



Patience, Temperance, and Politics

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to give an account of the conditions under which political parties in a democracy flourish and which virtues facilitate the flourishing of political parties. I argue that political parties flourish when they are winning elections, sustaining membership, enacting legislation, and working towards the common good. I further argue that cultivating the virtues of self-control—specifically patience, temperance, courage, and transparency—facilitates flourishing. These virtues are particularly relevant because if parties pursue short-term gains merely to maintain power, that will erode trust between the party, its members, and the electorate.

“Affluence breeds impatience, and impatience undermines well-being” (Offer, 2006, p. 1).

“So long as our civic life is fraught with hopes that are commonly disappointed, ideals compromised and diluted in the process of realization, so long, that is, as our politics are not utopian, a patience will be needed to carry on that is grounded in a sense of the good of public life as objects of service rather than brute appropriation” (Callan, 1993, p. 539).

Introduction

Recent work in environmental ethics and virtue epistemology provides an important new basis for understanding collective virtue. The purpose of this paper is to explore a particular type of collective, the political party, and investigate both what it means for political parties to flourish, and what virtues help them do so.

Three theses about political parties enjoy widespread support in the political science literature: 1) political parties are necessary for democracies to function well because they provide the means to solve collective action problems and pursue the interest of

the majority (Fitts 1988, Mack 2010),¹ 2) political parties cannot function or govern effectively without established trust between the party and the electorate (Hetherington and Rudolph, 2015), and 3) over the last 40-50 years there has been a demonstrable and significant erosion of trust between the American electorate (and other democracies as well) and their institutions including political parties, the government, and the media (Nye, Zelikow, and King, 1997; Diamond and Gunther, 2001; Foa and Mounk, 2017). Despite the importance of trust between citizens and their government, trust in democratic institutions has been steadily declining for quite some time.

Given the importance of healthy political parties for a functional democracy, it is important to further investigate what it means for a political party to flourish. I argue that in order for political parties to flourish, they must cultivate the virtues of self-control, which I claim are the virtues of patience, temperance, courage, and honesty. I begin by defining political parties and giving a preliminary account of what it means for political parties to flourish based on an analysis of their functions. In the next section I provide my argument for the centrality of the virtues of self-control. I conclude with an account of several concerns about this account, and a discussion of important future research directions.

What is a (flourishing) political party?

Jointly, the participation of government actors and citizens are necessary for a strong democracy. Politicians, as well as voters making choices about who they want to represent them and how those representatives should govern, must cultivate rational, critical and open dialogue to make felicitous group decisions together. For John Rawls, this requires public reason. According to Rawls (1999), government actors ought to work towards the ideal of public reason in order to fulfill their duty of civility, and citizens

¹ "... as political scientists have long recognized, political parties are the critical link that connects society with government. Parties are considered a vital signal of democracy even, ironically, when they are absent, as in the typical authoritarian state" (Mack, 2010, p. 2). This is also complicated by well-supported claims that "partisanship is a well-documented source of bias and distortion, it is also the edifice upon which most political opinions and decisions rest... Partisanship continues to be a dominant factor in nearly every voting decision (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008), and is perhaps the only basis for judgment in low-information elections like state representative" (McAvoy 2015, p. 9).

ought to hold government actors accountable to the ideals of public reason. More specifically, one “engages in public reason... when he or she deliberates within a framework of what he or she sincerely regards as the most reasonable political conception of justice, a conception that expresses political values that others, as free and equal citizens might also reasonably be expected reasonably to endorse” (Rawls 1999, p. 773). Public reason is necessary for democracy, because a basic feature of democracy is reasonable pluralism:

The form and content of this reason—the way it is understood by citizens and how it interprets their political relationship—is part of the idea of democracy itself. This is because a basic feature of democracy is the fact of reasonable pluralism—the fact that a plurality of conflicting reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious, philosophical, and moral, is the normal result of its culture of free institutions. Citizens realize they cannot reach agreement or even approach mutual understanding of the basis of their irreconcilable comprehensive doctrines. In view of this, they need to consider what kinds of reasons they may reasonably give one another when fundamental political questions are at stake. I propose that in public reason comprehensive doctrines of truth or right be replaced by an idea of the politically reasonable addressed to citizens as citizens. (Rawls 1999, p. 765-766)

