Citizenship, Virtue & the Neutral State: A Search for the Private Justification of Civic Virtue

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A Search for the Private Justification of Civic Virtue

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"We may not acquire learning, nor do we see that every learned person is a servant of the country. All of us, however, can cultivate virtues like fearlessness, truthfulness, fortitude, justice, straightforwardness, firmness of purpose, and dedicate them to the service of the nation. This is the religious way. This is what the mahavakya, that political life should be spiritualized, means. He who follows this line will always know the path he should take."

- Gandhi

Declaration of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work. I confirm that I have clearly referenced, in both the text and the bibliography, all sources used in the thesis. No content of the thesis has been used previously for other courses.

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Job Siegmann

ABSTRACT

While the literature on civic virtue and its relation to the state is extensive, little to no work has been done on what justifies the development of civic virtue for the individual. This thesis will begin by arguing that civic virtue is not only compatible with an account of liberal neutrality, but that, referring to existing literature, liberal democracies require a measure of civic virtue to sustain itself. Asserting that the stare requires a level of civic virtue on behalf of its citizenry, the thesis will pose the question of what justifies developing civic virtue for the individual citizen. After first considering and rejecting two objections to justifying civic virtue in private terms categorically, the thesis considers a few variations of the argument that acquiring civic virtue is ultimately in the (enlightened) interest of the self, alongside an argument from reciprocity. The thesis will argue that none of these justifications ultimately succeed and concludes by arguing that civic virtue should instead be considered as an expression of general virtues and is justified accordingly. The thesis concludes by considering the implications of this claim for how we should see our role as citizens, and how we should see the role of the state in promoting civic virtue.

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0. Introduction

In a February 24th article the Lexington columnist of *the Economist* (*The Economist* 2024) told the story of Wang Huning, a leading political theorists and ideology for the Chinese Communist Party, and his 1988 trip to the United States. Wang was both impressed and pessimistic when it came to American civil society. Though he admired the political culture, he ultimately felt that the decline of shared values would result in a spiritual crisis of "individualism, hedonism and democracy". Though the column ultimately rejects Wang's claims favoring tradition, collectivism and authoritarianism, the Lexington columnist does end with the recognition of "the corrosion of civic virtue that is letting the once and possibly future president [Donald Trump] tear so much to pieces."

This column is not the first lament of declining civic virtues. An argument could be made that civic virtues are indeed declining, expressed in the declining norms of public discourse (Krzyżanowski 2020), increased polarization (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008) and in declining norms against political violence (Samuelson 2022). Much philosophical work has been done on the need for civic virtue in maintaining a liberal democracy. Recognizing the public need for civic virtue, this thesis will turn to the perspective of the citizen. While civic virtue is of clear moral import for the public values and institutions we hold dear, how should we consider civic virtue in terms of our private life?

Much of political philosophy is concerned with what roles citizens should or should not play in society. How to improve citizen participation, what the duties are of both citizen and state, how we should arrange our institutions and how we should see individual freedoms. All these perspectives consider the citizen from the perspective from the state, but what about citizenship from the perspective of the individual? Most of us see ourselves as much more than merely a political entity – we have lives, values, make decisions on what to prioritize and within the framework of virtue ethics, many aim to grow in character, practice virtue and gain practical wisdom. How does civic virtue play into these considerations? Should civic virtue be the highest form of virtue to strive for, or is this optional based on how engaged we are with civil life? Even if we strive for a good life, why should we be concerned with the interests of the state? *If I, as an individual, am committed to moral excellence, why should moral excellence include civic virtue?* Not only is this justification question mostly neglected in modern discourse, but the way in which civic virtue is justified has serious implications for what we

can reasonably expect from citizens. Even more, what is in the interest of the state, might very well not be in the (moral) interest of the individual.

The first chapter will consider the role of civic virtue within a liberal democracy and will show the need for civic virtue in maintaining a liberal system. The chapter will conclude with a typology of civic virtue and explain in detail the problem of private justification of civic virtue. Chapter two will address the 'realist interpretation' of civic virtue, which says that civic and private life are so radically distinct in their context and character demands, categorically rejecting any private justification of civic virtues. Chapter three will examine civic virtue as "self-interest rightly understood" and concludes that though civic virtue might frequently end up being in one's own interest, enlightened self-interest ultimately fails as a justification. Chapter four will argue that civic virtues should ultimately be seen as expressions of general virtue in the context of civic life, and will conclude by looking at the implications of this claim for how we should understand civic virtue.

1. Civic Virtue & Liberal Democracies

Naively, civic virtue can be characterized as certain dispositions or attitudes that make one a good citizen or contribute to the public good in some way. This chapter considers how civic virtue is essential for the stability and functioning of liberal democracy and will consider how a specific conception of civic virtue is compatible with an account of liberal neutrality. The chapter will conclude with a typology of civic virtue.

1.1 The Liberal Need for Citizenship

The need for civic virtue in liberal democracy has been argued extensively, most famously by authors in the civic republican tradition. For William Galston, we need some concept of civic virtue to maintain what he sees as the purpose of liberalism. Galston explicitly defines civic virtues as "the virtues needed to sustain the liberal state" (Galston 1991, pg. 220). Richard Dagger, another civic republican, is similarly concerned with "virtues that are most directly civic and most clearly vital to republican liberalism", seeing civic virtue as similarly essentially to maintaining the public good of liberalism (Dagger 1997, pg. 196).

Why is civic virtue needed to maintain liberal democracy? Will Kymlicka argues that "Without cooperation and self-restraint in [areas of public concern], 'the ability of liberal societies to function successfully progressively diminishes'" (Kymlicka 2002, p. 285). This notion of the flourishing state requiring certain attitudes from the citizenry can be found in a number of historical authors. Rousseau claimed that "for all [the conditions of democracy] could not exist without [civic] virtue." (Rousseau 2011, p. 52). Similarly, Mill argues that "political machinery […] has to be worked, by men, and even by ordinary men. It needs, not their simple acquiescence, but their active participation" (Mill 2010, p. 11). More recently, Pettit argued that "Laws […] need to be supported by widespread civic virtue, by widespread civility—if they are to have any chance of being effective; the legal republic needs to become a civil reality." (Pettit 1999, 280), with even Rawls himself in later works conceded that "When these [civic] virtues are widespread in society and sustain its political conception of justice, they constitute a great public good.", and that they must be "constantly renewed by being reaffirmed and acted on in the present."(Rawls 2001, 118).

