

# Liberalism and the Problem of Plutocracy

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The argument I put forward in this essay is a simple one: liberals almost universally conceive of plutocracy as a problem that in principle will be satisfactorily corrected in a well-ordered liberal-democratic regime, when in fact it is an inescapable problem that cannot be fully solved — at least so long as there is private property and the family — and this therefore generates a second-order challenge for liberals committed to social justice: not just how to *reduce* plutocracy, but how to *retrospectively respond* to the plutocracy that always will have existed in liberal-democratic states.

By plutocracy I mean less the coordinated rule of moneyed interests or an oligarchy in any traditional sense than the power of inequalities in wealth to undermine equality of opportunity in education and politics. With respect to education, a society is free from plutocracy to the extent that similarly talented and motivated children, regardless of their socioeconomic circumstances, can expect roughly equal prospects of success in life. With respect to politics, plutocracy is neutralized if similarly talented and motivated citizens, regardless of their socioeconomic background, can expect to have roughly equal prospects of engaging in government. The ideal of a society where educational and political opportunities are insulated from the effects of economic inequality is a powerful and pervasive fixture of contemporary liberal thought, figuring prominently within contemporary liberal philosophies of various types as well as the attitudes of ordinary citizens.<sup>1</sup>

While such an ideal is noble and while there is always more that could be done to better approximate it in any given polity, it is a dereliction of both intellectual honesty and progressive purpose not to acknowledge at the same time that such ambitions are not fully realizable in a liberal regime. They are not so, not simply because every extant liberal democracy falls well-short of the goal a plutocracy-free society, but because, as I shall elucidate below, the very institutions of private property and the family generate limits to a liberal-democratic society's capacity to neutralize its plutocratic elements. Private property is ultimately translatable into political influence and access — a truth virtually unanimously accepted by political thinkers prior to the nineteenth century, including those operating from a popular republican standpoint, and virtually unanimously substantiated today by cross-national empirical studies on the impact of socioeconomic status on political influence

and access. And the family constitutes a permanent engine whereby the arbitrary socioeconomic conditions of one's birth are made to have a formative significance for individual development. Liberalism, in other words, does not embody a unitary moral commitment, but a variety of rights — such as the protection of private property and the family, on the one hand, and equality of opportunity on the other — that are, ultimately, in inescapable tension with each other.<sup>2</sup> The problem of plutocracy is one main consequence of this tension.

After detailing in the next section various forms of excessive sunniness among contemporary liberal thinkers regarding the problem of plutocracy, the bulk of the essay substantiates the main claim that plutocracy will be a permanent problem in a liberal-democratic regime. I conclude by offering brief suggestions for how a liberal-democratic society fully cognizant of the problem of plutocracy might have this awareness modulate, and indeed further develop, its commitment to social justice.

## Varieties of Liberal Blindness to the Problem of Plutocracy

The acknowledgment of permanent limits to the liberal project of a plutocracy-free society — and, with it, the recognition that a shadow of unfairness will be cast over even the most progressive and enlightened liberal-democratic regimes — has almost entirely eluded liberal thinkers of the present generation. While few liberals think that existing polities sufficiently realize the condition of non-plutocracy, by far the most common approach is to imagine that, with proper reforms (such as robust campaign finance legislation and social policies that make the distribution of wealth much more widely dispersed), the problem of plutocracy might be satisfactorily addressed. Specifically, liberals manifest an irrational and excessive sunniness regarding the problem of plutocracy in at least three different ways: by *denying* outright that plutocracy is an inescapable problem besetting liberal-democratic regimes, by *ignoring* the problem through supporting policies that, however substantial in their egalitarianism, clearly do not yield the promised neutralization of plutocracy, and by *avoiding* the problem through the articulation of liberal-democratic ideals not directly bearing on fair equality of opportunity in education and politics.

### Denying the Problem

Liberals who deny plutocracy usually do so by holding out the promise that reforms — ranging from campaign finance legislation, inheritance and estate taxation, and egalitarian social policies aimed at insuring wealth is widely dispersed within a polity — could create a society where socioeconomic factors would not interfere with opportunities for educational development and political influence. Consider, for example, John Rawls, arguably the most influential political philosopher of the last century. Rawls, to be sure, in at least one key instance in his *A Theory of Justice* veers in the direction of acknowledging something like the permanent problem of plutocracy, when he briefly admits that similarly talented and motivated children, even in the most well-ordered liberal-democratic regime, will always have their life prospects affected by the socioeconomic conditions of the families into which they are born:

[T]he principle of fair opportunity [with regard to education] can be only imperfectly carried out, at least as long as the institution of the family exists. The extent to which natural capacities develop and reach fruition is affected by all kinds of social conditions and class attitudes. Even the willingness to make an effort, to try, and so to be deserving in the ordinary sense is itself dependent upon happy family and social circumstances. *It is impossible in practice to secure equal chances of achievement and culture for those similarly endowed* (74/64 rev, emphasis added).

But this honest acknowledgment of plutocracy — the power of wealth to intrude upon educational opportunity — is a highly anomalous moment in Rawls's philosophy which, in two different respects, must be said to have the opposite function of *denying* the problem of plutocracy. On the one hand, Rawls elsewhere and, indeed, for the most part, describes fair equality of educational opportunity as something that is in fact fully realizable. As early as 1967, Rawls could affirm: "Equality of opportunity is a certain set of institutions which assures equally good education and chances of culture for all."<sup>3</sup> And in a different passage from *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls can write:

[A]ssuming there is a distribution of natural assets, those who are at the same level of talent and ability and who have the same willingness to use them, should have the same prospects of success regardless of their initial place in the social system. [...] The expectations of those with the same abilities and aspirations should not be affected by their social class.<sup>4</sup>

Rawls's later work is yet more forceful in its confidence that an educational system can be free from the arbitrary influences of children's class backgrounds:

[T]hose who have the same level of talent and ability and the same willingness to use these gifts should have

the same prospects of success regardless of their social class of origin, the class into which they are born and develop until the age of reason. In all parts of society there are to be roughly the same prospects of culture and achievement for those similarly endowed.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, if Rawls might plausibly be described as ambiguous with regard to the full realizability of educational opportunity in a just society, when it comes to the capacity of a well-ordered liberal-democratic regime to entirely neutralize plutocracy with respect to the *political* opportunities afforded to its citizens, Rawls is even more adamant, arguing that such a regime will guarantee what he calls the "fair value of political liberties," which:

ensures that citizens similarly gifted and motivated have roughly an equal chance of influencing the government's policy and of attaining positions of authority irrespective of their economic and social class.<sup>6</sup>

Rawls repeatedly emphasizes this element of his theory, insisting:

[A]ll citizens, whatever their economic or social position, must be sufficiently equal in the sense that all have a fair opportunity to hold public office and to affect the outcome of elections.<sup>7</sup>