Reasonable pluralism, according to Hartley and Watson, is an anti-perfectionist political theory that depends on “a purely political conception of justice (one that does not depend on the acceptance of a particular comprehensive doctrine) and the likelihood that such a conception of justice can be the focus of an overlapping consensus of reasonable comprehensive doctrines” (Hartley and Watson, 2014, p.421). Anti-perfectionist theories are contrasted with perfectionism, the position that that the state ought to promote a comprehensive and objective account of the good human life.

Thinking broadly about political parties we can understand them as actors in democratic, pluralistic societies that ought to aspire to the ideals of public reason. In

order to understand how a party may flourish, we still have to ask the question of just what a political party is. The question of defining a political party is surprisingly challenging. As Charles Mack puts it: “The voluminous literature [concerning the qualities and characteristics that comprise a definition of this important term] is reminiscent of the blind men seeking to describe an elephant in terms of the single part each is groping” (2010, p.13). We might try to define a party through composition. As a first pass we might consider that political parties are composed of politicians and voters who either self-identify with, or are ideologically aligned in some important way to a political. It follows that political parties could be defined as a group of voters and politicians with similar values. However, a compositional account suffers from both vagueness and a lack of practical application. For one thing, multiple ideological alignments are often represented within parties (Grossman and Hopkins 2015). The vagueness is further complicated by self-identification and official registration. Many people might self-identify as independent from any political party, but consistently vote with one of the major parties. Alternatively, we might think about people whose values do not align with any party but nonetheless they are registered with a particular party. We can understand this by looking at the state of New York where primary elections are closed—one might be registered a Republican for strategic purpose, though ideologically aligned with another party, in order to mitigate the possibility of harm from motivated primary voters choosing more radical right-wing candidates. The person is registered as a Republican, but is ideologically aligned elsewhere. Another example we might consider is someone who self-identifies as a Tea-party loyalist but whose fundamental goal is environmental sustainability despite the fact that dogmatic libertarianism is at odds with the kinds of regulations that could protect the environment. This applies at the level of the politician as well—we might consider a candidate who is ideologically independent of a major party, but choose to run for office with a party to gain financial and other advantages that come with party alignment. So, attempting to identify a party by composition is a challenging task. In addition, even if we could have a clear sense of *who* makes up a party, that doesn’t really tell us what a party is. This suggests that a functional definition of political parties could give us a better idea of what they are.

One of the most general functional accounts of political parties is that political parties are organizations within democracies that aggregate interests and create compromise across interests, support candidates for election, and when winning elections, govern (Gunther and Diamond, 2001). This means that political parties are fundamentally aimed at training and supporting the individuals who will govern in democracies. Bartolini and Mair suggest a finer grain by identifying two main categories of function: “[P]arties may be seen to perform a variety of *representative* functions, including interest articulation, aggregation and policy formulation. On the other hand, they also perform a variety of *procedural* or *institutional* functions, including the recruitment of political leaders and the organization of parliament and government” (2001, p. 332). Mack builds on this idea but distinguishes between purpose and function of political parties. The purpose of a party is to give a society a government, while the particular functions include: “mobilizing the electorate, expressing and aggregating interests, articulating ideologies, and so forth—but the question for power and control of the government is their overriding *raison d’être*” (2010, p. 13). All of these accounts are centered on identifying a main function and articulating different ways various kinds of party organizations might work towards that goal. It is challenging, however, to try to develop unified account of political parties based on a singular central function—for instance minor parties such as the Green or Libertarian parties in the United States are thought to function more as protest parties attempting to influence the major positions of the major parties without any real hope of electoral victory or broad governance.