The need for civic virtue can be best understood in the role civic virtue plays in creating and sustaining civil society. Many have argued that the liberal state requires civil society in the

form of an active citizenry, which necessarily requires some measure of civic virtue on behalf of the people. While the need for civil society and civic virtue in general has been argued as early as Aristotle and Cicero, the most famous account for the need for a flourishing civil society can be found in Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, which argues the essential role for civic participation and civil society in creating an effective state (Tocqueville 2002). A modern interpretation for the need for civic attitudes can be found in Robert Putnam's work, who emphasized the role of "social capital" in successful government. In analyzing disparities in effective government between northern and southern Italy, Putnam identifies the fundamental role of civil society, and by extension the role of civic virtue, in maintaining and promoting democratic institutions:

> "Effective and responsive institutions depend, in the language of civic humanism, on republican virtues and practices. Tocqueville was right: Democratic government is strengthened, not weakened, when it faces a vigorous civil society." (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nonetti 1993, 182)

Both Putnam and Tocqueville in their own way recognize the need for civil society and civic virtue in the functioning of the liberal state. This, alongside the arguments by Kymlicka and the recent array of social science identifying the need for civic virtue (Cohen and Chaffee 2013; Scott 1971; Algan and Cahuc 2009), leads to the assertion that civic virtues are indeed necessary for civil society and thereby the proper functioning of liberal democracy.

1.2 Civic Virtue vs Liberal Neutrality

The problem with the previous assertion is that some might argue that liberalism is incompatible with a prescriptive notion of civic virtue, because of the liberal principle of state neutrality. Civic virtue, and 'good' citizenship more broadly, include a specific understanding of what makes a morally "good" citizen. If civic virtue is indeed necessary or desirable, then this implies a specific conception of the good life. And this is exactly the problem, for liberal neutrality fundamentally says that the state should remain neutral between different conceptions of the good life. This creates a conundrum: we have on the one hand a need for civic virtue, while on the other hand liberal neutrality does not permit specific conceptions of civic virtue as part of the good life.

In order to resolve this dilemma, let us first consider liberal neutrality. The debate on liberal neutrality largely focused on whether the state is in a position to define the good life, and act to encourage or discourage certain choices deemed incompatible (Kymlicka 1989). This idea of there being a concept of the good life, based not on general principles of government but specific moral ends, is what John Rawls calls "perfectionism". Rawls saw perfectionism as inherently incompatible with his version of liberalism, as he argued that the veil of ignorance necessarily cannot put special weights on specific conceptions of the good, as "the parties do not share a conception of the good by reference of which [distributive matters] can be evaluated"(Rawls 1971, p.328). For Rawls, it is not concepts of the good independently defined (perfectionist goods) that should make up our understanding of the public good, but rather "the principles that we would acknowledge to govern the background conditions" (Rawls 1971, p.560), under which each pursues their own goods. This returns us to the earlier dilemma. If we accept the need for liberal neutrality, how do we reconcile this with the fact that the best way to achieve and maintain liberal neutrality practically is through a perfectionist understanding of civic virtues?

There are two ways to resolve this. The first way, as put forth famously by Joseph Raz, is to formulate liberal neutrality in perfectionist terms. Raz argues that the liberal state can and should be perfectionist, in pursuit of the value of autonomy. This means that a good life is an autonomous life, and the government's role is to maximize autonomy. Though rejecting liberal neutrality in principle, this argument justifies a system of government resembling liberal neutrality in practice, justified in its pursuit of autonomy. This means that civic virtue needs to be justified in terms of autonomy: if the good life is an autonomous life, and civic virtue promotes autonomy either directly (supposing practicing civic virtue will result in more autonomy) or indirectly (in that civic virtue will sustain a form of government most able to maximize autonomy), then civic virtue is compatible with this conception of liberalism.

The problem here is that while autonomy is a great ideal to pursue publicly, it is unclear why a good life is necessarily an autonomous life. As argued by Sandel (1984), part of the good life is interpreting one's role in the community. While it is good that the state gives the individual autonomy in decisions of marriage, for example, marriage itself – part of what many consider a good life – essentially restricts autonomy in many ways. This problem holds of variations of this argument, as can be found in Galston's account, who sees liberalism as ultimately promoting the goods of individualism and diversity. These again are fine public goods to strive

for, but it is strange to define the good life exclusively in terms of living an individualistic and 'diverse' life.

All these accounts effectively aim to reformulate liberal neutrality in perfectionist terms, but in doing so they unnecessarily restrict themselves to very peculiar conceptions of the good life. Instead of resolving to such an argument, this thesis will accept the tension between liberal neutrality and the civic good. This thesis posits that liberal neutrality is a public good, necessary to govern interaction and allow citizens to find the good life, in line with Mill's account of freedom. This thesis sees individual freedom as an essential good not in itself, but because it is *necessary* to develop any kind of virtue. This is because virtue can only be developed when there is self-ownership. As Mill argued: "A person whose desires and impulses are his own—are the expression of his own nature, as it has been developed and modified by his own culture—is said to have a character. One whose desires and impulses are not his own, has no character, no more than a steam-engine has a character. "(Mill 1859, 56).

This means that there is a good life, defined in perfectionist terms, but the best way to find and achieve this good life is through the ability to choose the good life independent of state interference, hence requiring a practical concept of liberal neutrality. Though some might argue that even the concept of a public good is itself incompatible with liberal neutrality, this seems needlessly restrictive. Nagel, for example, argues that even Rawls himself, the strongest proponent of extensive liberal neutrality, implicitly appeals to specific conceptions of the public good: when considering Rawls's claim that the parties in the original position do not share a specific conception of the good, "Any hypothetical choice situation which requires agreement among the parties will have to impose strong restrictions on the grounds of choice, and these restrictions can be justified only in terms of a conception of the good.*"* (Nagel 1973, p.226). Even Rawls himself later concedes that his principles of justice and liberal neutrality require certain public attitudes to maintain. "[the principles of justice] incorporate the ideal of citizens as free and equal persons into public life by way of the shared recognition of the principles of justice and their realization in the basic structure. " (Rawls 2001, 117). We can therefore conclude that, accepting this argument, civic virtue *is* compatible with liberal neutrality - insofar civic virtue is justified in terms of promoting the public good, rather than as part of a specific conception of the good life.

This has two major implications. Firstly, if liberal neutrality is a quintessential public good, then civic attitudes or dispositions (civic virtues) on behalf of its citizens are an according public good, to be encouraged and facilitated by the state. The second implication is that since this justification of liberal neutrality is not based on a specific conception of the good life, but the *ability* to live a good life, this does not necessarily imply that the government is justified in enforcing particular conceptions of civic virtue. The question of facilitating and justifying civic virtue on behalf of citizens will fall to the remaining chapters of this thesis. For now, accepting the compatibility with liberalism and practical need for civic virtues, the question is what kind of civic virtues are necessary to maintain the liberal good. The following section will look at Dagger & Galston's typologies of civic virtue and will combine this with contemporary work on the role of civic attitudes to divide civic virtue into three distinct categories.

