon does indeed prove reliable. And clearly, once again, the reliance involved in the relationship between people and government is of the involved, vulnerable kind.

But even when we have made such specifications, there remains an important distinction between two different sorts of phenomenon, either of which might pass as the trust of people in their government.

The one sort I shall describe as impersonal trust, the other as personal trust.

Suppose that I am planning a weekend trip to the coast with my family and need to know if the journey will be delayed by roadworks. Suppose, then, that I make a telephone call to the relevant traffic center and take a note of their recorded advice. In such a case I rely on the center personnel to give me the required information, building my plans around the assumption that they will do so. I assume that the personnel have access to the information and are so motivated that they will provide accurate information.¹ And assuming those things, I give over control of certain of my fortunes—or of the fortunes of those with whom I identify—to the center; I bind the welfare of me or mine to their performance.

The sort of trust I exercise in this example will be impersonal in nature if it is grounded in the belief that the agents are so constrained by regulations that they are more or less bound to pass on the information available to them. My reliance on the people involved is not prompted by any beliefs about their person or character, not even by any superficial beliefs of the kind that might be based on how they look or on their color or gender or profession. I rely on the personnel because I believe that such employees are subject to fairly exacting scrutiny and sanctions and that they are unlikely to give inaccurate information.

But the reliance that this example illustrates will involve a personal form of trust if two further conditions are fulfilled. The first is that by my lights it is manifest to the center personnel, if not that I am relying on them, at least that people like me—members of the public—are relying upon them. And the second is that by my lights the evident fact of such reliance is likely to trigger a cooperative disposition—say, their civic virtue—and to increase their reasons for giving accurate information in their recorded messages and in other forms of advice. Not only do I take the fact of reliance to be manifest to them, I also take it to be motivating for them.

It will be more likely that I am exercising personal trust of this kind, of course, if I go further than just telephoning the traffic center and instead drop by to discuss the situation with the personnel at the center. I explain to them that it is particularly important that I not be delayed on the trip—say, because of having a sick child—and I place my faith in their having such a cooperative attitude that they will be motivated by my plea—by the evident fact of my personal reliance—to give me exact and correct information.

In impersonal trust, the reliance that I display is not particularly trusting, in the ordinary sense of that word. I rely on the center per-

sonnel because I know the accountability constraints under which they are employed. I rely on them solely because I judge that they are independently constrained to behave in the required fashion. In personal trust, on the other hand, the reliance that I display is distinctively trusting. I see the center personnel as people who have such a cooperative attitude toward me, whether in my individual right or as a member of the public, that my manifesting reliance will strengthen or reinforce their existing reasons to do that which I rely on them to do (see Baier 1986).²

What can it mean to believe that the center personnel's reasons for acting in the required way are strengthened or reinforced, if I already believe that there is little or no possibility of their letting me down—say, if I think that they are more or less bound, on pain of dismissal, to give me accurate information? I already believe in such a case that their utility for giving the correct information is higher than the utility they attach to not doing so. But I will be trusting in my attitude toward them if I also believe, on the grounds of their being cooperatively disposed, that the utility they attach to giving the right information increases with the recognition that doing so will serve my purposes.

Someone may say that trusting always means taking a risk and that my account allows that I may trust someone—trust him personally, and also impersonally—to do something even when I have independent reasons to be sure that he will do it; thus they may claim that the phenomena I target do not strictly deserve to be called trust (Hardin 1993). But it is certainly possible for me to trust someone of whose behavior I am independently assured. I may trust a friend in the personal way to do something—A, for example—even though, for any of a variety of reasons, I cannot imagine his doing anything other than A; the reason may be that the law requires that he do A, that doing A is a matter of virtue or honor, that he is indeed a very good friend, or whatever. But though trusting someone may not always mean taking a risk, in the sense of relying on him to do something that I am not sure he will do, it will always mean taking a risk in another sense. It will always require me to make myself vulnerable to the other person in some measure, to put myself in a position where it is possible for the other person, so far as that person is a free agent, to harm me or mine. While I may run no probabilistic risk in relying on someone to act in a certain way, therefore, I must still recognize that he is a free agent and that my welfare is in his free hands.³

The example of relying on the personnel at the traffic center enables us to draw the distinction between two different modes of trust, one impersonal, the other personal. In both forms of trust I rely on another to do something. In impersonal trust that reliance is associ-

ated with the belief that the agent is independently motivated, perhaps constrained, to act in the pertinent manner. In personal trust it is associated with the belief that the agent, being of a cooperative disposition, will be motivated by my reliance on his mode of action to prove reliable. The associated belief leads me to think in each case that the trustee has a reason that will help to produce or reinforce the behavior on which I rely; and in each case that belief makes it rational, assuming that the costs and benefits are appropriate, to invest my trust in the trustee.