In addition to the concern about third parties, other concerns may be raised about trying to identify political parties with a unified central goal. According to Mack the primary interest of a political party is power. Putting power and control at the center of a functional definition of political parties is problematic because the pursuit of power for power’s sake seems at odds with the democratic goal of mutual and cooperative governance through communal participation and compromise. We could imagine a party developing power through the support of powerful special interests that are at odds with the will of the majority, or other illiberal or anti-democratic means that are at odds with

political parties' role as major political actors in democracy.² To do so would be self-defeating for political parties—if elections no longer function as a means of real choice, then political parties will be replaced with a regime that rules. A political party that is too concerned with its own power risks eroding democratic norms and devolving its political environment into authoritarianism. Anything called a political party in authoritarian system would be a party in name only. Given a functional understanding of political parties that depends on interest aggregation and representation, parties cannot exist in such a system. Political parties are actors in a realm of choice, so the more coercive a system, the less political parties will be able to function in their primary roles of providing options for governance in open an election. This suggests that the main functions of political parties are to provide electoral choices, strive to govern effectively in a democracy, and provide a means to develop compromise across a variety of interests.

Building on this basic understanding, I take the ideal ends of political parties in a democracy to be cultivating candidates, winning elections, listening to and evaluating the needs of their constituents, enacting legislation, and pursuing the common good. This suggests that political parties flourish when they are functioning well, that is, they flourish when they are sustaining or increasing membership, supporting candidates, motivating, engaging with and informing the electorate, and collectively working towards the common good. If we accept that these are the appropriate ends of political parties understood through the ideals of public reason and reasonable pluralism, we might start by asking which virtues political parties could develop to facilitate public dialogue and mutual understanding among diverse groups of people with a variety of interests. More specifically, we might ask which virtues allow political parties to fulfill their basic functions while also orienting parties towards the social goods of public reason and justice in pluralistic societies.

The Virtues of Self-Control

² In fact, there is evidence than in authoritarian regimes pro forma elections are used to maintain power and as a mechanism of control (Gandhi and Lust-Okar, 2009).

“The greatest vices of popular governments are the propensity to gratify short-term desires at the expense of long-term interests” (Galston, 1988, p. 1283)

In order to successfully cultivate candidates, govern, and work towards the common good in a pluralistic society, political parties need to develop virtues that create substantive and meaningful dialogue within and among parties while also engaging honestly and openly with the public. The virtues that parties need to develop to do this are patience, temperance, courage and honesty. These virtues can be understood as the virtues of self-control because each of these virtues aims at moderation or control in some domain—patience is aimed toward control of time or frustration; temperance is aimed at control of appetites; courage is aimed at control of fear; and honesty is aimed at control of information. In a society where reasonable pluralism is accepted and compromise is necessary, these virtues facilitate communication, and understanding in order to compromise and come to agreement about what we can reasonably accept together. The virtues of self-control are also necessary for parties to avoid engaging in practices that are shortsighted, self-defeating and at odds with the people parties are representing or hoping to represent. It follows that these virtues are necessary to facilitate dialogue and community, as well as to avoid the temptation to cultivate power through illiberal means.

Before going into examples of how these virtues and their associated vices function with respect to the wellbeing of political parties, it is worth saying a bit more about the nature of collective virtue. Byerly and Byerly (2016) recently developed a dispositionalist neo-Aristotelian account of collective virtue, where virtue is irreducible to the particular members. According to these authors, collective virtues are dispositions to believe and behave in characteristically virtuous ways, where the particular beliefs and actions are appropriately responsive to the specific circumstances. They offer two formulations for collective virtues, both focusing more on the behavioral component of the disposition, thus avoiding to some extent contentious debates about the nature of collective minds. The first formulation, “(DCV) A collective C has a virtue V to the extent that C is disposed to behave in ways characteristic of V under appropriate circumstances”

(Byerly and Byerly 2016, p. 43) seems to potentially depend on the collective having a mind of some sort, so they also offer up an alternative formulation where virtues bottom out in individuals with group-dependent properties: “(DCV*) A collective C has a virtue V to the extent that the members of C are disposed, qua members of C, to behave in ways characteristic of V under appropriate circumstances” (Byerly and Byerly 2016, p. 43). Using either DCV, or DCV*, for the purposes of this paper we can understand collective virtues as neo-Aristotelian and behaviorally focused dispositions of groups.