1.3 A typology of civic virtue

1.3.1 Galston on Civic Virtue

Galston defines civic virtue as those virtues or dispositions most effective in the pursuit of the public goods of individualism and diversity (Galston 1991, pg. 222), and so he categorizes civic virtues in the four ways in which they promote said goods. Firstly, there are 'general' civic virtues which are necessary for any political system. Galston mentions *courage* in battle, *law-abidingness* and *loyalty* as specific virtues. Next there are the economic virtues, or "virtues of the liberal economy". There are some role-specific virtues (e.g., *entrepreneurial virtue*), and then there are generic economic virtues, namely *work ethic*, *moderate delay of gratification* and *adaptability*. Then there are the "virtues of liberal society", or social virtues (Kymlicka, 2002). Since Galston justifies civic virtues as part of a liberal perfectionist understanding, the specific elements of what he considers the liberal goods, diversity and individualism, require a specific kind civic virtue to maintain, namely the *virtue of independence* for individualism and the *virtue of tolerance* for diversity. The final type of civic virtue, which Galston defines as political virtues, are virtues practiced specifically in the public sphere. These are subdivided into three kinds, starting with *virtues of citizenship*: building on the general virtues, a liberal system requires the virtue of discerning candidates and respecting rights of fellow citizens. Secondly, there are the *virtues of leadership*: patience, forging common purpose, and narrowing the gap between popular preference and wise action (resisting temptations of populism). Lastly, there are *general political virtues* which apply to both leaders and citizens: The disposition to

engage in public discourse and narrowing the gap between social practice and public principles[1].

While all four virtues contribute to a liberal democratic system, they differ in their role. A liberal democratic system seems to require two types of dispositions. Firstly, for the liberal democracy to flourish it needs a certain share of citizens to possess a measure of civic virtue. Citizens who obey the law (general virtue), respect their fellow citizen (social virtue) and be a productive member of society (economic virtue). Yet a liberal democratic system also requires *citizen participation*: to hold power accountable, be publicly reasonable, speak out against injustice et cetera – Galston's 'political virtue'. There is a clear distinction here between the first three civic virtues, practiced privately, and the publicly practiced political virtue. To see why this is significant, consider the fact that one can master the first three civic virtues to a point of excellence, yet never vote or engage in public discourse.

1.3.2 Dagger's Alternative

An alternative typology of civic virtues is offered by Dagger (1997), who argues that "The republican-liberal citizen is someone who respects individual rights, values autonomy, tolerates different opinions and beliefs, plays fair, cherishes civic memory, and takes an active part in the life of the community." (Dagger 1997, p. 196) Similarly to Galston, Dagger emphasizes civic virtues in social terms, and argues citizens should possess some kind of disposition towards the general goods of liberal society. Citing Tocqueville, Dagger has a view of civic society as a communal project of which one is an integral part: '*"private citizen" is an oxymoron, for citizenship is a public office that requires the citizen to act with the common good in mind.'* (Dagger 1997, p. 196). Where Galston saw political and social civic virtue as somewhat distinct, Dagger sees private and public virtue as one and the same. Living in society means being a citizen, which combined with his teleological account of civic virtue[2], means that being a citizen necessarily implies one follows the "telos" or purpose of citizenship, possessing civic virtue. The thesis will return to this merging of citizen and person in chapter three and four, when considering civic virtue as self-interest properly understood.

[1] This refers to Galston's theory of social contradictions, further discussion of which falls outside the scope of this paper. For further reading, see Galston (1991) p. 22-37, 227

[2] Page 14: "As a role-related concept, virtue refers to the disposition to act in accordance with the standards and expectations that define the role or roles a person performs. "

1.4 Three categories of civic virtue

This is the point where a broader typology of civic virtue might be useful. It seems that different things are meant by civic virtue, depending on the author. Considering civic virtue as the virtue to promote the public good, civic virtue can be divided into three kinds of civic virtue, corresponding with the three different ways in which certain attitudes can benefit the public good. Starting with civic virtue as those attitudes practiced in private which are nonetheless instrumental in facilitating the public good. Call this civic virtue as **citizenship virtue**. Citizenship virtue includes those attitudes or specific virtues that make up a traditional understanding of a 'good citizen'. Citizenship virtue includes those unremarkable virtues practiced daily by most people which are nonetheless essential for the public good. Examples of this are law-abidingness, entrepreneurship, reciprocity & tolerance (Faulks 2013). Perhaps the most broadly applicable civic virtue, this type of virtue is lacking when people speak of declining social norms or communal values. Conservatives might bring up lacking patriotism or social behavioral norms, where progressives might highlight gender stereotypes or discrimination in the labor market as the results of lacking citizenship virtue.

Secondly, both Dagger and Galston highlight the need for citizens to be involved in public life and public deliberation. Dagger argues a need for citizens to "grow into the community", adapting a "civic memory", while Galston argues for the need to publicly address social contradictions. This can be grouped under civic virtue as civic involvement in public life, call this civic virtue as **civic engagement**. Civic engagement is the attitude to be involved in civic life, to participate and be engaged. Examples of expressions of civic engagement are voting in elections, attending city council meetings on important matters, speaking out against injustice, or engaging in political discourse more generally, either on social media or with peers. (Skocpol and Fiorina 2004). Note that civic engagement as civic virtue is not the same as mere civic *action,* a distinction that will be expanded on in chapter three. This type of civic virtue is lacking when people speak of low election turnout, political apathy, or when people neglect to speak out against injustice.

Finally, though Galston does address civic engagement somewhat ambiguously in his virtue of 'narrowing the gap between social practice and public principles' (Galston 1991, p. 227), he is clearly concerned with what could be called public conduct: how to conduct oneself in the public or political realm, through virtues like transparency, leadership and public

reasonableness. Call this type of civic virtue **public virtue**: those dispositions or virtues necessary to govern interaction in the public sphere. Public virtue is what motivates the maintenance of democratic norms, respect for rule of law, respectful disagreement and tolerance for different views etc. (Freelon 2015). This type of civic virtue is lacking when people speak of degenerating public norms, inflammatory political speech, public prejudice or problems of integrity amongst politicians.

1.5 Why be civic?

This typology of civic virtue is useful in two ways. For one, it allows us to distinguish between the different ways civic virtue is used in modern public debate. Recall the opening column in *The Economist*: when the columnist is speaking of corroding civic virtue, he is clearly referring to public virtue, where he argues both Trump and his supporters lack a respect for democratic process, motivated in part through a lack of tolerance of opposing views. The columnist is not referring to civic engagement (there might be rather too much of that, recalling the events of January 6th, 2021), nor is he particularly concerned for a decline in private social norms associated with citizenship virtue (at least not in this context).