But not only does our example help to bring out the difference between impersonal and personal trust, it also shows that these modes of trust are not exclusive of one another. I may simultaneously trust someone on an impersonal and on a personal basis. I may trust her to the extent of thinking that she is independently motivated to do that on which I rely. And I may trust her to the extent of thinking that she will also find my relying on her motivating; if she is cooperatively disposed, the perception that I am relying on her will raise the utility that she attaches to proving reliable.

While the distinction between impersonal and personal trust has been drawn with reference to a simple, artificial example, it should be clear that it applies more generally. In particular, it should be clear that it applies in relationships between the people and those in power. We may trust our politicians or bureaucrats or judges to behave appropriately on the grounds that they are effectively bound to do so by the disciplines of office. Or we may trust them to behave appropriately on the grounds that they are cooperatively responsive to the reliance of individual people, or of the people as a whole, to their decisions. Or of course we may trust them at once on both sorts of grounds.

People Have No Choice but Personally to Trust or Distrust Government

The main difference between the simple example and the general political case is that when I invest trust in the traffic center personnel, whether on an impersonal or on a personal basis, I have a choice that is often lacking in politics. I may choose to invest trust in those personnel, or I may decide to exit from the situation that requires trust; I may decide against going to the coast. If I make myself vulnerable to how the center performs, as I do when trusting the information they provide, then I assume that vulnerability in a voluntary manner. But in the political case I may have no choice of this kind. Wherever I choose to live, I will find myself subject to a government and in a position of vulnerability to government agents. I may trust or distrust

the government, of course, but I have no choice about whether to put myself in a position where those are the only alternatives.⁴ And this is true not just for me personally but for every individual and, in effect, for every collectivity of individuals.

There is no incoherence about the idea of exercising trust in a position where the only alternatives are to trust or distrust (Holton 1994). Suppose that I have to take a certain course of action and that what I do depends on the assumption I make about where a particular friend now is. Suppose, furthermore, that the only information available is from a certain witness's report. In that case I will have no choice but to trust or distrust the witness; whether I like it or not I am vulnerable to what she says. And yet it will make perfect sense in such a case to speak of deciding to trust the witness.

But it may be that while I have no choice but to trust or distrust those in government, I am in the happy position of having impersonal grounds for trusting them. There may be sufficient constraints on what the authorities can do, or I may have sufficient control over what the authorities do, for me to be able to rely confidently on their performance. In that case I will not face the choice of having either to trust the authorities on a personal bias or to distrust them on a personal basis. That choice will not be forced upon me—I may form no particular opinion as to whether the authorities are personally deserving of trust or not—because I will have perfectly good grounds for impersonal trust in government. The next question, then, is whether indeed things could ever be like that, whether things could be such that I do not have to face the choice, in relation to those in government, between personal trust and personal distrust.

Are the authorities capable of being so constrained, then, that there is no need to choose between personal trust or distrust? Or can they be so subjected to my control, or to the control of those in my position, that I can evade that choice? As it happens there are two political positions that claim, respectively, that government can be constrained and that it can be controlled in ways that make it unnecessary to choose between personal trust and distrust. The first can be associated, roughly, with a libertarian approach to politics, the second with a populist approach.

Libertarians argue that those appointed to government can be so constrained, actually or ideally, that there are adequate impersonal grounds for trusting them; there is no need to have to choose between personal trust and personal distrust. In particular they argue that this can be so if government is restricted, as they think it should be restricted, to the nightwatchman jobs of external defense and internal protection (Nozick 1974). The agents of government will have decisions to make, but the rules under which they make them will be so

demanding that they will rarely, if ever, have any discretion. Their brief will not leave them any effective leeway in which to interpose their own ideas or interests.

