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It is tempting to think that the ideals of freedom and harmony—the ideals of a free society on the one side, a harmonious society on the other—are in conflict. But the appearance of conflict disappears once they are each properly understood. People live in freedom only if they securely avoid interference; people live in harmony only if they securely avoid having to live in resentment at the power of others. And the security implied in each ideal requires broadly the same institutions and practices; their demands are more or less convergent.

freedom, harmony, laws, norms, institutions, security

C13

## Chapter 13

### Freedom and Harmony

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C13.P1

It is tempting to think that no matter how they are

interpreted, the ideals of freedom and harmony—the

Freedom and Harmony society on the other—are in conflict. The one holds out the image of a competitive, chaotic world of self-seeking, the other the image of a world of settled expectation and quiet acquiescence. The argument of this paper is that properly understood—understood in intuitively the most compelling manner—these ideals of the good society are not locked in inevitable conflict and may even be mutually supportive.

C13.P2

The reason why freedom and harmony may seem to be in inevitable conflict is not far to seek. Freedom is taken, at least in standard neo-liberal thinking, to require individuals to have maximal latitude in what they choose to do, regardless of the challenge their actions may pose for others. The paradigm is the zero-sum game where my go-getting gets in the way of your go-getting: if I win, you lose; if you win, I lose. In contrast to this image of

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account—and certainly on Confucian accounts—to  
require an alignment that allows people to relate to one  
another without any resentment at differences in power or  
fortune. And so it seems that the ideals pull in rival  
directions.

C13.P3

The argument in this paper, broadly cast, is that  
the ideal of freedom should be cast in neo-republican  
terms—terms derived from the long republican  
tradition—and that on this understanding of its  
requirements there need not be the same conflict with the  
ideal of harmony; or at least it need not conflict with the  
ideal of harmony, as it is interpreted here. What freedom  
turns out to require, on this understanding, is that people  
enjoy such ordered relations to one another that they do  
not have any reason, just because of their social position,  
to feel vulnerable in their interactions with others. And

Freedom and Harmony dovetail nicely with the requirements of harmony, on the interpretation defended of harmony. As virtues of the social institutions and practices under which people live, they tend to converge with one another.

C13.P4

The paper is in three sections. In the first, I outline and defend the neo-republican conception of freedom, arguing that it requires people to be robustly protected against fear or deference—more generally, a sense of vulnerability—in dealing with others. This draws on earlier work of my own—most recently Pettit (2014)—as well as on the work of others in the tradition. In the second section, I sketch out an attractive conception of social harmony, arguing that the harmonious society should secure people in a parallel, robust fashion against having to feel resentment at the greater powers and fortunes of others. Finally, in the third

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freedom ought also to secure robust harmony, and the  
other way around.<sup>1</sup>

C13.S1      **13.1.      The Free Society**

C13.P5      The free society might be taken to be the society that is  
free from outside constraint, but I shall understand it, in  
the more traditional way, as the society in which the  
members are free persons. More specifically, I shall take  
it to be the society in which all of its members or  
citizens—roughly, all its adult, able-minded, more or less

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<sup>1</sup> I should say that my thoughts on the harmonious society  
are not based on a deep understanding of the Confucian  
tradition. My knowledge of that tradition is too thin to  
enable me to make an informed connection with its texts  
or its themes. I was greatly aided, however, by Chenyang  
Li's (2014) study, *The Confucian Philosophy of*  
*Harmony*. I also found Joseph Chan's (2014) *Confucian*

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permanent residents—count as free persons. In this usage, no society can count as free if some of its members do not share in the freedom that others enjoy.<sup>2</sup>

C13.P6

The assumption that all the members of a free society should be free persons is distinctively modern, of course. In republican tradition, as in most other traditions, the citizenry was often restricted to

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<sup>2</sup> What about those members who are incarcerated in punishment for offenses against others? I think of these also as free citizens, for reasons that should be clearer later. They may be subject to penalties established in law, but it is just the contingent fact of their having been convicted of an offense, and not anything about their status in relation to others, that triggers those restrictions; and, ideally, the restrictions will be temporary and limited: they will leave offenders with many of the rights

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mainstream, propertied males. The ideal of the free  
society explored here is neo-republican in character, then,  
rather than classical republican. As the paper assumes  
universal enjoyment in its interpretation of the ideal of  
freedom, so it makes a similar assumption in dealing later  
with the ideal of harmony. Where older traditions may  
have looked for harmony only among certain classes of  
individuals, we shall take it in modern guise to require  
harmony among all the citizens of the society: all adult,  
able-minded, more or less permanent residents.