More importantly, this typology allows us to get at the heart of the issue of civic virtue. So far, this thesis has argued that a liberal democracy needs some level of civic virtue on behalf of its citizens, which are virtues expressed both publicly and privately. The problem is that for both Galston & Dagger, these virtues are justified in that they support their respective interpretation of the liberal good. But what justifies these virtues on behalf of the citizen? *If I, as an individual, am committed to moral excellence, why should moral excellence include civic virtue?* Chapter two will first address some objections to justifying civic virtue in private terms, specifically the objection that civic life is radically different from private life. Chapter three will set out a number of arguments for justifying civic virtue, focusing on civic virtue as being in the individual's self-interest 'rightly understood'. After concluding that these arguments ultimately fall short of justifying civic virtue in private moral terms, chapter four will conclude by arguing for civic virtue as a natural extension of general virtue. The thesis will conclude by examining the implications of this account for how the state and the individual should see civic virtue, respectively.

2. Civic and Private Virtue as Radically Different

2.1 Defining Virtue

When speaking of civic virtue, it is useful to define what virtue is. A more thorough discussion on the nature of virtue can be found in chapter four, for now it is sufficient to define virtue in broad terms. Virtues are character attributes, or dispositions, which are necessary for moral excellence. For example, honesty is understood to be a virtue when one decides to act honestly "because that would be honest", where being honest is sufficient justification for the action to be right. The issue is that there are many different virtues, and that in day-to-day life it is not always clear which virtue takes precedence, or which elements are relevant in pursue of virtue. This is why virtue requires a second principle: practical wisdom. Practical wisdom allows for discernment of relevant elements to know what virtue dictates in each situation, and it is typically obtained through experience (Hursthouse and Pettigrove 2023).
Children for example might be honest, but lacking experience and therefore practical wisdom, can be honest *to a fault*: they keep insulting people around them with their bluntness, and practical wisdom would show how they need to balance honesty with a concern for others, for example.

Virtue is distinct from moral action, in that virtue is a measure of moral character. Speaking the truth in a particular scenario is not a virtue in itself – being honest is - with speaking the truth being an expression of the virtue of honesty. Applying this to civic virtue, we can now see how civic virtue is essentially a matter of being a good citizen. This means that civic virtue is distinct from civic action or even civic duty, which are at best expressions of civic virtue. This highlights the pertinence of this thesis' research question: if civic virtue requires people to not just do what they are instructed, but to *care,* why should they?

2.2 Politics as Power Struggle

Before exploring how civic virtue could be privately justified, it is important to address some potential objections to the need or appropriateness to define civic virtue in private terms in the first place. Beginning with what this thesis will call the "realist interpretation" of civic virtue, this interpretation sees the civic realm as purely a power struggle, making civic virtue either non-existent or unnecessary. Elements of this can be found in the works of Machiavelli, who

saw public morality as necessarily different from private morality, particularly in the case of the ruler. Not only did he consider them as morally incommensurable contexts, but he also saw public life as needing certain private vices, such as ruthlessness and deceit (Hampshire 1978; Machiavelli, Skinner, and Price 2019). Where Machiavelli felt this only applied to the ruler (Pocock 2016), the realist interpretation extends this notion of public morality to citizens, and civic virtue more generally. The role of the individual in promoting the public good is in the measure of its political ends, with no moral boundaries on the means of procuring the public good (Maritain 1942). On this account, civic virtue are those traits most effective in achieving some worthwhile public end. If we see the public sphere as a fundamental struggle for power, *realpolitik*, then it is pointless to even speak of civic virtue, and it is rather it is a matter of political skill and effectiveness. If everything and everyone is involved with a struggle for power, then all that matters is the content of the political end, and one's ability to be effective in achieving this end, rather than the means. Any remaining sense of civic virtue would reduce to being strategic or effective in the pursuit of power, similar to the *political virtu* found in Machiavelli's works *(Price 1973; Machiavelli, Skinner, and Price 2019)*. While this does beg the question of why people would even want to engage with civic life in the first place, it also means that without any civic virtue to speak of, there is nothing to require justification. All that is left is the question of what is a worthwhile public end, and what skills will be most effective in achieving this end.

There are two main problems with this objection. For one, reducing politics to a power struggle is extremely cynical. It asserts that politics *is* nothing but a power struggle, with the only normative evaluation being based on the political ends. This undermines some of the 'civic exemplars' of liberal history. Gandhi, for example, was adamant in emphasizing non-violence as an end in itself, not merely as an effective political tool. And when politicians are accused of lying, taking bribes, or otherwise acting without integrity, we feel it is the means they used to achieve power which condemn them, not their political ends. The fact that we condemn politicians who lie, are corrupt, and otherwise fail to display some level of public virtue, means that society intuitively *does* value civic virtue. Just because civic life can frequently be characterized as a power struggle, does not mean that all aspects of civic life can be reduced to a power struggle, nor does it mean that people should act in accordance. Martin Luther King jr. was definitely part of a power struggle, but reducing the civil rights movement to nothing more than a power struggle ignore important aspects of the movement, for one the genuine conviction that non-violence itself was an essential element of justice (King Jr 1992). Another

problem of reducing any civic virtue to achieving certain worthwhile ends is that a means-end view of civic life is not only counterintuitive, but also opens Pandora's box of extremist politics. This is because most any political actor believes their respective cause to be just, which would mean that without any ends-independent measure of civic virtue, almost any public conduct would be internally justified – so long as the goal remains worthwhile.

Even if we would accept this characterization of the civil realm as power struggle, however, the need for civic virtue remains, and with it the need for a private justification. Recall that under this interpretation civic virtue are those traits most effective in achieving some worthwhile public end. If we consider the liberal state to indeed be a worthwhile end, accepting the need for civic virtue in maintaining the liberal state, then developing civic virtue would still be the most effective way of achieving the worthwhile public end of a liberal state. Unless one does not consider a flourishing liberal democracy as a worthwhile public good, one would have to concede at least instrumental need for civic virtue, and with it the need for private justification. This means that even if the realist interpretation is right, and that politics is a power struggle between conflicting political ends, civic virtue is still needed, and the question of private justification still stands.

2.3 Public and Private Virtue

A second objection to the need to justify civic virtue in private terms is to argue that because the public and private realms are radically different, it is impossible or inappropriate to justify civic virtue in private terms. Entering the civic realm demands certain civic virtues, meaning private life does not enter into it, making any need for private justification unnecessary. And since the need for civic virtue is justified in terms of the public good, there is no basis on which to even justify civic virtue in private terms. Private life might require certain virtues, and civic life requires others, with any overlap being coincidental.

In response, consider that the public and private realm are very much connected. It has become increasingly clear that humans do not exist in a vacuum – we cannot put on a 'civic hat' and suddenly shift our fundamental moral attitude. Civic life is very obviously interchanged with private life. Interacting with workplace acquaintances is a fundamental element of one's moral life, yet colleagues in a public context fulfil a public and personal role at the same time - political allies or even opponents might become friends. Getting along with fellow political

party members is good in a general sense (it is good to get along with people), but also in a civic sense, as doing so might create important civil connections. Indeed, some have argued that defining a public-private distinction is a conceptual impossibility in the first place (O'Sullivan 2009). If it is indeed a practically impossible to fully separate one's civic and personal life, then it is similarly impossible to fully separate personal and civic virtue.