Libertarianism in this sense is not a plausible view of government. No matter how restricted the tasks assigned to government, there are bound to be areas of significant discretion that are left to legislative, executive, and judicial authorities. There will be legislative questions to do with how much defense and protection are adequate; there will be executive decisions on where best to commit the resources made available by the legislature; and there will be significant judicial issues on the interpretation of this or that law, or this or that constitutional clause.

If we admit that government is bound to involve agents who face certain relatively unconstrained choices, then we recognize that, so far, it looks like government has to be a matter of personal trust or personal distrust. But another way of arguing that government does not force this choice on citizens is to hold that government agents need not be given autonomous power in relation to whatever discretion is left them by their briefs. The idea is that wherever there is discretion, then the people individually or collectively can be given the power to direct the government or at least to force the government, if necessary, to reverse any decision it makes; they can be given the power to control the government.

What approaches take this line? The outstanding example is the majoritarian or populist view of government, under which those in government are the servants of the people and are ideally subject to their continuing control. The populist view shares with the libertarian the hope that for all posts that are not elective and that cannot feasibly be made so, those who occupy those posts can be denied any significant discretion. But where libertarians think that all government agents can be deprived of discretion, populists believe that this is not desirable and perhaps not feasible. They hold enthusiastically by the ideal of a government in which the legislators make a large range of unconstrained decisions, as they seek to articulate the will of the people whom they represent. The reason is that in their ideal world legislators are subject to the control of the people. Legislators act on the more or less specific mandates of their electors and if they fail to live up to those mandates on any issue, then they can be called to account in some manner. For example, their decision can be exposed to the judgment of the electorate, as under an arrangement for citizen-initiated referenda.

But the populist picture of the relation between people and government is no more plausible than the libertarian image. It shares the problem raised for libertarians, that even with nonlegislative agents

of government it is impossible to eradicate discretion. And it raises two independent problems of its own. The first is that there is no effective possibility of submitting the legislature to the sort of popular control that would mean that the people did not have to choose between personal trust and personal distrust in the legislators. And the second is that even if the people in its collective capacity could exercise the required control—even if electronic technology made it possible, for example, to have government by plebiscite—that would still leave in place a legislature that was uncontrolled from the point of view of individual agents. The legislature would now be the people in its collective identity, not the body of elected representatives, and from the point of view of individual persons that agent would certainly have discretion and power sufficient to force on them the choice between personal trust and personal distrust. Indeed it requires little reflection to see that from the point of view of individual persons the collectivity may look like an agent that is particularly difficult to control, an agent that is as wanton as the wind.⁵

I think that this discussion shows that issues of desirability apart, neither the libertarian nor the populist image of government represents a serious alternative. However government is organized, and to whatever ultimate end, there is no possibility of constraining government agents to more or less uniquely determined choices. Nor is there any realistic possibility, where such constraints fail, of subjecting government agents to the control of those who are governed. Government agents inevitably enjoy such discretion and power that people have no choice but to trust or distrust them on a personal basis.

This point of view fits well with the republican way of thinking. The tradition has been associated with a sustained search for mechanisms whereby impersonal trust in government can be boosted—mechanisms like limited tenure, rotation of office, separation of powers, democratic accountability, bicameralism, and the like. But it is a recurrent theme among republicans that government cannot live by law and regulation alone, that inevitably it presupposes the presence of virtue—the presence of trustworthiness—in the society, particularly among those who hold power. If government will work only to the extent that those in power are virtuous and trustworthy, then the people are in a position where they have no choice but to trust or distrust personally the relevant public officials.

This theme was well elaborated during the renaissance of republicanism thought in the northern Italian republics of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, particularly in the work of Machiavelli (1965): “Just as good morals, if they are to be maintained, have need of the laws, so the laws, if they are to be observed, have need of good morals” (241; see also Rubenstein 1991). This republican emphasis

on the need for trustworthiness among public officials, clearly gives expression to the idea that the constraints that provide grounds for impersonal trust are never going to bind with sufficient strength or scope to drive out the choice between personal trust and personal distrust. But it also reflects a belief that those in government can never be subjected adequately to the control of the citizenry, however broadly the citizenry are conceived.