And again: "All citizens, whatever their social position, may be assured a fair opportunity to exert political influence."<sup>8</sup> While Rawls is all too brief in his account of the institutions whereby the fair value of political liberties might be instituted, he continually emphasizes at least two key reforms: campaign finance legislation and other uses of electoral law to reduce the impact of private money in politics,<sup>9</sup> and various policies (like estate and inheritance taxes) that would serve to make the distribution of wealth more evenly dispersed than it is in conventional capitalist welfare states.<sup>10</sup> This latter element is important not simply because it suggests the potential radicalism of Rawls's model, but also because it indicates that one of the principal liberal strategies for reducing plutocracy involves the reduction of inequality itself.<sup>11</sup>

Rawls is not alone in implying that the neutralization of plutocracy vis-à-vis politics and education is essentially a fully realizable goal. Numerous subsequent liberal thinkers working within a Rawlsian paradigm repeat Rawls's idealism in this regard, especially with respect to equality of political opportunity.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the denial of plutocracy as a permanent problem also finds voice among liberal thinkers working from different philosophical standpoints. Thus, G. A. Cohen, whose luck-egalitarian account of justice departs from Rawls in numerous respects, affiliates himself with Rawls's confidence about generating a plutocracy-free society:

I do not think, and I do not think that Rawls thought, that ensuring the people's opportunities to hold office and exercise political influence are substantially independent of their socioeconomic position requires substantially equal material holdings. I believe that un-American experience shows that election regulation, of a sort that Rawls would endorse, can produce political democracy under a wide inequality of income and wealth.<sup>13</sup>

Even if Cohen incorrectly reduces Rawls's proposals for combatting plutocracy in politics to those pertaining to campaign finance legislation, thus forgetting that Rawls also thought the reduction of inequality was essential to neutralizing the unfair influence of wealth in politics, the basic point to emphasize is that Cohen too denies that plutocracy is a permanent problem in a liberal-democratic society.

Even libertarian thinkers, to the extent that they see plutocracy as a concern, sometimes suggest that the problem can be neutralized by reducing the scope of the state: if welfare and other state programs are dramatically curtailed, then any disproportionate influence over and access to government on the part of the wealthy become less significant, since there is simply less to be won by effective political advocacy.<sup>14</sup> Of course, such an approach, if it is even plausible within the conditions of the vast and administratively complex nation-state, is even less plausible when it comes to educational opportunity.

To be clear, I do not think that liberal thinkers are wrong to uphold fair equality of opportunity vis-à-vis education and politics as sacrosanct ideals, nor that the policies they recommend would not meaningfully help liberal-democratic regimes better realize such aspirations. But insofar as even the most radical liberal schemes would still condone substantial inequalities,<sup>15</sup> insofar as (as I shall relate) the evidence is strong that even modest inequalities reproduce themselves in differential opportunities for education, politics, and even health, and insofar as liberals have no answer to the permanent limits the family places on equality of educational opportunity, then even the most ambitious liberal projects for combatting plutocracy would only reduce it, not eliminate it from social life.

### *Ignoring the Problem*

One of the best pieces of evidence that plutocracy is an inescapable problem in even the best-ordered liberal-democratic regime comes, ironically, from certain liberals themselves. After all, some liberal thinkers, especially those who, unlike Rawls, have thought through in greater detail the kinds of specific policies and programs required to combat plutocracy, are not altogether unaware that the reforms they support will lead to

something less than the neutralization of socioeconomic status as a factor determining educational and political opportunity. But rather than confront this shortcoming head on, a frequent trope in liberal thought — and another aspect of the liberal blindness to the problem of plutocracy — is to subscribe to less than ideal proposals as if they were fully satisfactory.

Ronald Dworkin, for example, has proposed that if the underlying distribution of resources is itself justly organized in a liberal-democratic regime — which, for Dworkin, involves a society insuring all its citizens against various forms of misfortune (for example, poverty, disease and unemployment) as well as campaign finance legislation — then both economic inequality and the political influence stemming from such inequality will be greatly reduced, so that “a great deal of the inequality in political influence of our own time” would be eliminated.<sup>16</sup> Like Rawls, Dworkin's ambition is to neutralize the effects of wealth inequality on politics, while accepting that inequality of political influence might continue to result from non-economic factors, such as the talent and commitment individuals bring to politics.<sup>17</sup> Yet, when Dworkin reflects on the ultimate impact of his proposed reforms, he states not that they will fully neutralize the role of wealth in relation to political opportunity but only that, much more modestly, they will prevent the super-rich from altogether monopolizing politics:

Moral agency is possible for all citizens in politics only if each has an opportunity to make *some* difference [...] enough to make political effort something other than pointless. [...] Citizen equality is destroyed when *only the rich* are players in the political contest.<sup>18</sup>

If Dworkin's more sober assessment of the ultimate impact of his proposed reforms should be commended for its honesty, he barely admits that the standard it embodies is something lesser than equality of opportunity for political influence — and it certainly does not lead Dworkin to reflect on the enduring problem of plutocracy within his idealized account of social justice in a liberal-democratic regime.

The tendency to ignore, rather than simply deny, the problem of plutocracy can also be found in Tomasi's recent “bleeding-heart libertarian” theory of social justice, in which a watered-down account of fair equality of opportunity in education — which promises only “*high quality* educational opportunities to all,” not *equal* opportunities regardless of socioeconomic status, and which contains the caveat that this promise cannot necessarily be guaranteed by the market-based strategies Tomasi favors — is presented as a plausible interpretation of Rawls's idea of fair equality of opportunity, even though it is certain to lead to a circumstance

where similarly talented and motivated children will not expect to grow up with roughly equal prospects of “success” regardless of their class of origin.<sup>19</sup> From the other side of the political spectrum, one finds the problem of plutocracy is similarly ignored when Freeman, after acknowledging that the family is a permanent barrier to the full realization of fair equality of opportunity, suggests that Rawls never intended the “practically impossible,” rigorous standard that similarly talented and motivated children grow up with opportunities uninfected by their socioeconomic class of origin, but only that those with similarly *developed* abilities compete fairly for positions.<sup>20</sup> What is objectionable about this interpretation is not only that it conflicts with numerous passages where Rawls envisions an education system that will offer equal opportunities to the equally endowed, nor merely that Freeman’s exposition becomes incoherent when he somehow thinks this reduced conceptualization of fair equality of opportunity is consistent with the ideal that “people, whatever [ . . . ] their social circumstances, be given the means to fully develop and effectively exercise the talents and abilities that they are endowed with, so that they may engage in public life as equal citizens” (Freeman, 98), but that it leads Freeman to look away from the problem that plutocracy is an inescapable feature of liberal-democratic regimes.

In putting forward genuinely progressive reforms that nonetheless fall short of neutralizing plutocracy, liberals in these instances emphasize their progressivism in such a way so as to ignore the lingering problems that would persist in even a significantly more egalitarian liberal-democratic regime.