Not only is it difficult to separate distinct realms of virtue practically, doing so is morally problematic. Possessing virtue is a character trait, linked to the self on a fundamental level. We cannot simply turn off character traits when desirable – doing so would reject part of the self, and they would cease to be a trait in the first place. Macintyre, for example, could in one sense be seen as aligning with the previous objection: he characterizes virtues as role-specific attitudes based on specific practice, suggesting that we can perhaps see civic virtue as nothing more than virtues internal to the practice of civic life. Yet on the contrary, Macintyre himself actually explicitly highlights the need for consistent moral character: "the liquidation of the self into a set of demarcated areas of role-playing allows no scope for the exercise of dispositions which could genuinely be accounted virtues in any sense remotely Aristotelian" (MacIntyre 2007, 205). This means that even if civic virtue is nothing more than virtue internal to citizenship, there needs to be some consistency of character. And this makes intuitive sense: if one is a cheat and liar in public, it seems unlikely for this same person to possess great honesty in private. And even if one managed, can we even speak about them possessing the virtue of honesty? Not only does moral excellence require some consistency, but moral consistency itself appears to be part of what could be considered virtuous. This is evident when we consider the alternative: intuitively we consider moral inconsistency a vice - we accuse someone who is kind to one and mean to another as 'two-faced', and someone who is honest to some but lies to others as duplicitous. Moral character then can be said to require moral consistency, of a kind incompatible with a sharp separation of the roles and virtues of citizen and person.

Finally, recall how civic virtue has so far been defined as promoting the public good of liberal democracy. Examining the three types of civic virtue shows the problems of distinguishing sharply between roles and virtues. Starting with civic virtue as public virtue, it could be argued that public virtue has nothing to do with private virtue. But this already seems intuitively wrong. As the last section showed, virtue flourishes when there is consistency in the practice of virtue. And though public virtue will undoubtedly make different demands than private

virtue, there is enough overlap to suggest that possessing public virtue requires at least some private virtue. As Aristotle argued, an essential element of virtue is practice, or habituation (Callard 2022; Aristotle 1955). Being honest and conscientious in public typically requires some level of private practice to develop or maintain such virtues.

The hard contrast between public and private realms becomes even more problematic when considering civic virtue as civic engagement, since civic engagement is precisely that virtue which bridges the gap between private and public in the individual. Civic engagement in part means taking that which one develops privately and putting it to public use, not merely stepping outside private life but expanding private elements into the public. Civic engagement might mean taking corporate experience and using it for the public good by taking a seat in the city council, or it could mean encouraging people in one's private context to go out to vote and engage with elections. Finally, when considering civic virtue as citizenship virtue the distinction between civic and private virtues disappears altogether. Paying taxes, for example, is essentially a private act – yet it is also undoubtedly a civic act, as it is the quintessential example of putting the public good above the private (assuming taxes are paid out of a civic attitude, not out of fear of punishment).

It is clear then that the public and private realms are in many ways connected. But even if they were not, and that our civic role requires drastically different virtues and justification, it still leaves the question of why individuals should take their civic role in the first place. The idea of civic virtue is a normative concept of good citizenship – so how can we reject the question of how civic virtue relates to the good life? Is not the ultimate goal of politics, and especially liberalism, to allow people to live a good life, however defined? And if we require certain virtues, be it civil, how can we not consider how civic virtue relates to the good life for people, as more than just citizens?

3. Civic Virtue as Self-interest Rightly Understood

The main argument for private justification of virtue is that it is in the individual's interest "rightly understood". This chapter considers a number of variations of the argument that says that developing civic virtue is itself in the interest of the enlightened self, starting with an account of civic virtue being in the individual's external self-interest, showing how this account quickly runs into problems. After considering an argument from reciprocity, this chapter will end by examining two variations of an argument that says civic virtue is in the internal or 'enlightened' interest, because of either the integrative or educative benefits of public life, concluding by arguing that none of these justifications ultimately hold.

3.1 Civic virtue as external interest

For the purposes of the following arguments, it is useful to divide self-interest into two categories: internal and external interests (MacIntyre 2007, 190). External interests could be seen as traditional 'goods', ranging from material interests to social interests like social standing, good relations et cetera. Internal interests, on the other hand, are the interests of the 'deep self' – mental, emotional and for some spiritual[3] well-being, and developing virtue.

3.1.1 Collective Benefit & the Free-rider Problem

Before looking at internal or "enlightened" self-interest, consider the argument that practicing civic virtue is in the rational, external self-interest of the individual. The first argument of this kind could be considered as the 'collective-benefit' argument. As Dagger argues: *"[I]f people can see that their interests as individuals frequently coincide with the public interest, either in the short or the long term, then they will find it in their interest to act as responsible citizens who must occasionally make sacrifices in order to promote the common good."*(Dagger 1997, p.100). If the public interest aligns with the private interest, and if civic virtue is in the public interest, then acting in accordance with civic virtue will ultimately result in private benefit as a share of the public benefit. To illustrate this point, consider the following scenario: there is a medium-sized town, without its own hospital. Though the town needs a public hospital, there

[3] One example is in Gandhi's concept of Satyagraha (Singh 1997)

is no room in the municipal budget to construct one. A citizen initiative is setup to collect money, and after a few months enough donations were collected to begin construction.

It is clear how the town was benefitted by the donations as expressions of civic virtue. The contributors themselves also benefitted from their own act of civic virtue by contributing, in that they too now had convenient access to a hospital. The collective benefit argument says that this is how we should see civic virtue in general: by exercising civic virtue and participating in society we build society up – and the benefits of a flourishing society outweigh the cost of civic virtue, resulting in civic virtue being net beneficial to the individual.

The problem is that even if the private cost is lower than public benefit, the public benefit does not depend on *individual* contribution, but rather on collective contribution. This means that to maximize benefit, one should aim to receive the benefits of the state with minimal contribution. This is what is commonly referred to as the 'free-rider problem' in economics (Kim and Walker 1984). In the hospital scenario, as long as enough other people contribute, it is in the private benefit to not contribute to the public work yet still enjoy the same benefits of the hospital. Similarly, the benefits of a flourishing society are the result of collective acquisition on civic virtue, and therefore do not depend on individual contribution. This means that a reason beyond mere public interest is necessary to justify civic virtue.

3.1.2 Incentivized Civic Virtue

In response, one could consider the traditional resolution to the free-rider problem, which is to coerce people into contributing, either directly or through incentives. One could accordingly argue that the role of the state is to incentivize civic virtue to the point where it would be in the individual's self-interest to practice. There is some intuitive appeal to this argument, since the most essential civic duties are typically enforced coercively, consider for example tax paying enforcement, or military draft in cases of war.