This latter feature of republicanism may seem surprising. Republicanism is firmly associated with a belief in the power of democracy, and some commentators have tended, for that reason, to give it a populist gloss (Arendt 1973). But the populist reading of republicanism is downright mistaken, at least as I understand the tradition. The central republican focus is always on creating institutions that will further people’s enjoyment of freedom as nondomination, and while democracy is certainly recognized as an important safeguard against governmental domination it is never presented as the centerpiece of the republican polity.

The seventeenth-century republican James Harrington (1977) made particularly clear that for all the importance he gave to democratic measures, he did not think that populist democracy was at the center of things: “The spirit of the people is no wise to be trusted with their liberty, but by stated laws or orders; so the trust is not in the spirit of the people, but in the frame of those orders” (737). And similar qualifications about populist democracy are found in contemporary republicans such as John Milton, who actively shunned “the noise and shouting of a rude multitude” (Worden 1991, 457) and, a little later, Algermon Sydney (1990), who said of “pure democracy . . . I know of no such thing; and if it be in the world, have nothing to say for it” (189).

The authors of the *Federalist Papers* thought that representative democracy was important enough to build it into the definition of a republic (Madison, Hamilton, and Jay 1987; see also Paine 1989). But they too insisted that democratic representation was only one of a number of ways of furthering “civil liberty”; like the separation of powers, they placed it in the catalogue of “powerful means by which the excellencies of republican government may be retained and its imperfections lessened or avoided” (Madison, Hamilton, and Jay 1987, 119). Like almost all republican writers, they shrank from any suggestion that government can be subject to such perfect popular control that there is no need for the people to have choice between personal trust and personal distrust in relation to those in power.

The belief that government has to involve giving not fully constrained and not fully controlled discretion to public officials is characteristic of the republican tradition, as I hope these considerations

show. But I should mention that it is also part of contemporary liberal thought. John Rawls has emphasized it, for example, in arguing that if people were to try to assert their democratic or political liberties, they would be cutting off their noses to spite their faces. For fear of giving over control to those in government—in effect, to those who can never be fully constrained—they would be like the passengers of a boat who refuse to give control to the captain; they would be denying themselves access to “the other freedoms that, so to say, define the intrinsic good of the passengers” (Rawls 1971, 233).⁶

The Republican Belief in the Availability of Political Trustworthiness

Why might we trust a particular government agent on a personal basis? The principal ground for personal trust is the belief that those in government are worthy of trust—that they are sufficiently conscientious about their brief, for example, or sufficiently devoted to their people to find the prospect of proving reliable attractive. If people take their politicians or bureaucrats, their police or their judges, to be virtuous in these ways, then they will certainly tend to trust them in the personal mode. They will tend to believe that so far as they safely rely, individually or collectively, on the authorities’ behaving in a particular manner, those agents will be motivated in a corresponding measure to behave in that manner.

The long tradition of republican thought suggests, as we have seen, that if government is to work well, if government is to succeed in securing the freedom of citizens—in particular, their freedom as nondomination—then those in government, and citizens in general, must be possessed of a good deal of civic virtue or civility; they must be trustworthy (Burt 1993). But it is one thing to say that trustworthiness is required, another to hold that it is available. And now the important thing to see is that the tradition also emphasizes that this essential condition of good government is capable of fulfillment, that there are dispensations where the people have good reason to believe in the virtue and trustworthiness of their rulers and are entitled to have a lot of personal trust in how they will behave.

This republican belief in the availability of trustworthiness comes out in the insistence that it is not utopian to look for civic virtue among those in power. But it comes out also, and perhaps more vividly, in the association that republicans make between the freedom attainable for citizens—freedom as nondomination—and the attitude of confidence and boldness that they expect in such citizens. Being free, as republicans represent it, consists in the condition of not being exposed to the arbitrary interference of any other, including any other

in governmental power. And that condition, so they suppose, is more or less bound to constitute a subjective and social status, as it becomes a matter of shared knowledge that one is indeed protected against others—protected both by the external constraints that give grounds for impersonal trust and by the internal constraints provided by the virtue of others. Among these writers, being free is scarcely distinguishable from the status of being able to look others in the eye without fear or deference, being able to walk tall, knowing that one does not live at anyone’s mercy.