### *Avoiding the Problem*

A final form of liberal blindness toward the problem of plutocracy that I wish to highlight relates to the tendency of certain leading liberal philosophers simply not to address questions of fair equality of opportunity vis-à-vis politics and education when delineating the requirements of their progressive, left-leaning conceptions of liberal justice. For example, Sen’s recent influential account of justice, which argues against ideal theorization in the name of comparative judgments of better versus worse arrangements that might be realized in the short term, articulates social justice in a way that need not face up to the truth that, even in the most progressive liberal-democratic regimes, similarly talented and motivated children do not enjoy roughly equal prospects of success regardless of their socioeconomic background, nor do citizens possess roughly equal prospects of political influence independent of their class background.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, whenever some threshold level of welfare is upheld as providing the conditions for socioeconomic independence and free and equal citizenship

— but there is no additional attention to how citizens living above this minimum still experience differential political and education opportunities — one finds avoidance of the problem of plutocracy among liberals. For example, the capabilities approach to justice pursued by Nussbaum, among others, presents wealth and income in a just regime as susceptible to this kind of threshold analysis, whereby once sufficient economic resources are obtained, inequalities have no clear effect on civic relations of political equality.<sup>22</sup> Liberal republicans like Pettit draw on this capabilities idea when they argue that justice requires that citizens have sufficient resources so as to possess “the basic capabilities for functioning in society” and when they call for the state to promote the “socioeconomic independence” of its citizens so as to escape avoidable forms of domination (for example, “their being exploited or manipulated or intimidated by others”). Even as Pettit claims that such standards might require “the substantial reduction of certain material inequalities,” and even as he presents his theory as something likely to appeal to “left-of-centre liberals,” his focus on the more rudimentary problem of non-domination means that his account does not face the plutocratic problem that inequalities in a condition of non-domination still, on average, generate disproportionate educational and political opportunities for the more wealthy.<sup>23</sup> To be sure, in his recent work especially, Pettit affirms the ideal of equality of political opportunity, writing that “the citizens of a legitimate state have to enjoy equal access to a system of popular influence,” which he defines in terms of “an opportunity for participation in that system that is available with equal ease to each citizen.”<sup>24</sup> But because Pettit does not reflect on the way socioeconomic inequality above and beyond a threshold of non-domination shapes unequal opportunities for political influence, his appeal to equality of political opportunity seems empty, if not obfuscating insofar as he thinks it will be secured in the kind of liberal-republican order he defends.

In sum, then, whether by denying, ignoring, or avoiding the fact that even in a well-ordered liberal-democratic society fair equality of opportunity cannot be fully achieved for children in education nor citizens in politics, liberals manifest a blindness to the problem of plutocracy. The argument that follows, drawing both on the history of political thought and empirical studies in civic behavior, aims to overcome such blindness and insist upon plutocracy as an intractable problem besetting even the most hypothetically advanced liberal-democratic regime.

### **Republican Honesty about Plutocracy**

Contemporary liberal-democratic theorists are the exception when they claim it is possible for relations

of political equality to be fully uncontaminated by the effects of economic inequality. The far more prevalent philosophy has been to recognize the impossibility of this ideal, taken in its fullest sense. Not just Marxist critics (who argue that economic structures of private property and inequality must limit the meaning of the juridical equality of liberal civic status), and not just defenders of monarchy and aristocracy (who expect the wealthy and well-born to have disproportionate political influence as a normative matter), but the long pre-modern and early modern republican tradition of political thought expresses, in various ways, the basic assumption that wealth cannot be entirely separated from political power.

Indeed, in acknowledging plutocracy I am only recalling (which is not to say returning to) an older, well-established understanding of the relationship between wealth and politics that was commonplace among republicans, especially prior to the modern rebirth of democracy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For a vast range of republican thinkers, wealth was taken to be inseparable, both normatively and descriptively, from political power. As Harrington put it, “where there is inequality of estates there must be inequality of power.”<sup>25</sup>

For some, this inseparability of economic and political power was seen primarily as a problem, as numerous republican thinkers argued for curbing wealth inequality both to protect ordinary citizens from abuse from the very wealthy<sup>26</sup> and to make political power more likely to be placed in the hands of merit rather than mere wealth.<sup>27</sup> For example, Plato’s scheme for a ruling elite of philosopher-kings required, he understood, that there be no property, and thus no economic inequality, among this class, because Plato accepted that economic divisions otherwise would interfere with the rule of reason and virtue. Plato’s parallel requirement that the ruling elite forego the other main pillar of a liberal democratic society (and indeed of societies pretty much everywhere) — the family — and that they raise their children collectively without knowing who are their biological relations followed a similar logic.

For others, the problem rather was that the natural and proper political authority generated by property might be disrespected to the detriment of the stability of the state: hence, a long tradition of republicans (including Aristotle, Guicciardini, Montesquieu, Sieyès, and Guizot) proposed a variety of institutional measures for formally bestowing on the wealthy disproportionately greater political voice and opportunity, both as a necessary means of protecting property rights and on the assumption that the wealthy, due to their economic stake in society, would have a superior incentive to cognize and pursue the genuine public interest. Accordingly, prior to the gradual abolition of property requirements for voting from the eighteenth century down to the present

day, wealth shaped civic membership in virtually all pre-modern republics, whether as a minimal threshold level required for active citizenship or in the form of graded civic levels based on property.

Interestingly, very often these two competing, almost opposed notions of the political potency of wealth — great wealth as a threat to political liberty and wealth as deserving class-based instantiation in formal political institutions — co-existed in the mind of single republican thinkers. Aristotle both expects that a healthy republican regime will afford disproportionate influence to the wealthy and cautions against the excessively plutocratic exclusion of common citizens from deliberative institutions where they might participate and lend their superior judgment.<sup>28</sup> Harrington affirms property requirements for citizens and gradations of two civic classes based on property (the order of the foot and the order of the horse),<sup>29</sup> and at the same time calls for land redistribution to prevent excessive accumulations that would undermine the unity of the state.<sup>30</sup> Montesquieu’s desire to replace the rule of wealth with merit and virtue did not prevent him from excluding those without property from civic membership.<sup>31</sup> Constitutional framers in the USA aimed to create a regime that would “preserve the spirit and the form of popular government” but at the same time afforded special respect to property both as a core political right and as something that would lead its holders to play a disproportionate position of leadership in the state.<sup>32</sup>

A similar situation occurred in France, where the political rights affirmed in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen were applied unevenly, with property-holders but not the propertyless having them.<sup>33</sup> Rather than seeing this simultaneous effort to both *limit* and *enable* the disproportionate influence of the propertied in republican regimes as schizophrenic or otherwise contradictory, it should be interpreted in light of an almost pretheoretical republican acceptance that, within regimes grounded on private property and the family, wealth of course would carry with it political potency, thereby making the question for republican theorists one of *how*, rather than *whether*, the disproportionate influence of the wealthy should be allowed to reveal itself. As Montesquieu put it, “It is impossible that riches will not secure power.”<sup>34</sup>