There are a number of problems with this argument however, starting with the fact that there is a significant difference between civic *duties* and civic *virtue*. Civic duties are activities required of citizens, like the examples mentioned. Civic virtue, on the other hand, is a character disposition – and while the state can incentivize certain civic activities, it is unclear how the state would succeed in incentivizing character attributes on behalf of its citizens. This is apparent even when looking only at state enforcement of civic duties: the tax authorities, for

example, do not nearly have enough capacity to deal with large-scale tax evasion, instead relying on sufficient civic virtue on behalf of most citizens to fulfil their civic role (Górecki and Letki 2021). Similarly, the government does not remotely have the capacity to deal with massive draft-dodging in the face of a military draft – it relies on a sufficient share of people to act with civic virtue to be able to enforce the mandate to the non-complying. Furthermore, many of the contributions of civic virtue are unable to be captured by incentive schemes in the first place. Take civic engagement, for example. The best the state can do is to either encourage civic participation by appealing to civic virtue, or to incentivize specific desired behavior, such as mandatory voting. Appealing to civic virtue would require a justification outside incentives, defeating the point of this argument. When it comes to enforced behavior, while incentivizing specific behavior might work, it would ultimately result in behavior without virtue. Consider for example the case of mandatory voting: though it is effective in getting people to vote, empirical research shows little to no effect of mandatory voting on civic engagement outside the act of voting itself (Carreras 2016; Sheppard 2015).

Finally, there is the problem of incentives "crowding out" civic virtue. Crowding theory says that external rewards replace and reduce individuals intrinsic motivations to act (Deci and Ryan 2013; Lepper and Greene 2015). This means that incentives, more than just being ineffective, might actively *reduce* civic virtue, especially when this incentive is coercive. As Frey (1997) argued, though the state must take care to punish exploitation, *"care must be taken to design a system of laws fundamentally trusting citizens and politicians."*, to avoid crowding out civic virtue. In order for citizens to adequately develop civic virtue, therefore, something else is needed besides mere incentives or enforcement.

3.2 Civic virtue as duty of fairness

In response to the objection to civic virtue as external self-interest, one could argue that the public benefit of civic virtue on behalf of citizens creates a duty for reciprocity – that the civic virtue practiced by others resulting in public benefit to the individual creates a duty for the individual to similarly develop civic virtue.

There are two problems with civic virtue as reciprocity. Firstly, justifying civic virtue in terms of reciprocity would mean that demand for civic virtue depends on the individual received benefits of society, result in some strange character demands. This is because public goods are

rarely distributed in proportion to respective contribution. Most modern welfare states employ systems of progressive taxation, where the rich contribute significantly more to public goods in both relative and absolute terms, while the worst-off in society receive net benefits through entitlements. If we follow the reciprocal justification, then demands of civic virtue would disproportionately apply to the unfortunates who depend on government assistance, since they benefited the most. As long as the spoils of a flourishing society are not distributed equally, then the same would apply for the moral need for civic virtue – something which is not only intuitively problematic, but it is unclear if this kind of civic virtue would be sufficient for maintaining the public goods as outlined in chapter one.

Even if we assume that public benefits result in a civic duty, it is hard to see what a duty to have civic virtue would look like, considering that civic virtue is a type of civic attitude, a character disposition. Reciprocity might bring a duty to vote, but it does not bring a duty to care about the election outcome. To highlight the distinction, consider the following scenario. There are two friends, Luca and Matilde. Luca needed help moving, so Matilde spends her free weekend helping her friend out. When months later Matilde needs help in return, she could reasonably appeal to a reciprocal duty – since Matilde helped Luca, Luca has duty to return the favor. The problem is that Luca begrudgingly helping Matilde out of duty can hardly be characterized as acting out of friendship virtue. The type of friendship virtue where helping out comes from certain character dispositions, and indeed the type of virtue which makes friendship meaningful, can therefore not truly be captured by mere reciprocity. True friendship is helping out of a disposition of friendship, of virtue, not obligation, and it is the dispositions which give the friendship meaning. Similarly, a liberal democracy needs more than civic duty or obligation – it needs civic virtue. What society requires in civic virtue can therefore not be captured by obligation derived from reciprocity.

3.3 Civic virtue as Enlightened Self-interest

Because of the many problems of justifying civic virtue in terms of rational self-interest, some authors have argued that we should instead see civic virtue as being in one's 'enlightened' or internal self-interest. The idea of enlightened self-interest originates from virtue ethics, specifically eudaemonist theories. These theories say that possessing *general* virtue is ultimately in the interest of the individual, as it is an essential part of human flourishing. The following two arguments in different ways argue for how *civic* virtue, specifically, is in the

internal self-interest. Beginning with the educative argument, which says that civic life brings internal benefit because of its essential educative function, a benefit that can only be received after sufficient acquisition of civic virtue. This is followed by the integrative argument, which says that the disposition of civic virtue itself allows one to be integrated in social life, which will bring both internal and external benefits.

3.3.1 The Educative Argument

The first way in which participation of public life as result of civic virtue is in the enlightened self-interest is that civic life serves as a kind of moral education. In the words of Dagger, citing John Stuart Mill: *If Mill is right, active citizenship performs an educative function by drawing out abilities in individuals that might otherwise remain untapped. Because these abilities will prove valuable in other aspects of the citizens' lives as well, the educative dimension of citizenship clearly promises to work to their benefit."* (Dagger 1997, p.103) Assuming that developing general virtues is in the moral self-interest, and public life teaches people how to develop general virtues, then it is in the moral self-interest of the individual to develop sufficient civic virtue to participate in public life.

The question is why civic virtue is necessary to obtain these moral benefits. If public life is in the moral self-interest, then the civic virtue necessary to engage in public life, civic engagement, is accordingly in the internal interest of the self. But what about the other aspects of civic virtue, public and citizenship virtue? Take public virtue, for example. If one is civically engaged to the point where one participates in public life, the argument would imply that this is sufficient to obtain the moral educative benefits of public life. So why be concerned with specific conduct and attitudes *in* public life? Similarly, why be concerned with citizenship virtue? After all it does not provide the moral education that civic engagement does.

Now some might argue that public and citizenship virtue are the natural consequence of the public education following from civic participation, developing naturally once civically engaged. But this still does not explain why these would be good virtues to develop for the individual. More problematically, it is not at all clear that civic participation will result in the development of general virtues. Consider once again the realist interpretation of public life, discussed in chapter two. Though it seemed overly cynical to see public life as nothing more than a power struggle, it does appear true that much of civic life can be, and indeed occasionally

is, ruthless and cynical. If civic virtue is justified in that it will lead to moral education through civic participation, what about cases where civic life is not morally exemplary? There are conceivable scenarios where civic life is corrupt to a point where civic participation might actually pose a threat to one's moral character. Yet it is exactly in those cases where civic life is *lacking* virtue when civic virtue is most important - something this argument cannot account for.