Consider this remark from Machiavelli (1965), which emphasizes the linkage between republican liberty and confidence: “The common benefit gained from a free community is recognized by nobody while he possesses it: namely, the power of enjoying freely his possessions without any anxiety, of feeling no fear for the honor of his women and his children, of not being afraid for himself” (236). Or consider the gloss, as it were, that Montesquieu (1989) offered over two centuries later: “Political liberty in a citizen is that tranquility of spirit which comes from the opinion each one has of his security, and in order for him to have this liberty the government must be such that one citizen cannot fear another citizen” (157; see Spinoza 1951).

Where Machiavelli and Montesquieu stressed the confidence that goes with republican liberty, others have stressed the boldness in overtures to others; they have emphasized the intersubjective as distinct from just the subjective aspect of such freedom. John Milton is a good example. “They who are greatest,” he said of the “free commonwealth,” “walk the streets as other men, may be spoken to freely, familiarly, without adoration” (Worden 1991, 457). This theme assumed rhapsodic dimensions in the writings of Richard Price (1991) and Joseph Priestley (1993). I quote Priestley at length, though his references are unfortunately sexist:

A sense both of political and civil slavery, makes a man think meanly of himself. The feeling of his insignificance debases his mind. . . . On the other hand, a sense of political and civil liberty, though there should be no great occasion to exert it in the course of a man’s life, gives him a constant sense of his own power and importance; and is the foundation of his indulging a free, bold, and manly turn of thinking, unrestrained by the most distant idea of control. Being free from all fear, he has the most perfect enjoyment of himself, and of all the blessings of life. (35–36)

Not only is it going to be necessary, then, for people to be able to trust their government on a personal basis; and not only does every republican have to be a republic of morals as well as a republic of laws.

It is also a recurrent theme in republican writing that the republican image of a confident, bold citizenry is an accessible vision and that people do often have reasons to invest personal trust in those who hold power; in particular, they often have reasons associated with believing in the trustworthiness of the authorities.

The Republican Reliance on the Trust-Responsiveness of Those in Power

The chapter thus far has showed that according to republicans people need to have grounds for personally trusting those in power and that such grounds are often provided by the fact that the authorities are virtuous and trustworthy. Do republicans build their political hopes, then, on blind faith in the availability of trustworthy politicians? We know that they look for institutions that create grounds for impersonal as well as personal trust in the authorities, and that fact testifies to a certain realism about human motivation. But do they have any similarly realistic grounds for expecting the authorities to prove worthy of personal trust? I maintain that they do. Republicans have generally argued that there is a self-interested mechanism available to reinforce and reinvigorate the trustworthiness of those in government. I call it a mechanism of trust-responsiveness (Pettit 1995).

It is a common republican belief that where there is a modicum of trustworthiness in government—in particular, where there is a shared belief that people in power are sometimes trustworthy—then there is going to be a reason for trusting government agents over and above the fact of believing that they are trustworthy. The key idea in this theme is that if there are standards and models in a society that establish what it is to be honorable—say, what it is to be trustworthy—then even those who are not possessed of such virtue will desire to be thought to have it; they will desire to be regarded as honorable. To be regarded as honorable is to be honored, after all, and to be honored—to enjoy the good opinion of others—is one of the primary human goods (Brennan and Pettit 1993; Pettit 1990). Thus the idea is that trustworthiness, an essentially admirable trait, will be boosted by a trait that has no place in the list of virtues—that is, the love of glory or esteem. The love of honor, the love of opinion, will serve as a sort of saving vice; it will serve to ignite the motivation of those in whom virtue proper has stalled.

John Locke (1690] 1975) offered one of the most striking statements of this theme when he argued that the law of opinion offers a most potent means of keeping officials honest.

For though Men uniting into Politick Societies, have resigned up to the public the disposing of all their Force, so that they cannot em-

ploy it against any Fellow-Citizen, any farther than the Law of the Country directs: yet they retain still the power of Thinking well or ill; approving or disapproving of the actions of those whom they live amongst, and converse with: And by this approbation and dislike they establish amongst themselves, what they will call Virtue and Vice. (353–54)

The incentives of shame and glory are invoked throughout the later republican tradition. Montesquieu ([1748] 1989) is famous, for example, for having argued that in moderate monarchical regimes—including the sort of monarchy that conceals a republic—the spring of all action is honor: “In monarchical and moderate states, power is limited by that which is its spring; I mean honor, which reigns like a monarch over the prince and the people” (30). The incentives of shame and glory appear again in the *Federalist Papers* as one of the two great securities, alongside the possibility of discovery and impeachment, against the abuse of power (Madison, Hamilton, and Jay [1787] 1987). Joseph Priestley (1993) offered a characteristically moderate version of the idea: “Magistrates, being men, cannot but have, in some measure, the feelings of other men. They could not, therefore, be happy themselves, if they were conscious that their conduct exposed them to universal hatred and contempt. Neither can they be altogether indifferent to the light in which their characters and conduct will appear to posterity” (33).