The republican political thinker who provides what is likely the most important theoretical bridge between the pre-modern republican outlook that took for granted the propriety of affording *legalized* political privileges to the wealthy and the modern liberal-democratic outlook that finds any such formal privileges unacceptable, given the moral premise of free and equal citizenship — *and who, crucially, in spite of this transition, still expected property to exert disproportionate influence in modern liberal-democratic politics* — is James Madison. By the end of his life, Madison came

to reject his earlier belief that the franchise might be restricted to the propertied, since any denial of universal (male) suffrage “violates the vital principle of free Govt. that those who are to be bound by laws, ought to have a voice in making them.”<sup>35</sup> But what deserves special emphasis is Madison’s recognition that even within such an ethico-political context — which clearly is the one occupied by today’s liberal democracies where any constitutionalization of political advantage for the wealthy is seen as a *prima facie* injustice — wealth would continue to exert disproportionate influence in politics, albeit in indirect and informal ways. That is, Madison posits that the natural power of wealth itself exerts disproportionate influence even when unaided by electoral institutions formally favoring the wealthy:

Should [. . .] universal suffrage and very short periods of elections within contracted spheres be required for each branch of the Govt., the security for the holders of property when the minority, can only be derived from the *ordinary influence possessed by property*, & the superior information incident to its holders; from the popular sense of justice enlightened & enlarged by a diffusive education; and from the difficulty of combining & effectuating unjust purposes throughout an extensive country.<sup>36</sup>

Madison did not, of course, originate the idea that, in electoral republics especially, oligarchic tendencies would persist even when offices would be open to all citizens regardless of social background — as the belief in the inherently oligarchic feature of elections (their tendency to favor the wealthy and wellborn) had informed much republican theorizing in the centuries prior to Madison.<sup>37</sup> But Madison’s reflections here are significant both because he attends to the persistence of oligarchic effects in the much more egalitarian liberal-democratic regimes of the nineteenth century and because, in delineating the different sources of such effects, he puts forward the central idea of the “ordinary influence possessed by property” (an influence which suggests something more general and widespread than the simple tendency for the wealthy to be elected disproportionately to office). Madison, in other words, has his finger on plutocracy — again, conceived not necessarily in terms of the conscious coordination of moneyed interests, but rather in terms of the raw power of wealth to exert its influence and force within a formally (that is, juridically) equal political system. I discuss the contemporary mechanics of this phenomenon in the next two sections.

### The Ordinary Influence Possessed By Property

But what, after all, did Madison have in mind by “the ordinary influence possessed by property”? And how

might such influence be conceptualized today? Three dynamics are especially relevant.

First of all, one can point to the *fluidity of power* and in particular the fluidity of economic power, such that, at a certain level, wealth overlaps with various political potencies like the capacity to hold government office, influence the decisions of governments, and mobilize others to achieve political aims.<sup>38</sup> Just as at a certain level of poverty, other forms of empowerment become impossible or meaningless, so at a certain level of economic wealth there is an almost inescapable generation of extra-material, political forms of empowerment like fame, influence, and other informally derived opportunities for a more active political career. As Adam Smith strongly argued, one of the chief advantages of wealth is that it gains the attention of others.<sup>39</sup> From the other side, beyond material deprivation, having few resources renders one invisible. As John Adams put it, the poor man

feels himself out of the sight of others, groping in the dark. Mankind takes no notice of him. He rambles and wanders unheeded. In the midst of a crowd, at church, in the market [. . .] he is in as much obscurity as he would be in a garret or a cellar. He is not disapproved, censured, or reproached; *he is only not seen*.<sup>40</sup>

This combination of factors — wealth’s capacity to generate attention as well as the resources to mobilize supporters and engage in political marketing — helps explain the long tradition of political thinkers who took it for granted that, within an electoral republic especially, the wealthy would have disproportionate advantages in pursuing active political life.<sup>41</sup> The very wealthy are more proximate to political power, have more opportunities to get it, and can magnify their voices and influence in ways that ordinary citizens cannot. The United States Supreme Court’s doctrine that money is speech for the purposes of jurisprudence regarding election law, and that therefore spending for political purposes deserves a high level of protection, may not be just as a matter of law (there might be more just campaign finance legislation which is currently being stymied by such jurisprudence) but it is accurate as a matter of political phenomenology.<sup>42</sup> Much like the Hegelian notion that quantity, after a certain level of magnitude, necessarily becomes quality, so does wealth become political power and political power wealth, at least at the highest levels of each.

Second, it is not just that wealth at very high levels almost inescapably becomes a political force, but that even more modest increments of wealth produce greater political participation. Political scientists have repeatedly shown that

the inequality of representation and influence are not randomly distributed but systematically biased in favor of more privileged citizens — those with higher

incomes, greater wealth, and better education — and against less advantaged citizens.<sup>43</sup>

The wealthy are more likely to vote;<sup>44</sup> they are also more likely to campaign, protest, and engage in other forms of community activism.<sup>45</sup> The power of wealth to mobilize citizens politically has been documented across various times and places.<sup>46</sup> Verba *et al.*'s so-called civic voluntarism model identifies the mechanisms plainly.<sup>47</sup> The model distinguishes between three sources supporting participation: resources (time, money, and civic skills), engagement (including interest in politics, a sense of political efficacy, and the capacity to recognize the connection between one's own needs and preferences and ongoing public policy debates), and mobilization (that is, the likelihood of being recruited to participate).<sup>48</sup> Wealth not only contributes to the first of these in a direct and obvious way, since wealth is a basic resource for political activity and the effective communication of one's political voice, but also connects to the latter two, insofar as material resources have been shown to contribute to education, political efficacy, and the likelihood of recruitment.<sup>49</sup> For these reasons, income and wealth often are considered not just as an ingredient of socioeconomic status, but as a proxy for it.<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, insofar as wealth generates both an incentive to participate and a means of doing so, the wealthy — and perhaps the very wealthy — will have a disproportionate advantage in politics. That is to say, in conflicts between the haves and have-nots, the wealthy occupy a favored position not only in their often superior resources and organization, but in the fact that such resources and organization can reveal themselves without explicit efforts at coordination. For example, insofar as one of the political ambitions of the wealthy is to protect their wealth, the deployment of political resources toward this end need not require the same level of coordinated mobilization of those who, even if they potentially share a common commitment to redistribution, are more likely to suffer from the disaggregation generated by underprivilege and ideological difference.<sup>51</sup>

Third, another set of social-scientific findings supporting the phenomenological truth of plutocracy — specifically, ordinary citizens' experience of their economic status as being relevant to their political voice — concerns the extent to which inequality itself, beyond the material disadvantages of the less fortunate, has increasingly been shown to have a demotivating impact on political activity and a lessening of the quality of civic life.<sup>52</sup> Among the mechanisms hypothesized to contribute to this dynamic is that the experience of inequality, especially when the inequality is between segregated neighborhoods of better and less well-off, undermines efficacy in the less well-off by eroding their capacity to trust and cooperate, preventing information

flow (insofar as communication is hindered by homogeneity), and producing apathy.<sup>53</sup> Solt's cross-cultural study of five nations, for example, finds that

higher levels of income inequality powerfully depress political interest, the frequency of political discussion, and participation in elections among all but the most affluent citizens, providing compelling evidence that greater economic inequality yields greater political inequality.<sup>54</sup>

Since the disadvantaged are less likely to be mobilized anyway,<sup>55</sup> any added effect from inequality itself would only exacerbate a prior tendency.