Aristotelian virtues are often defined with respect to the doctrine of the mean—the understanding of virtues as excellences that are situated between two extremes of excess and deficiency relative to some domain. Patience has been defined with respect to the domains of time and frustration—these conceptions are related, and both are relevant to how a political party can and should function well. Kupfer defines patience as “having to wait the appropriate amount of time for things to unfold or taking the time needed to perform tasks and solve problems...the disposition to accept delays in satisfying our desires” (Kupfer 2007, p. 266). This notion of taking the appropriate time and not getting frustrated with respect to the performance of others or frustration of one’s own desires is underwritten by a proper understanding of human imperfection and the relative importance of our desires (see also Callan 1993). In attempting to live well in a pluralistic society, and to govern according to the ideals of public reason, political parties require an appropriate understanding of their own importance relative to their various functions they are meant to fulfill. The continued existence of the party, for instance, is subordinate to meeting the needs of the diverse group of people that parties represent. Interestingly, parties are beholden to two sets of people—their party members but also the broader constituent base that elected officials in a party represent. Kupfer identified individual patience in part by understanding imperfections in ourselves and others, and the limits of our own desires. For parties this suggests the need to acknowledge that they do not represent everyone’s interests, certainly do not know everything, and cannot have everything they want. This means that patience requires, politicians must work with their colleagues, learn from experts, and engage in dialogue with constituents rather than set a particular agenda and pursue it regardless

of the costs. These actions are also required to govern effectively. Furthermore, the members that make up political parties ought to have appropriate sensitivity to their collectively imperfect nature and use this patience to work through governing priorities equitably and openly. If politicians working as actors within parties fail to do so, that may damage their collective dispositions.

In addition to his account of patience, Kupfer also offers an account of the extremes that constitute the vices of deficiency and excess with respect to patience: the obvious impatience (deficiency) but also sluggishness or over-waiting (excess). Political parties must be patient with respect to communicating with their constituents, understanding their needs, cultivating and supporting candidates, crafting and debating legislation—in all of these cases parties must take the appropriate time and understand the importance of their own desires relative to the population they serve. This means that patience requires acting quickly in emergency situations, while overly slow responses such as the federal response in the United States to the Katrina disaster was an instance of the vice of sluggishness. Political parties must also avoid developing impatience, especially with respect to issues that require significant consideration and debate such as the passage of major legislation. Importantly, this means responding appropriately both temporally and even-temperedly in the relevant circumstances. Depending on what is called for given the circumstances, the patient actions could be executed quite speedily—what is important is that political parties have cultivated the dispositions to respond appropriately with respect to time and frustration.

Temperance is the virtue relevant to the domain of appetites. Understood as a virtue of individual persons, we often associate temperance with having appropriate appetites for food, drink, and sex (Roberts, 2014). This situates temperance as the mean between abstinence and overindulgence. When applied to political parties, temperance is best understood as a check on overindulgence of political power. As we saw, political parties are collectives within a democracy whose functions are to develop candidates and support political actors who can work towards the common good and solve collection action problems. If a party does not seek power and governing majorities, it risks not

getting anything done, but if a party seeks power without restraint it risks fracturing the very system that sustains it. Without temperance, political parties risk being self-defeating by obstructing the democratic process and using illiberal processes thereby endangering the very political environment that parties flourish in: democracies.

Keeping appetites for power in check also takes courage—in the political domain and in a democracy in particular, the threat of losing is a real possibility and one that will happen often. Political parties need to courageously work towards better understanding and supporting their constituents and working productively with other legislators to govern well. This requires keeping fear of particular parties members, or in some cases irresponsible demands from the public,³ in check and avoiding cowardice and non-action, as well as overly aggressive and foolhardy measures. Again, importantly they need to develop dispositions to characteristically behave courageously as the circumstances require.

A fourth virtue that helps facilitate the cultivation of the first three, as well as trust among constituencies and parties, is the virtue of honesty. Transparent platforms, legislation, and processes can help forge trust within parties, between parties, and among politicians and the electorate. Political parties maintaining control of how they represent information, create priorities in a timely manner and control their frustration with opposing parties, moderate the desire for power, and pursue the interests of the constituents and the common good are therefore extremely important elements of fulfilling their functions and flourishing in a pluralistic society.