The republican argument implicit in these comments is not exactly straightforward, but it is pretty convincing (Pettit 1995). Assume that appropriate standards of government behavior are established and that the performance of agents in relation to those standards is generally likely to be recognized. Provided that that performance can be plausibly put down to trustworthiness—provided that a regime of personal trust is established in common consciousness—then those in government have a reason supplementary to reasons of trustworthiness for actually complying. As those in power recognize that the citizenry ascribe trustworthiness in explanation of their behaving well—at least at a certain limit—they are given an extra motive for actually behaving in that way; in the event of behaving appropriately they are offered the prospect of being well regarded—of being regarded as trustworthy—by the citizens generally.

The appearance of personal trust among the citizens, then, can actually increase the grounds that people have for feeling trust. For when citizens trust government agents to do that which the citizens apparently have only reasons of trustworthiness to expect, then in reality there are also other reasons for expecting those agents to comply. Those other reasons come of the recognition that the government agents are going to recognize that by complying they can help to win

a good opinion for themselves and that by not complying they run the risk of losing that good opinion.

These extra reasons that people have for trusting those in power are not reasons of trustworthiness—they do not come of a belief in the trustworthiness of the officials—but reasons of trust-responsiveness. They come of the belief that even if the agents are not moved by the fact of others' relying on them, in the manner of truly virtuous and trustworthy individuals, they will at least be moved by the fact that those others will think well of them for proving reliable and will think badly of them for proving unreliable. They come of the belief that even if the agents are not trustworthy, in the sense of possessing the cooperative disposition associated with virtue, they are at least trust-responsive; they possess the cooperative disposition associated with caring about the good opinion of the trustees. The lesson of the republican observation about the love of glory is that those who have grounds of trustworthiness for personally trusting those in government may also have grounds of trust-responsiveness for such personal trust. In the more extreme case, indeed, the lesson may be that those who seem to have grounds of trustworthiness for personally trusting those in government may actually have grounds of trust-responsiveness for such personal trust.

One final comment. Although trustworthiness is a morally challenging trait and trust-responsiveness is an aspect of human frailty, the two mechanisms are synergetic; they pull in the same direction. To be trust-responsive, to be desirous of being thought trustworthy and therefore admirable, is to have reason to present yourself as trustworthy—in effect, to prove yourself trustworthy. In particular it is to have reason to present yourself as trustworthy rather than trust-responsive, since in most cases you will win no honor if you are recognized as an honor-hunter. "The general axiom in this domain," as Jon Elster (1983) has said, "is that nothing is so unimpressive as behavior designed to impress" (66). But that means that trust-responsiveness reinforces trustworthiness in a particularly intimate way; it gives a person reason to let impulses of trustworthiness have their way and indeed to try to drum up such impulses. We can think of trust-responsiveness as a force that boosts the motor of trustworthiness, not as an alternative, potentially rival motor.

Republican Vigilance

But the republican story about trust is not so straightforward a narrative as the discussion so far may suggest. For there is another theme that we also find in the republican literature, and on the face of it this theme runs directly counter to the message so far conveyed. The price

of liberty is eternal vigilance, according to the traditional republican doctrine, and that suggests that the best way to keep others on track—in particular the best way to keep government agents on track—is never to take your eye off them, never to relax in the manner associated with personal trust. On the contrary, so the lesson goes, the best way to ensure that they prove reliable in the manner of virtuous officials is to subject them to sustained checks and sustained challenges, to insist that they operate under the challenge of always having to prove themselves to an unconvinced and untrusting audience. How otherwise to "keep the bastards honest"? (see Ely 1981).