Finally, even if moral education would be a sufficient justification, it is unclear why civic participation would be the best place for moral education. The educative argument might motivate some to participate in civil life, but others might be better off seeking their moral education elsewhere. The state requires specifically civic virtue for its flourishing, however, and all this argument does is argue why someone *could* develop civic virtue – it falls short in arguing for why one ultimately *should*, above other options, choose for civic participation and the developing of civic virtue.

3.3.2 The Integrative Argument

The final argument similarly sees civic virtue as contributing to self-interest rightly understood, but sees this as the interest of integrating into civil society. Dagger: *"The activity of citizenship—the exchange of viewpoints, the give- and-take of debate—helps to provide this understanding. Indeed, the activity of citizenship performs an integrative function in two respects: first, it enables the individual to integrate the various roles he or she plays; second, it integrates individuals into the community."* (Dagger 1997, p.101). This argument says that being well-integrated in a community is ultimately in one's own interest, both internal and external, and can only be reliably achieved by developing civic virtue. Recall how the last chapter argued for the moral need for consistency of character in different roles: civic virtue is argued to help us balance our different roles in life, and builds the kind of moral consistency essential to moral character, making civic virtue ultimately in our internal interest. Furthermore, civic virtue is argued to allow the individual to be fully integrated into the community, which Dagger argues is in the essential external interest of the self. Since it is the practice of civic virtue, not just civic participation, which is in the individual interest, this argument justifies not only civic participation and engagement, but also public and citizenship virtue (insofar they are necessary for proper integration).

The problem with civic integration as external interest is that the demands of civic virtue might sometimes contradict the integrative interests. Consider the civic virtue to speak up against injustice: what if the community is unjust? A proper display of civic virtue might very well result in losing the integrative benefits – the cases of whistleblowers being ostracized are too numerous to ignore. Secondly, though developing civic virtue undoubtedly has internal benefits in practicing virtue, it is unclear why this should justify civic virtue specifically. At best it would establish that civic virtue is a viable way to build moral character, but the same could be said for any other practice which requires virtue. This is particularly problematic when we consider the virtue of civic engagement: we want people to be civically engaged when it is important for the state, or the public good – not just when it is a convenient route for the individual to work on their moral character.

This bring us to the final problem of the self-interest-based justifications, namely that there are very clear intuitive cases where displays of civic virtue go against the interest of the self, even the enlightened interest. In virtue ethics, it is usual to speak of 'moral exemplars'. These are exemplars which the individual can use as a reference for how to develop their own virtue. Similarly, we can think of civic exemplars as exemplars of civic virtue, exemplary people who put the interest of the public over their own. But any justification of civic virtue as some kind of self-interest will always be limited to mutually beneficial scenarios. So how do we make sense of civic exemplars who sacrificed so much for the public good? Martin Luther King jr. advocated for civil rights up until his assassination, and Gandhi's numerous hunger strikes could hardly be seen as cases of even enlightened self-interest, at least in the context of civic virtue. Instead, the next chapter will argue that these displays of civic virtue can be best understood as displays of *general* virtue, applied civically, and that if anything it is the development of general virtues which is in the enlightened self-interest – not civic virtues.

4. Civic Virtue as General Virtue

The last chapter showed that while civic virtue might often be in the enlightened interest of the self, it ultimately falls short in justifying the type of civic virtue necessary for liberal democracies to flourish. This chapter will argue that civic virtue can be best understood as an expression of general virtue, and that civic virtue is justified insofar general virtue is justified.

4.1 The Benefits of General Virtue

Within virtue ethics, general virtues are typically justified insofar they constitute what Aristotle called eudaemonia, or happiness as human flourishing. For Aristotle, possessing virtue is an essential part of what it means for humans to flourish. Within virtue ethics there are variations of Aristotle's account of eudaemonia, all essentially coming down to the argument that virtues are in the enlightened interest of the self, and if not always resulting in external goods they are an internal good themselves (or bring some internal good about). Macintyre, for example, defined virtues explicitly as those qualities which are necessary to obtain the essential goods internal to certain 'practices'. For Aristotle, on the other hand, it is the possession of virtues which constitute the good life, no matter the context in which they are practiced. Either way, though the question of what justifies virtues is a question that is far from settled, this thesis will assume that the general virtues are justified. The question of what justifies virtues essentially comes down to the question of why people should try to be good, or what the point is of trying to build moral character. This thesis departs from the presupposition that there is a private moral good – the point being to discover whether civic virtue constitutes such a private moral good. Leaving the question of moral nihilism and the point of morality to meta-ethicists, for now, intuition will have to suffice, as the scope of this thesis requires a line to be drawn somewhere. This thesis will simply restrict itself to the question that if there is a private moral good, whether civic virtue should be considered as one.

4.2 Teleological Civic Virtue

So how to place civic virtue in this context? First let us consider civic virtue under a teleological account, as put forth by Macintyre. Since virtues are defined and justified in their role in a certain practice, then civic virtue could be justified insofar civic virtue is necessary to obtain some essential good internal to the 'civic practice'. The problem here is twofold. Firstly, Macintyre has very specific conditions for what qualifies as a practice, and it is unclear to what

extent civic life is a particular practice requiring virtues to achieve the goods internal to the practice. Civic virtue is ultimately aimed at promoting the public good, goods outside the civic practice itself, whereas Macintyre's virtues are more pointed towards obtaining certain goods internal to the practice. But even if we grant that civic virtue will result in the goods internal to civic life, similar to the arguments of enlightened self-interest of the last chapter this cannot answer the question of why people should engage with civic practice in the first place. This point applies to Macintyre's more generally: since he sees virtues as internal to certain practices, it is unclear how we should prioritize practices, or which practices to participate in at all. Furthermore, consider the civic virtue of civic engagement: civic engagement is that virtue which motivates people to participate in civic life – but if this virtue is internal to civic life itself, how can we ever speak of people outside civic life ever developing this virtue?

4.3 Character-based Civic Virtue

This is why this thesis concludes with what it believes to be the most viable justification, one based on traditional accounts of eudaemonia. For Aristotle,[4] it was not attributes related to specific practices that constituted virtue, but virtues were character dispositions independent of specific practice. Either a person is either honest or they are not – and when they are, they are honest across different practices. When it comes to civic virtue, this generalist approach would see civic virtue as nothing more than general virtue applied to a specific context. If one posesses the virtue of honesty, this should naturally result in public honesty, resulting in a measure of public virtue. But what about the civic virtue relating specifically to the role of citizen, such as citizenship virtue and civic engagement? This thesis proposes to see these virtues as expressions of the virtue of justice. Justice might require civic engagement, require being a tolerant citizen et cetera – though it sometimes might not. And since justice is a virtue, not an end, civic virtue means being civic in a just way, not doing whatever it takes to achieve an ideal of justice.