Several recent examples from American politics can help us better understand how the absence of the virtues of self-control, and the presence of their associated vices, which I will call the vices of indulgence, has negatively impacted political parties. We might first look at the ongoing stalemate regarding how to move forward with health care policy in a way that is sustainable and mutually agreeable. John Cannan, who develops a

³ There is much to be said about the requirements of politicians to be both responsive and responsible—requirements that are, needless to say, sometimes in tension. Barbara Sinclair discusses this in the final chapter of *Unorthodox Lawmaking* (2017).

thorough account of the complicated history of what eventually became known as the Affordable Care Act (ACA), argues that “‘hyper-partisanship,’ the intense scrutiny of the 24-hour news cycle, deficits, the demands of campaign finance, and social media” (2013, p. 131) are shaping the modern legislative landscape by creating circumstances that forge new procedures for developing bills and passing them into laws. According to Cannan, the ACA, a two part law that was composed of the Senate’s Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) and Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010 (HCERA), is a good example of the challenge of chronicling the history of major, contentious legislation in this landscape. The ACA faced widespread criticism for being overly partisan and secretive even though it started with the more traditional process of committee hearings. The process of regular order devolved into a more secretive and contentious process, especially after Ted Kennedy unexpectedly passed away and dissolved the democratic super majority in the United States Senate (Cannon 2013). The complicated legislative history of the ACA demonstrates a move towards impatience and intemperance in the Democratic Party in their urgency to pass major health care legislation, and throughout the process negotiations appeared to become less transparent. One might argue that the Democratic actions were courageous (see for instance Beaussier 2012), but it is also reasonable to believe the political calculus was such that the Democrats believed they had more to lose by not passing the legislation than by passing it regardless of the means, which suggests potential intemperance. With respect to passage of the ACA it is challenging to sort out to what extent the Democratic Party was impatient, or if obstruction from the Republican Party in the minority necessitated an unorthodox process. Despite the complexity of understanding to what extent vices were indulged, the lack of transparency and apparent lack of patience cost the Democratic Party dearly in steep losses during the 2010 midterm elections.

In 2016, when Republicans took control of Congress and the executive branch, the party quickly began work on their longtime promise of repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act. Proponents of the ACA have been accused of overstating the bipartisan nature of the ACA, but they did accept hundreds of Republican amendments,

though many technical in nature and uncontested, public hearings were also held for the ACA; by contrast there were no public hearings for the AHCA and no Democratic Amendments were considered (Healy 2017, Kasprak 2017). The House of Representatives narrowly passed H.R.1628, the American Health Care Act (AHCA), a bill that was projected by the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to leave 23 million more people under the age of 65 uninsured by 2026, and reduce the federal deficit over the same time period by \$119 billion (Congressional Budget Office AHCA). Republican Senators advocated and voted for a bill that the CBO scored as reducing the deficit by \$321 billion and leaving 22 million people uninsured by 2026 (Congressional Budget Office BRCA). This bill was voted down by a procedural vote that affirmed there were provisions in this bill that violated Senate rules (Shabad 2017). In a final and extreme act, the senate very nearly passed a bill dubbed “skinny repeal” that three Senators reportedly agreed they would vote “yes” on only with assurances that the bill would not become law—the goal was reportedly to trigger a conference with the house of representatives and agree upon health care legislation there (Berman 2017). Though the legislation ultimately did not pass, the process was roundly criticized for its speed and secrecy.

In the case of each party, passing or attempting to pass this legislation makes some effort to fulfill a major campaign promise, which seems instrumentally related to the end of maintaining power. It is certainly the case, particularly with the passage of the ACA, members also think enacting the legislation discussed above works towards the end of the common good. However, health care legislation has increasingly been composed in secret, is being rushed, and more broadly the increasing use of unorthodox legislation overall (Sinclair 2017) suggests both parties are becoming more impatient, opaque and intemperate. The lack of temperance is suggested especially by the apparent unwillingness to work with legislators in another party. Furthermore, intemperate attitudes in politics seem to be motivated largely by two factors: attempts to gain and maintain power, as well as acrimony towards the other side. We see promises of a better process and regular order while the minority party obstructs the agenda of the other side and frustrates progress, leading the majority to increasingly secretive and

backdoor negotiations (Sinclair 2008). These practices erode trust between the parties and the American people.