The plutocratic effects of inequality itself also can be seen in relation to health, where recent research continues to suggest that socioeconomic inequality reproduces itself in unequal health outcomes. The point is not simply the well-known correlation of low economic class with certain health risk factors (smoking, obesity, poor diet, exposure to pollution, and substandard housing) — as here such health inequalities could be addressed by raising the absolute material and educational standards of disadvantaged citizens so that they have the resources, information, and opportunity to engage in behavior and choices no less healthy than that of their better-off fellow citizens. Rather, what seems to reveal plutocracy in relation to health as an inescapable feature of civic life is the degree to which social inequality itself, divorced from its connection to material deprivation, appears to have negative health consequences. For example, the ongoing British Whitehall study, which has examined the health of more than 28,000 civil servants in England since 1967, has found that life expectancy increases at each grade of the civil service's socioeconomic ladder. The most junior employees like doorkeepers have death rates three times higher than the most senior administrators, even when controlling for numerous other risk factors.<sup>56</sup> Similar findings about the effects of inequality on health outcomes exist across countries, with countries that enjoy lower levels of national wealth but higher levels of equality performing better on health measures than their counterparts.<sup>57</sup> If inequality itself has negative health consequences for those further down a socioeconomic ladder, by what mechanism does it operate? Recent research suggests that lower socioeconomic status carries with it greater stress at not being in control of the conditions of one's life, whether in the form of being more likely to follow orders and obey a rigid schedule or in the form of lacking the predictability and stability afforded by higher levels of socioeconomic status.<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, higher cortisol levels (associated with stress) and lower serotonin levels (associated with depression), both of which are detrimental to health, have been linked to low social status.<sup>59</sup> The plutocratic impact on health, if true, has potentially

profound implications for political philosophy. Whereas the intrusion of economic inequality into politics and education represents a failure to achieve a full-fledged meritocracy — since what plutocracy means in these contexts is that similarly talented and motivated citizens do not, in fact, have equal prospects of influencing elections and similarly talented and motivated children do not, in fact, have equal prospects of success in life — the epidemiological costs of socioeconomic inequality would seem to problematize even meritocracy itself.

### The Enduring Refusal to See Plutocracy as an Inescapable Feature of Liberal Democracy

In analyzing the structure of plutocracy — the penetration of the effects of economic inequality into civic spheres (education, politics, health) supposedly protected by widely-held norms of free and equal citizenship — I have emphasized the fluidity of power by which wealth at a certain level of magnitude must begin to contain political advantages; the various ways in which higher socioeconomic status correlates with a greater likelihood of engaging in politics; and the possibility, underwritten by recent research, that inequality itself has a negative impact on political activity as well as bodily health. Now, it seems there are at least three main ways to resist such assertions of plutocracy as a basic structure of liberal democracies: to point out specific findings that do not cohere with it; to argue that its effects on politics is minimal, because participants have similar preferences as nonparticipants; and to argue that the situation is correctible (for example, that it is more of an American phenomenon that is largely neutralized in relatively egalitarian European societies). I take up these objections in turn.

With regard to the first, there are admittedly exceptions to the general plutocratic relationship between socioeconomic status and political activism. For instance, in certain contexts and at certain levels of intensity, socioeconomic disadvantage can actually generate political activism.<sup>60</sup> And some well-known trends — like the correlation of education and political activity — are not absolute. For example, even though the level of education in many Western societies has risen over the last generation, it remains doubtful that such developments have contributed to greater political engagement. But, in response, it should be stressed that my purpose is to uncover only what is ordinary. Ordinary citizens ordinarily can expect, at least to some degree, wealth to intrude upon opportunities for political power, educational and career expectations, and health outcomes. As countless studies have demonstrated in various times and places, it is clearly the rule and not the exception that wealth promotes political activity and influence.<sup>61</sup> As a landmark 1978 study put it: “The political advantage of those citizens more advantaged in

socioeconomic terms is found in all nations, certainly in all those for which we have data”<sup>62</sup> — a finding which is repeated in even stronger terms by Verba *et al.*: “No democratic nation [. . .] lives up to the ideal of participatory equality.”<sup>63</sup>

The second challenge to the assertion of plutocracy argues that the consequences of unequal participation are not that important, because the attitudes of participants on policies are virtually the same as nonparticipants: thus, even if the median actual voter is better off than the median eligible voter, the effects on actual policies might be negligible. To be sure, some studies have found a close match between the policy preferences of voters and nonvoters — or that where there are differences they go in no particular ideological direction.<sup>64</sup> But we do a disservice to the phenomenology of everyday political life if we conclude from such findings that the effects of plutocracy are thereby neutralized. For one thing, while some studies find little difference, many others find both that there are differences and that these tend to relate specifically to redistributive policies.<sup>65</sup> Further, and much more fundamentally, we need to look past mere policy preferences as an indication of similarity. What matters in politics is not just the content of preferences, but how preferences are prioritized. In the American context, for example, despite substantial overlap in policy preferences, those of lesser means place a higher salience on certain issues — like education and “basic human needs” — and deprioritize other issues like non-tax-based economic issues, foreign policy, abortion, and the environment.<sup>66</sup> Also, to focus too heavily on any alleged correspondence between the policy preferences of voters and nonvoters is to forget that there are other forms of political activity beyond voting — many of which afford participants the opportunity to communicate and pursue objectives with at least somewhat more expressivity than the relatively mute, rare, often binary vote. Such extra-electoral kinds of engagement — activism, campaign work, fundraising and donations, contacting leadership — have been shown to be much more likely among socioeconomically advantaged people than disadvantaged ones, pointing to a plutocratically determined differential in the amplitude, subtlety, and reach of the political voice available to citizens.<sup>67</sup>