An example of someone who exemplified a similar conceptualization was Mahatma Gandhi, expressed through his political movement. The previous chapter concluded with the claim that Gandhi's hunger strikes could hardly be seen as in his own enlightened interest, but with this

[4] Note that Aristotle's specific account of civic virtue is rather different than the argument put forth here, having more in common with traditional republican account as discussed in chapter three (Inamura 2015; Miller 2020; Aristotle 2013). The argument here limits to his account of general virtues.

new perspective this claim can now be interpreted differently. Gandhi was a big believer in what he called 'satyagraha', or the soul force of his independence movement. Gandhi saw non-violence and other civic virtues as in the interest of the self, the interest of the 'soul' – this is why he rejected the idea of non-violence as passive resistance, for example (Livingston 2018, 515; Gandhi 1999, 251–54). He felt that the suffragettes, in their utilization of non-violence as a mere political instrument, lost track of non-violence as a soul-transforming virtue. Even if one does not share Gandhi's specific philosophy of satyagraha, it is clear that Gandhi's actions were motivated and justified in terms of personal, general virtue, applied in a specific context. This thesis ultimately remains agnostic on what specifically justifies virtue and moral character for the individual. What it does argue is that when one aims to acquire and practice virtue, civic virtue should naturally follow. Not only is civic virtue a natural expression of general virtue, but this thesis also argues that in the end, living a good life is the best (and perhaps only viable) justification of developing civic virtue.

4.4 Implications

4.4.1 Civic Virtue and the State

The first implication of this conclusion is what this means for the state. The state needs civic virtue, but if civic virtue is indeed an expression of general virtue, then promoting civic virtue would effectively mean promoting general virtue. Unfortunately, there are a number of problems with the state promoting general virtue. The discussion on liberal neutrality in chapter one concluded with the position that an understanding of virtue and specifically civic virtue, necessarily requires a practical sense of liberal neutrality. This means that paradoxically, the best way to promote general and thereby civic virtue, is to be neutral with respect to different conceptions of the good life. Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, argues that coercion is essentially antithetical to the ability to develop virtue, and that developing virtue both generally and civically *requires* political freedom (Coffee 2014; Barker-Benfield 1989; Wollstonecraft 2016). This is because, as classic civic virtue teaches, developing virtue requires practical wisdom – something which can only develop when people make life choices, experience and learn from their mistakes. Recall too the empirical work on crowding theory mentioned in the last chapter, which similarly argued for the need and efficacy of trusting the citizenry (Frey 1997).

Concluding that the best way to promote general virtue and thereby civic virtue is for the state to remain neutral, how should we respond to societal problems resulting from a lack of civic virtue? This is where there is an essential role for communities in developing virtue. Aristotle argued that to develop virtue, sometimes all we need is habituation - to act the part until the virtue becomes internalized. While the thesis so far has argued that the state is unable or unsuited to habituate its citizenry, communities *can*. As Macintyre argued, virtue is essentially tied to our social identity and certain practices (MacIntyre 2007, 205). This means that while the state cannot instill general virtue itself, it can potentially facilitate the kinds of practices that habituate virtue. This could range from religious communities to sport, to home-owners associations. And while communitarians argue that liberal neutrality cannot accommodate communities to a sufficient degree as to instill virtue, this thesis follows Kymlicka's position, who argued that under liberal neutrality, "people naturally form and join social relations and forums in which they come to understand and pursue the good. The state is not needed to provide that communal context and is likely to distort the normal processes of collective deliberations and cultural development". The best a state can do in order to promote civic virtue is therefore to recognize and facilitate existing communities and communal activities, while at the same time recognizing its own limited role and ability.

4.4.2 Civic Virtue and the Individual

The second implication is for how individuals should understand their own civic role, and the demands of civic virtue. The fact that civic virtue is an extension of general virtue means that there can be no true civic virtue without general virtue. This means that political activism or other forms of civic engagement need to be consistent with private expressions of virtue. This also means that if one wants to improve their ability to act as a good citizen, they should start by improving their general moral character.

This same idea of civil action ultimately being an expression of general virtue can be found in Gandhi's work, specifically in his writings on Satyagraha. Gandhi saw Satyagraha, his concept of just political action, as the ultimate expression of virtue. When discussing how to learn from his political mentor and example Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Gandhi concluded that while most cannot follow in his political footsteps, "All of us, however, can cultivate virtues like fearlessness, truthfulness, fortitude, justice, straightforwardness, firmness of purpose, and dedicate them to the service of the nation. This is the religious way. This is what the mahavakya, that political life should be spiritualized, means." (Gandhi 1999, 145) For Gandhi, political

action and personal virtue were not only necessary companions, but he saw the development of virtue as a necessary precondition for successful and just political action.

How does the need for general virtue then relate to pursuits of justice? What if public justice occasionally requires citizens to neglect virtue? Though there are undoubtedly cases conceivable where what is in the public interest conflicts with the demands of virtue, consider Thoreau's response to justice as a matter of weighing benefits. Thoreau argues that when people see justice in terms of expediency, they do not account for "those cases to which the rule of expediency does not apply, in which a people, as well as an individual, must do justice, cost what it may.". To conclude this chapter, and this thesis, consider these final words from Thoreau: "that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. […] The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right." (Thoreau 2017, 2,4).

5. Conclusion

This thesis started out by outlying how liberal democracies need civic virtue on behalf of its citizens. Before examining what justifies civic virtue for the individual, the first chapter argued how a concept of civic virtue can be compatible with the notion of liberal neutrality, ending with a typology of civic virtue as consisting of citizenship virtue, public virtue and civic engagement. The second chapter followed this by addressing two main objections to justifying civic virtue privately. The realist objection of public life as a power struggle was ultimately argued to not only be overly cynical of civic life, but also to ignore common intuitions we have about civil behavior. The second objection saw private and public life as radically distinct, making a private justification a conceptual impossibility. In response this thesis argued how such a stark public-private distinction is not only descriptively wrong, but also morally problematic, in that it would fail to account for the need for moral unity between different aspects of life. Chapter three then considered whether civic virtue could be justified in terms of (enlightened) self-interest, ultimately concluding that civic virtue might often benefit the self both externally and internally, but that it falls short as a justification, as it would justify civic virtue only in those cases where ultimately expedient for the interests of the individual. Chapter three also considered and discarded an argument from reciprocity, as it would not provide consistent duties, and contradict intuitive notions of civic virtue. Finally, the thesis concluded by arguing that the best way to justify civic virtue privately is to consider civic virtue as nothing more than an extension of general virtue, implying both strong limits to the state's ability to enforce or promote civic virtue, and a need for personal emphasis on developing general virtue when considering one's role as a citizen.

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