To counter the vices of impatience, intemperance, and secrecy parties need to enact meaningful reform through developing the corresponding virtues of patience, temperance and transparency. Party members in Congress are obviously suffering from voter frustration given their inability to get things done (Sinclair 2006), and voter wrath when it comes to obstructing normal governing processes for particular legislative agendas that are pushed through with the use of threat, such as in recent misuses of the debt ceiling (Mann and Ornstein 2012). If parties were patient they could craft legislation that would create compromise that was acceptable to meet a variety of voter needs while also balancing those demands with their responsibility to work towards the common good in a just manner. In the case of the debt ceiling patient parties would cultivate candidates and run for offices that gave them the power to enact legislation rather than use threats to get what they want when in vulnerable positions. The process of being patient, creating compromises, including a variety of perspectives, and avoiding the temptation to obstruct majority parties will take courage because compromise in our hyperpolarized current climate potentially comes with costs. This will also require the kind of resilience patience can offer as we can see looking at the 110th Congress in which Democrats promised to reform unorthodox processes through the use of regular order and transparency, but began to walk them back as Republicans deployed delaying tactics to embarrass them (Sinclair 2008). Democrats were rewarded with majorities by their promise of return to regular order in the 110th Congress though many of their legislative priorities were frustrated in the Senate or vetoed by then President Bush.

Beyond the domain of legislation, there are other realms in which the virtues of self-control would clearly serve the interests (especially long-term) of political parties and the people they represent. Impatience and intemperance developed from the desire to maintain control are pernicious factors in supporting candidates or legislators who are implicated in allegations of sexual harassment and assault. Democratic President Bill

Clinton is one of the first people to come to mind in American politics when it comes to accusations of sexual assault and abuse of power. Clinton is most famous for his affair with Monica Lewinsky, a Whitehouse intern, but also accused of harassment by multiple women, and accused of rape in 1978 while he was running for governor of Arkansas (Matthews, 2017). The reaction at the time, especially on the American left, was to give Clinton a pass, even, in some cases, in the name of feminism (Flanagan, 2017). Even 20 years later, few Democratic leaders feel comfortable questioning the outcome of the Clinton investigation and impeachment hearings or facing the accusations head on (Steinhauer, 2017).

In 2017 there has been a return to the public litigation of Clinton's behavior catalyzed by current sexual misconduct scandals in both parties including Representative John Conyers, Senator Al Franken, senatorial candidate Roy Moore, and President Donald Trump. However, the public and political assessment and reaction to the ways these men abused their power, and in some cases assaulted women, has a familiar partisan tone. In the parties that support these men we have seen the vices of impatience, intemperance, dishonesty and cowardice. This is especially true given the political calculus apparent from the reaction to accusations of sexual misconduct at the expense of the victims. John Conyers and Al Franken are both Democrats and Democrats lack a majority in either chamber of Congress, so the party and party leadership seem hesitant to ask either to step aside. That said there are some within the party, including House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, who have called for Conyers to step aside. Overall, however, the party's reaction seems slow, cowardly and intemperate—choosing political power over the respect for women and the rights of women.

Candidates Roy Moore and then Candidate Donald Trump provide an even more disturbing example of choosing political power over women's rights. The Republican party as a whole has generally embraced these candidates (and now President) despite in the case of Trump having been accused of rape by his former wife Ivana, an *Access Hollywood* tape being released in which Trump brags about sexual assault, and the many other women who came forward to give their accounts of Trump's sexual

misconduct prior to the 2016 election (Tolentino 2017). While some lawmakers stepped away from Trump after the release of the *Access Hollywood* tape, the party stood by him and has embraced him for the ease with which he was brought into line with major political priorities such as the (unsuccessful) repeal of the ACA and new tax legislation. Roy Moore also stands accused of sexual assault of minors while in his 30s, but as of late November 2017, looks on track to win the Senate seat in Alabama (Enten 2017). Again, while it's true that some of the party leadership have distanced themselves from the candidate, Trump continues to endorse Moore and the party as a whole seems to be more concerned about the possibility of losing Moore's vote for things like Supreme Court Justices (Bump 2017).⁴