Third, plutocracy might be resisted as only a contingent, but not a necessary, feature of liberal-democratic civic life. Such an objection might claim, for example, that while countries like the USA exhibit clear plutocratic tendencies (inequality is high, winner-take-all elections potentially underrepresent economic minorities, poverty and the depoliticization it threatens represent serious social problems, and onerous registration rules magnify the socioeconomic impact on participation rates), other polities, like European and especially Nordic liberal democracies, counteract such plutocratic

effects insofar as inequality in such countries tends to be lower, proportional representation incentivizes participation even from political minorities and the less powerful, poverty is contained, high voting rates minimize socioeconomic effects on electoral participation, and educational systems better approximate the condition of providing similarly talented and motivated children roughly equal life prospects. To be sure, in the USA the effects of plutocracy seem especially strong.<sup>68</sup> But while it is important to recognize a wide diversity in the intensity of the plutocratic elements of different nations, it is a mistake to allow such relative analyses to cover over the basic fact of plutocracy as a fundamental structure of political life in *all* contemporary mass democracies. Europe and other relatively egalitarian societies differ in degree but not in kind from the USA. Not only are even the most egalitarian societies still shaped by sizeable inequalities in income and especially wealth, but the basic plutocratic dynamic that socioeconomic status on average predicts various forms of political activity — whether voting or, more significantly, extra-electoral forms of engagement — is a widely accepted feature of European political behavior, even within the most egalitarian Nordic states.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, the fact that welfare programs in Europe are funded primarily through relatively regressive taxes on income rather than relatively progressive taxes on wealth — and that the very wealthy prevent more egalitarian transfers due to the threat of capital flight — indicate additional mechanisms by which plutocracy exerts itself in even the most egalitarian European societies.<sup>70</sup> The Nordic countries are not immune from such processes. Not only do they exhibit sizeable inequalities in wealth, but their political and educational systems — even if much more egalitarian than those of countries like the USA — are still overrepresented by the socioeconomically advantaged.<sup>71</sup> As in the USA, the disproportionate political and civic capacity of the rich in the Nordic countries has generated social criticism.<sup>72</sup> The point, in other words, is that Europe is only *less* plutocratic, not without plutocracy.

### The Implications of Plutocracy for the Future of Liberal Democracy

Given the prevalent resistance in contemporary liberal thought to considering plutocracy as a permanent problem, my primary objective in this essay has been to insist upon the inevitable intrusion of economic inequality, even in the most progressive hypothetical liberal-democratic regime, into the spheres of educational and political opportunity. In such a context, overcoming blindness to the problem of plutocracy seems like a more foundational task than asking how such a problem might be fruitfully addressed. Still, in conclusion, it is

important to clarify what I take to be the most significant implication the problem of plutocracy might have for citizens committed to an ethical and progressive vision of liberal democracy.

In insisting upon the inescapability of plutocracy — the fact that, even under ideal conditions, similarly talented and motivated children will not grow up in societies where their socioeconomic status has no relevance for their educational prospects and where, likewise, similarly talented and motivated citizens will not have roughly equal prospects of political opportunity regardless of their class backgrounds — the suggestion is not to reject the propriety of prevalent liberal-democratic norms of free and equal citizenship, nor in any way to depreciate efforts in specific societies to reduce their plutocratic elements. Clearly, even if plutocracy will remain a permanent problem, it can be contested and improved on a relative basis.

Rather than abandon the commitment to fair equality of opportunity, the problem of plutocracy suggests a *secondary* dimension through which it might be pursued. Specifically, insofar as the problem of plutocracy means that a *residual unfairness* will inhabit even the most progressive liberal-democratic states, the stage is set for expanding the purpose of progressive liberal reform to involve not only the future-oriented reduction of the unwanted effects of socioeconomic status on political and educational opportunity, but the discovery of ways for a society, in a future-perfect temporality, to acknowledge and in some partial way redress the unfair intrusion of economic life into politics and education that always will have occurred. As I have argued elsewhere, the wealthiest members of a liberal-democratic society may have a special role to play in this regard: that is, as those who have prospered the most within a system that is less than fully fair, the economically most advantaged are ideally situated, through compulsory public donations, to both acknowledge and in some partial way remedy the unfairness generated by the problem of plutocracy.<sup>73</sup> The logic of such a proposal finds some historical support in the practices of early popular republics, like Athens and Rome, in which certain economic burdens were placed uniquely on economic elites, arguably as a reflection of the idea that part of what an egalitarian society requires is the special regulation of its most advantaged members.<sup>74</sup> Yet, regardless of whether liberal-democratic thinkers follow this kind of particular proposal for progressive reform, the problem of plutocracy means that the liberal-democratic commitment to free and equal citizenship should be shaped not merely by an asymptotic desire to achieve ever lesser amounts of plutocracy, but by a spirit of repentance that responds to the unfairness that will always shadow even the most advanced liberal-democratic state.

## NOTES

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1. For the pervasiveness of the ideal of a plutocracy-free society within the attitudes of ordinary citizens, see, for example, Benjamin I. Page and Lawrence R. Jacobs, *Class War? What Americans Really Think about Economic Inequality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 2–3; also see Larry M. Bartels, *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 127–61. For its pervasiveness in contemporary liberal philosophy, see my argument in the main text.

2. While not confronting the problem of plutocracy *per se*, John Gray does depart from the perspective of most contemporary liberals when he insists upon liberalism’s internal pluralism: its diverse and competing set of moral commitments. My argument here is in the spirit of Gray’s “agonistic liberalism.” See Gray, *Two Faces of Liberalism* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 14, 32, 34, 69–104; Gray, *Berlin* (London: Fontana Press, 1995), 141–68.

3. John Rawls, “Distributive Justice” [1967], in *Collected Papers*, ed. Samuel Freeman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 143.

4. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1971), 73; also see, 93; Rawls, *A Theory of Justice: Revised Edition* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999), 63 (rev); also see, 80.

5. John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2001), 44.

6. *Ibid.*, 44.

7. *Ibid.*, 149.

8. *Ibid.*, 177.

9. John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 358; Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 149.

10. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 73/63 rev; *Justice as Fairness*, 44, 46n, 161; *Collected Papers*, 52–3, 161, 77, 89, 140, 141.

11. The rigor of Rawls’s egalitarianism is often overlooked but it is given special emphasis by a recent set of commentators who emphasize how the later Rawls’s notion of “property-owning democracy” carried with it the call for the wide dispersal of capital through such policies that would block “the intergenerational transmission of advantage” (for example, significant inheritance, estate, and gift taxes) and policies that would aggressively protect political discourse from the intrusion of money (for example, “campaign finance reform, public funding of political parties, public provision of forums for political debate, and other measures to block the influence of wealth on politics [ . . . ] perhaps including publicly funded elections”). See Martin O’Neill and Thad Williamson

eds, *Property-Owning Democracy: Rawls and Beyond* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 81, *passim*.

12. For example, the full realizability of the fair value of political liberties is claimed by: Martin O’Neill, “Free (and Fair) Markets without Capitalism: Political Values, Principles of Justice, and Property-Owning Democracy,” in *Property-Owning Democracy*, Martin O’Neill and Thad Williamson, 75–100; Samuel Freeman, *Justice and the Social Contract* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 107.

13. G. A. Cohen, *Rescuing Justice and Equality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 385.

14. John Tomasi, *Free Market Fairness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 252; H.A. Scott Trask, “William Graham Sumner: Against Democracy, Plutocracy, and Imperialism,” *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 18 (2004): 1–27.

15. For example, even a well-ordered Rawlsian regime would still be characterized by what one radical Rawlsian describes as “moderate, ethically justifiable inequalities.” Further, given that the most radical liberal proposals usually target the intergenerational transfer of wealth, there is reason to suspect that intra-generational inequalities would still be significant under most liberal schemes. See Thad Williamson, “Is Property-Owning Democracy a Politically Viable Aspiration?” in *Property-Owning Democracy*, Martin O’Neill and Thad Williamson, 288.

