

strengthening unions, or even expanding workplace democracy. Sometimes, though not always, promoting freedom from domination will entail restricting market freedom. By offering fresh new ways to think about these tensions, MacGilvray's book helps us see clearly what is really at stake.

Response to Frank Lovett's Review of *Liberal Freedom: Pluralism, Polarization, and Politics*

doi:10.1017/S1537592723001032

— Eric MacGilvray 

I'm grateful to Frank Lovett for his generous and perceptive review of my book. This is billed as a critical dialogue and space is at a premium, so I'll have to move quickly to points of difference. But I'm conscious that I thereby run the risk of seeming ungracious, and would prefer simply to stand shoulder to shoulder in what he aptly describes as the "ongoing pragmatic project of building a humane society of equals under modern conditions."

Perhaps not surprisingly, the main issue on which we disagree has to do with our understanding of republican freedom. As Lovett points out, I associate republican freedom with being fit to be held responsible for what we do and thus, *inter alia*, with self-government; with having a say in defining the social conditions under which we act. He suggests, in so many words, that this position is both too broad and too narrow: too broad because it counts as freedom-reducing forms of constraint that aren't dominating; and too narrow because it mistakes a secondary concern for a primary one. As I understand it the second point, about self-government, hinges on the question of whether there might be special cases in which political exclusion is compatible with a commitment to reducing domination. Since Lovett has thought more

carefully about that question than I have (e.g., *Well-Ordered Republic*, pp. 137-42) I'll set it aside for present purposes. We agree at the end of the day that "republicans have strong reasons to favor the most democratic forms of popular control available in any given context" (*Well-Ordered Republic*, p. 142).

It's true, as I emphasize in *Liberal Freedom* (e.g., pp. 43-4), that not all of the factors that diminish a person's fitness to be held responsible pose a threat to republican freedom, because not all of them are within the power of other human beings to remove or remediate. Andrea's broken elevator falls into this category, assuming that the outage was unforeseen and not due to negligence or malice. The salient question is whether markets, broadly defined, are freedom-threatening. I argue that they are, because the decision to allow markets to operate in a given domain, and thus to make people vulnerable to the externalities that they generate, is (typically) within human control. But of course we often have excellent reasons to allow markets to operate that are quite independent of the concern to promote non-domination: thus the central tension in liberal political thought and practice.

If republican and market freedom are irreducibly in tension, then we either need to come up with a second-order theory that tells us how best to balance them against each other, or else we need to adopt a more modest view of what a freedom-centered political theory can provide. *Liberal Freedom* takes the path of modesty: instead of defending a political *ideal* that we should strive to realize, it elaborates a political *vocabulary* that we can use to discuss our differences constructively. However modesty doesn't mean quietism: liberalism so understood, unlike any of its ideological rivals, has a proven track record of persuading people to expand the sphere of human equality and freedom, and of actually making it stick.