In these cases it seems obvious that parties are acting intemperately because of a desire for power is overriding belief in the victims or justice for them. This shielding of predators by parties is cowardly, and concerns voiced while these men are candidates that are quickly forgotten if the candidates are elected seems dishonest. Supporting sexually predatory party members is also impatient in that it presents an inflated sense of the importance of the party's goals. Recall that according to Kupfer patience is in part a recognition of mutual imperfection and the limits of one's own desires—shielding the wrong doing of working legislators fails to appropriately balance the desires of the party in terms of legislative priority and power versus the rights of victims and the rights of women. If parties had the patience, temperance and courage to hold their own members accountable for their actions, the parties would become more just, and more able to fulfill their function of working towards the common good while maintaining voter trust, perhaps especially the trust of women.

Can political parties flourish?

I have argued that the virtues of indulgence threaten the well-being of political parties while the virtues of self-control help to bolster political parties and enable them to

⁴ There is also much to be said about the many other forms of prejudice and bigotry beyond their misogyny these men publicly pronounce.

function well. Several concerns about this account, however, remain. One preliminary concern is a worry about how the virtues of self-control in an unjust society. As Bommarito (2014) rightly points out, an initial and important worry about patience is that one might expect those in untenable and unjust circumstances to patiently wait while they are taken advantage of or otherwise abused. Several authors have argued that while both major political parties in the United States are indulging in unorthodox legislation and obstructionism, the Republican Party is really the more egregious actor (Mann and Ornstein, 2012). If this is the case, one might worry that even if Democrats regained control of Congress and won the next presidency, if they tried very hard to work with Republicans patiently, temperately, honestly and courageously, nothing would get done and the American public's estimation of Congress and the major parties would continue to decline. Some might even argue that the mistake the Democrats made in the legislative process that led to the passage of the ACA was trying too hard to work with Republicans, thereby giving the Republicans time to further develop obstructionist tactics. There are similar concerns with respect to Gerrymandering and a generally unfair political playing field given the two presidential elections in which the Democratic Candidate won the popular vote but lost the election.

While these are serious practical concerns, a larger objection to patience as complicit with oppression and abuse is misguided and depends on a colloquial understanding of patience rather than the Aristotelian conception that identifies patience as aimed at the mean between two extremes. Patience does not require that an individual or a collective meekly wait for their oppressor to back down, and it does not require a political party to stand idly by while another party obstructs its work. That said, given the current climate of American politics, each party seems to be repaying the other in kind with opaque and rushed processes rather than a transparent and temperate attempt to pass legislation through the means of debate and compromise. This leads to the next potential objection, which is the concern that the current climate presents daunting structural obstacles to either political party cultivating the virtues of self-control such that they can flourish. A variety of factors such as the speed of communication through social media and online journalism, as well as the potential for self-isolating in political and

informational bubbles, complicate the way Americans get information. This means that political parties have new challenges to face in attempting to be honest. This also means a potentially less patient public, which creates new tension with respect to the balance elected officials must attempt to meet their commitments of responsiveness versus responsibility. There is also increasing not just disagreement but extremely negative feelings towards members of different parties which creates new challenges for self-control (Heatherington and Rudolph 2015).

I have argued in this paper that the virtues of self-control are conducive to the flourishing of political parties in a democracy. The functions of political parties are to cultivate candidates, win elections and govern justly in a manner that works towards the common good through compromise and developing consensus. In order to do this in a pluralistic society parties ought to cultivate the virtues of self-control in order to fulfill their functions. That said, there are number of confounding factors in contemporary American society that frustrate parties' abilities to cultivate these virtues. This raises new questions about what systematic changes we can make so that parties can be more virtuous, and also what individual changes we can embark upon to create that systematic change as well as individually embody the virtues that enable us to more effectively and responsibly work together.

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