16. Ronald M. Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue: The Theory and Practice of Equality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 199.

17. Ronald Dworkin, *Is Democracy Possible Here? Principles for a New Political Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 150–54; *Sovereign Virtue*, 195, 197, 199, 351–85.

18. Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue*, 230, 385 (emphasis added).

19. Tomasi, *Free Market Fairness*, 243–44.

20. Samuel Freeman, *Rawls* (London: Routledge, 2007), 98.

21. See, for example, Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 97.

22. Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 291–3. On the capabilities model’s interpretation of these capabilities in terms of “sufficiency” levels, see Jonathan Wolff, “Social Justice and Public Policy: A View from Political Philosophy,” in *Social Justice and Public Policy: Seeking Fairness in Diverse Societies*, ed. Gary Craig, Tania Burchardt, and David Gordon (Bristol: Policy Press, 2008), 23.

23. Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 10, 159, 161–63; also see Pettit, *On the People’s Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 84–8, 90–1, 298.

24. Philip Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, 169–70.

25. James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana and a System of Politics*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 57. Even if Harrington thought much of this inequality could be corrected — since, in the very next clause, he writes, “and where there is inequality of power there can be no commonwealth” — he also expected wealthier citizens to have disproportionate political opportunities (as seen in his call for two orders, the foot and the horse, and his exclusion of the propertyless from citizenship), acknowledging in his own ideal proposals the place for seemingly inescapable economically generated political inequality.

26. Aristotle, *Politics*, ed. W. L. Newman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887), 1295b4–15; Thomas More, *The*

*Complete Works of St. Thomas More* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 67; Thomas Jefferson, *Writings*, Library of America 17 (New York: Library of America, 1984), 841; Eric Nelson, *The Greek Tradition in Republican Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

27. Plato, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 584d, 737e; James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, 202, 231, 460; Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 44–5, 94–6.

28. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1281a40–b10, 1283a40–b1, 1283b23–35, 1286125–32, 1287b12–30, 1332130–35.

29. James Harrington proposes a division of the citizenry which “distributes the citizens into horse and foot, by the sense or valuation of their estates; they who have above £100 a year in lands, goods, or moneys, being obliged to be of the horse, and they who have under that sum to be of the foot. But if a man has prodigally wasted and spent his patrimony, he is neither capable of magistracy, office, or suffrage in the commonwealth.” Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana and a System of Politics*, 76.

30. *Ibid.*, 76, 234. As James Harrington explains: “The centre or fundamental laws are, first, the agrarian, proportioned at £2,000 a year in land, lying and being within the proper territory of Oceana, and stating property in land at such a balance, that the power can never swerve out of the hands of the many,” *ibid.*, 234.

31. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 160. Montesquieu argues that “in choosing a representative, all citizens in the various districts should have the right to vote except those whose estate is so humble that they are deemed to have no will of their own.”

32. James Madison, “Federalist No. 10,” in *Federalist*, ed. Terence Ball, 3rd vol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 40–6. See also Alexander Hamilton, who expects “land-holders, merchants, and men of the learned professions” will dominate the political life of the nascent American republic (“Federalist No. 35,” *The Federalist*, 161).

33. William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1989), 124, 420.

34. Montesquieu, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Chez Lefevre, 1835), 145.

35. *Ibid.*, 445.

36. *Ibid.*, 448–49. Emphasis added.

37. See Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 8–93.

38. On this last, see Jeffrey Winters, *Oligarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 11–20.

39. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Ryan Patrick Hanley (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 40–41.

40. John Adams, “Discourses on Davila,” in *The Works of John Adams*, ed. Charles Francis Adams, vol. 6 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1850), 239.

41. See footnote 37 above.

42. As the Supreme Court reasoned in *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 19 (1976): “A restriction on the amount of money a person or group can spend on political communication during a campaign necessarily reduces the quantity of expression by restricting the number of issues discussed, the depth of their exploration, and the size of the audience reached. This is because virtually every means of communicating ideas in today’s mass society requires the expenditure of money.”

43. Arend Lijphart, “Unequal Participation: Democracy’s Unresolved Dilemma,” *American Political Science Review* 91 (1997): 1; Lester Milbrath and Madan Lal Goel,

*Political Participation: How and Why Do People Get Involved in Politics?* (Chicago: Rand McNally College, 1977); Jan Teorell, Paul Sum, and Mette Tobiasen, “Participation and Political Equality: An Assessment of Large-Scale Democracy,” in *Citizenship and Involvement in European Democracies: A Comparative Analysis*, eds. Jan W. van Deth, José R. Montero, and Anders Westholm (London: Routledge, 2007), 384–414; Sidney Verba, “Would the Dream of Political Equality Turn out to Be a Nightmare?” *Perspectives on Politics* 1 (2003): 666.

44. Robert Franzese and Jude Hays, “Inequality and Unemployment, Redistribution and Social Insurance, and Participation: A Theoretical Model and an Empirical System of Endogenous Equations,” in *Democracy, Inequality, and Representation: A Comparative Perspective*, eds. Pablo Beramendi and Christopher Anderson (New York: Russell Sage, 2008), 239–40.

45. Arend Lijphart, “Unequal Participation.”

46. Sidney Verba, Norman Nie, and Jae-on Kim, *Participation and Political Equality: A Seven-Nation Comparison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

47. Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

48. *Ibid.*

49. On the significance of education to likelihood to participate, see Raymond E. Wolfinger and Steven Rosenstone, *Who Votes?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980) Ch. 3; Verba *et al.* *Voice and Equality*, 5, *passim*; Lester Milbrath and Madan Lal Goel, *Political Participation*. On the correlation between education and wealth, see Verba *et al.* *Voice and Equality*, 18. On the correlation between wealth and political efficacy, see Frederick Solt, “Economic Inequality and Democratic Political Engagement,” *American Journal of Political Science* 52 (2008): 48–60. On the correlation of wealth to the likelihood of recruitment, see Robert Huckfeldt and John Sprague, “Political Parties and Electoral Mobilization: Political Structure, Social Structure, and the Party Canvass,” *American Political Science Review* 86 (1992): 70–86; Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

50. Christopher Anderson and Pablo Beramendi, “Income Inequality and Electoral Participation,” in *Democracy, Inequality, and Participation*, eds. Anderson and Beramendi (New York: Sage, 2008), 280–1.

51. Jeffrey Winters and Benjamin Page, “Oligarchy in the United States?” *Perspectives on Politics* 7 (2009): 731–51. Frederick Solt, “Economic Inequality and Democratic Political Engagement,” 49.