The doctrine I am describing took a particularly sharp form during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the commonwealthmen tradition. One of the principal messages of the commonwealthman was that people had to keep a continual watch on those in power—power being inherently corrupting—and that they should challenge rulers to explain and justify their behavior on every possible front. "As he never saw much Power possessed without some Abuse, he takes upon him to watch those that have it; and to acquit or expose them according as they apply it to the good of their country, or their own crooked Purposes" (quoted in Robbins 1959, 120).

Like Montesquieu ([1748] 1989), some thought that this sort of vigilance, this sustained manifestation of personal distrust, could be more or less routinized, that things could be organized so that without any tumult, without any hue and cry, those in power were systematically required to vindicate themselves under their reciprocal scrutiny and the scrutiny of ordinary citizens. But others sided with Adam Ferguson ([1767] 1971) when he railed against this restriction of vigilance, arguing that there is no hope for virtue in public life unless ordinary people also remain actively alert to the worst that the powerful can do. The rule of law that Montesquieu found and praised in Britain was fine, for example, so Ferguson said, "But it requires a fabric no less than the whole political constitution of Great Britain, a spirit no less than the refractory and turbulent zeal of this fortunate people, to secure it" (167).

How is one to make sense of this emphasis on distrust of government, given our claim that republicanism takes personal, political trust to be both necessary and available? How can the tradition assume that it is essential and possible to establish personal trust in government and at the same time argue that citizens should never indulge the complacency associated with such trust—on the contrary, argue that it is essential for them to manifest an attitude of downright distrust? Is there an incoherence at the center of republican thinking, assuming that we are justified in speaking of a common republican tradition of thought? I argue that there is not.

The key to my argument is a distinction between having or feeling trust in someone—in particular, personal trust—and displaying or expressing trust in someone.⁷ To trust someone in the sense of having trust in him involves confidently assuming reliance upon him. But without feeling and having such trust, I may practice an expressive form of trust or, as we say, perform an act of trust. Without feeling an attitude of confidence in the reliance I have assumed, for example, I may choose to trust someone in the way that leads me to say, “I have decided to trust you in this, and I can only hope that you will not let me down.” To trust someone in that expressive sense is not to rely with confidence upon him, or at least not necessarily, but to go through the expressive motions—that is, the behavioral motions—of relying with confidence upon him.

What goes for trust goes, naturally, for distrust—in particular, for personal distrust. I will distrust someone in the ordinary sense of feeling and instantiating distrust to the extent that I feel no confidence that she will prove reliable and do not actually rely upon her—do not build my plans around her proving reliable—or at least not for personal reasons. I will distrust her in the expressive sense—I will perform an act of distrust—just to the extent that I go through the behavioral motions of not relying with confidence upon her. If I have no choice but to rely upon her, for example, I will perform an act of personal distrust to the extent that I insist on external checks or constraints and try to ensure, on an independent basis, that she does not let me down.

There is no tension between the republican belief in a dispensation of trustworthiness and trust-responsiveness on the one hand and the emphasis on maintaining eternal vigilance on the other. For vigilance clearly involves expressive or behavioral distrust. The republican recommendation is that whatever personal and impersonal confidence people have in the authorities, they will have all the more reason to feel such confidence if they always insist that the authorities go through the required hoops in order to prove themselves reliable. To be vigilant in this sense is not to have an attitude of distrust towards the authorities—or at least not necessarily—but to maintain a demanding pattern of expectations in their regard—to insist, for example, that they should abide by certain procedures, for example, that they should accept challenges to their actions in Parliament or in the press, and that they should allow access to information on relevant aspects of their personal lives.

It should be clear why it might make sense to maintain expressive personal distrust—to behave as if one felt distrust—while actually feeling no such distrust. People may have an attitude of personal trust

because they believe that the authorities are uncorrupt and that they will reliably behave in the proper manner. But there are good reasons, nonetheless, why they may behave as if they had an attitude of distrust, insisting on the necessity of various checks and constraints. First, it may be that however uncorrupt the authorities actually are, human corruptibility means that in the absence of the checks and constraints implemented in such distrustful behavior, they would begin to develop habits of corruption. And even if that were not so, imposing those checks and constraints should increase people’s reasons for impersonal trust in the authorities and reduce the need for personal trust.