52. Anderson and Beramendi, “Income Inequality and Electoral Participation,” 299; David Campbell, *Why We Vote: How Schools and Communities Shape Our Civic Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

53. On the relationship of increased inequality to declining levels of trust and cooperation, see Alesina and La Ferrara “Who Trusts Others?,” *Journal of Public Economics* 85, no. 2 (2002): 207–234; Robert J. Boeckmann and Tom R. Tyler, “Trust, Respect, and the Psychology of Political Engagement,” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 32, no. 10 (2002): 2067–88; Eric M. Uslaner and Mitchell Brown, “Inequality, Trust, and Civic Engagement,” *American Politics Research* 33, no. 6 (2005): 868–94. On inequality as a potential blockage to information flow, see Matthew Schroeder, “Economic Inequality and Political Participation: Scale Matters” (Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota, 2009); Robert Huckfeldt, Jeanette Morehouse Mendez, and Tracy Osborn, “Disagreement, Ambivalence, and Engagement: The Political Consequences of Heterogeneous Networks,” *Political Psychology* 25, no. 1 (2004): 65–95. On the relationship of inequality to

the production of apathy, see John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980).

54. Frederick Solt, "Economic Inequality and Democratic Political Engagement," 48. Also see Goodin and Dryzek, who found that the relationship between income inequality and electoral participation was strongly negative across 38 democracies in the late 1950s and 42 American metropolitan areas in the early 1960s. Robert Goodin and John Dryzek, "Rational Participation: The Politics of Relative Power," *British Journal of Political Science* 10 (1980): 273–92. For the effect of inequality on participation at the sub-national level, see Carles Boix, *Democracy and Redistribution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Frederick Solt, "Civics or Structure? Revisiting the Origins of Democratic Quality in the Italian Regions," *British Journal of Political Science* 34 (2004): 123–35.

55. Frederick Solt, "Civics or Structure?"; Robert Goodin and John Dryzek, "Rational Participation"; Boix, *Democracy and Redistribution*; Verba, "Would the Dream of Political Equality Turn out to Be a Nightmare?."

56. Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011), 75.

57. As Wilkinson and Pickett explain: "There are now numerous studies that show the same thing, in different societies and for most kinds of ill-health — low social status has a clear impact on physical health, and not just for the people at the very bottom of the social hierarchy. [...] There is a social gradient in health running right across society, and where we are placed in relation to other people matters; those above us have better health, and those below us have worse health, from the very bottom to the very top" (*The Spirit Level*, 75–6). Also see Wilkinson, *The Impact of Inequality: How to Make Sick Societies Healthier* (New York: The New Press, 2006), 16, 18, 20, 23.

58. For the former, see H. Kuper and M. Marmot, "Job Strain, Job Demands, Decision Latitude, and Risk of Coronary Heart Disease within the Whitehall II Study," *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 57 (2003): 60. For the latter, see Ari Väänänen, Aki Koskinen, Matti Joensuu *et al.*, "Lack of Predictability at Work and Risk of Acute Myocardial Infarction: An 18-Year Prospective Study of Industrial Employees," *American Journal of Public Health* 98 (2008): 2264–71.

59. Tarani Chandola, Annie Britton, Eric Brunner, *et al.*, "Work Stress and Coronary Heart Disease: What Are the Mechanisms?" *European Heart Journal* 29 (2008): 640–8; R. J. Verkes, M. W. Hengeveld, R. C. van der Mast *et al.*, "Mood Correlates with Blood Serotonin, But Not with Glucose Measures in Patients with Recurrent Suicidal Behavior," *Psychiatry Research* 80 (1998): 239–48; Wilkinson, *The Impact of Inequality*, 87–88, 275.

60. J. Eric Oliver, *Democracy in Suburbia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 68–98; Campbell, *Why We Vote*, 13–75; Henry E. Brady, "An Analytic Perspective on Participatory Inequality and Income Inequality," in *Social Inequality*, ed. Kathryn Neckerman (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), 667–702.

61. Roller and Rudi argue that the civic voluntarism model (which predicts that greater socioeconomic status generates a greater likelihood of political participation) "seems to be a universal model of political participation that is not only valid for the USA but also for Western as well as Central and Eastern European democracies." Edeltraud Roller and Tatjana Rudi, "Explaining Level and Equality of Political Participation: The Role of Social Capital, Socioeconomic Modernity, and Political Institutions," in *Social Capital in Europe: Multi-Level Analyses of the European Social Survey 2002*, ed. Heiner Meulemann (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 269, 278.

62. Verba *et al.*, *Participation and Political Equality*, 1.

63. Verba *et al.*, *Voice and Equality*, 1.

64. Peter Enns and Christopher Wlezien, eds. *Who Gets Represented?* (New York: Russell Sage, 2011); Stephen Shaffer, "Policy Differences between Voters and Non-Voters in American Elections," *Western Political Quarterly* 35 (1982): 496–510; Verba *et al.*, *Voice and Equality*, 204; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, *Who Votes?* 105–14.

65. See, for example, Stephen Earl Bennett and David Resnick, "The Implications of Nonvoting for Democracy in the United States," *American Journal of Political Science* 34 (1990): 799. Also see Verba, "Would the Dream of Political Equality Turn out to Be a Nightmare?" 670.

66. Verba *et al.*, *Voice and Equality*, 221; Verba, "Would the Dream of Political Equality Turn out to Be a Nightmare?"

67. Verba *et al.*, *Voice and Equality*, 197, 202, 205, 213, 512; Verba, "Would the Dream of Political Equality Turn out to Be a Nightmare?" 670–2.

68. See, for example, Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady, *The Unheavenly Chorus: Unequal Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*.

69. Verba *et al.*, *Participation and Political Equality*, 1–22; Erik Oppenhus, *Voting Behavior in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Electoral Participation and Party Choice* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1995), 21–2; Jan Teorell, Paul Sum, and Mette Tobiasen, "Participation and Political Equality," 388, 408; Roller and Rudi, "Explaining Level and Equality of Political Participation," 253, 267.

70. Pablo Beramendi and David Rueda, "Social Democracy Constrained: Indirect Taxation in Industrialized Democracies," *British Journal of Political Science* 37 (2007): 627; Winters, *Oligarchy*, iii.

71. Douglas Baer, "Voluntary Association Involvement in Comparative Perspective," in *State and Civil Society in Northern Europe: The Swedish Model Reconsidered*, ed. Lars Trägårdh (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007), 69–125; Erik Amnå, "Associations, Youth, and Political Capital Formation in Sweden: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Trends," in *State and Civil Society in Northern Europe*, ed. Lars Trägårdh 69–125.

72. Nora Mueller, Sandra Buchholz, and Hans-Peter Blossfeld "Wealth Inequality in Europe and the Delusive Egalitarianism of Scandinavian Countries," *Munich Personal RePEc Archive Paper 35307* (University Library of Munich, Germany, 2011); Bengt Ericson, *Den Nya Överklassen: En Bok Om Sveriges Ekonomiska Elit* (Stockholm: Fischer & Co., 2010).

73. Jeffrey Edward Green, "Rawls and the Forgotten Figure of the Most Advantaged: In Defense of Reasonable Envy Toward the Superrich," *American Political Science Review* 107 (2013): 123–38.

74. See, for example, Mogens Herman Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 110–15; Fergus Millar, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 73–94; Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 199–234.

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