Not only is there no inconsistency in having personal trust in the authorities while behaving as if one felt distrust, it is even possible for people to make it clear to the authorities that they are espousing this dual posture. They can quite easily present the routines of distrust as constraints that are required in general and that help to keep the best of agents honest, while communicating the sense that they personally, or they as a group, are actually quite confident of the virtue and good will of the authorities in question. They can go through the established routines of expressive or behavioral distrust and show in other, less-established ways that actually they feel a lot of personal trust in the authorities. This dual posture will often make a lot of sense under our argument. By insisting on expressive distrust people can maximize the grounds for impersonal trust, forcing the authorities to jump a maximal number of hoops. By indicating that this expressive distrust is required only on an impersonal, routine basis, however, and by signaling the existence of personal trust, they can increase the chances of also triggering the trustworthiness and trust-responsiveness mechanisms; they can maximize the grounds available for personal as well as impersonal trust.

The upshot, I hope, is clear. The republican emphasis on vigilance reflects a belief that those in authority must be subjected to quite demanding checks and constraints, that this may be the only way of guarding against corruptibility and of maximizing the grounds available for impersonal trust. But that emphasis is quite consistent with enjoying and generally acting on an attitude of personal trust in the authorities. There is no incoherence at the heart of republican tenets. On the contrary, the allegedly conflicting views fit quite naturally together.

My thanks to John Braithwaite for advice on an earlier version. My thanks also to members of the conference at which this paper was first

presented at the Australian National University, February 1997, especially to Geoff Brennan; he was the one who pressed me to account for the republican ambivalence. My thanks, finally, to Valerie Braithwaite and Margaret Levi for their extremely helpful editorial comments.

Notes

1. Or I assume that that is a good bet, or as good a bet as any other available to me (Holton 1994).
2. Why do I stipulate that the personnel should have a cooperative attitude toward me, should be more or less well disposed? I do so to guard against having to say that I trust the personnel in the personal mode when I realize that they have been promised a reward by some enemy to lure me toward the coast and that that is why my reliance is motivating. The notion of being well disposed, the notion of having a cooperative attitude, is to be understood in a deflationary manner—in a manner, for example, such that I can trust someone in personal mode when I regard her, in the phrase I use later, as trust-responsive.
3. Richard Holton drew this point to my attention.
4. There is a difference, of course, between the sort of vulnerability to government that everyone suffers, as a citizen—the sort I have in mind here—and the more specific kind that is triggered by a person's looking for some government service that is due to him in virtue of his special circumstances—say, the sort of vulnerability assumed when I call in the police to help me cope with a threatening neighbor, or when I make a claim on social security. A person may have a choice as to whether or not he should assume this special vulnerability.
5. The one possibility that would give control to individual people is a veto over every collective decision. I am assuming that such a "unanimitarian" arrangement would clearly be infeasible.
6. In his discussion of the analogy with the captain of a ship, Rawls suggested that the captain is fully constrained by his own wish to get to port, even if he is not controlled by the passengers: it is obvious, however, that such full constraints—such grounds for impersonal trust—are not generally going to be available.
7. My thanks to Simon Blackburn for a helpful conversation about this.

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Chapter 13

Trusting Disadvantaged Citizens

MARK PEEL

FOR SOME observers, there are few more pressing problems in late-twentieth-century political culture than the apparent decline of conscientious citizenship. Contemporary Australian discussions form part of a broader debate about national institutions and national identity, arising in part from the prospect of a republic and an Australian head of state in time for the anniversary of federation in 2001. They have focused to a significant extent on young people and have tended to assume that distrust of politicians and governments stems from declining civic awareness or a lack of civic education. The problem, in other words, lies within the citizen.

While the best of these reports address real concerns about popular awareness of the institutions and possibilities of democratic governance, few pay much heed to the role governments play in citizen distrust and disengagement. Indeed, celebrations of "active" citizenship by Australian state and federal government sit oddly alongside their marginalization of public protest; their hit-and-run attacks on groups and individuals who dare to differ; their shielding of an increasing range of political decisions from the public gaze in the name of commercial confidence; and or their reliance on more or less facile surveys, quick-fire community consultations, and carefully monitored "independent" research as a substitute for democratic decision making (Irving 1995).

Whether or not there is a historical narrowing of active citizenship—and the evidence in Australia is not conclusive—there are certainly good reasons for investigating the ways in which governments