C13.P7

What does it mean to say that the members of a  
society are free persons? By all accounts it means that  
they have a suitable level of access to a suitable range of  
choices. But accounts differ, of course, on exactly the  
sorts of access and range that are suitable. We will focus  
first on the issue of access and turn later to the issue of

C13.S2

## The Issue of Access

C13.P8

Every choice involves a number of options, which are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive. And I may frustrate you in the choice of any option, by imposing on the possibility of your choosing that option in a manner that you do not yourself license or control.<sup>3</sup> To outline

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<sup>3</sup> This is to say that for purposes of this paper we take frustration—and, by extension, interference—to be arbitrary or hostile in the sense of not being under the control of the person frustrated. If you were to ask me to impose a fetter on what you can do at a certain moment, in the way that Ulysses asked his sailors to keep him bound as they passed within sound of the sirens, then in imposing that fetter I would not count in the sense assumed here as frustrating you. The paper adopts this



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the main possibilities of frustration, I may overtly or covertly remove the option from the choice set; I may overtly or covertly replace it with a penalized version; or I may misrepresent the option to you, whether by depriving you of information or manipulating and warping your understanding.<sup>4</sup> The different levels of access that freedom might be thought to require can be distinguished by how robustly or resiliently they require

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possible to keep the account shorter than it would otherwise need to be.

<sup>4</sup> This understanding of frustration is common to most contemporary thinkers about freedom. The most prominent exceptions are Steiner (1993), Carter (1999), and Kramer (2003), who take only the prevention of the choice of a particular option to be relevant. For a fuller account of the three forms that frustration may take, see

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such frustration to be absent. There are three salient  
views on the issue, each well represented in the literature.

C13.P9           The weakest view would require only that you as  
chooser are not frustrated in satisfying your actual  
preference over the options. In a metaphor put in  
circulation by Isaiah Berlin (1969), it would require that  
among the doors you face in the choice—that is, among  
the options before you—only the door you push on, the  
option you prefer, need be open. Let the choice be  
between staying silent at a meeting or speaking up. If you  
prefer to stay silent and no one forces you to speak, then  
you enjoy freedom in that choice; and this would be the  
case, even if it happens that had you preferred to speak,  
you would not actually have been allowed to do so.

C13.P10           This view of the access that freedom requires was  
defended by Thomas Hobbes (1994, chapter 21), who

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hindered to do what he has a will to”: that is, what he actually prefers. Berlin argued persuasively against this view, pointing out that it would allow you to make yourself free in a choice where only one option is open by getting yourself to want that particular option. Aware that you are not allowed to speak at a meeting where you actually want to have your say, you could make yourself free by thinking about the ease and relaxation associated with keeping quiet and coming to adapt your preferences so that that is what you want.

C13.P11

This manifestly absurd consequence led Berlin to argue that in order to enjoy freedom in a choice, all of the options must be accessible to you; all the doors must be open. On this account, freedom requires, not just the non-frustration of the option you actually prefer, but the non-frustration of any option. It must be that if you want to

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wanted to speak, you would have been able to speak. The account equates freedom with non-interference, we may say, since interference has been traditionally taken to occur when I close down any of the options otherwise open to you in a choice, even an option you have no wish to take. Thus, I interfere with when I rig things so that you cannot speak at a meeting, even if it happens that you have no desire to speak.

C13.P12

But there is a third account of the access to options that freedom in a choice requires, which is more demanding than Berlin's own. Where he defends a way of thinking about freedom that became common only in the late eighteenth century (Pettit 2012)—it was the centerpiece of classical liberal thought—this third account derives from the classical republican tradition that began in Rome and culminated, arguably, in the

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Roman times by authors like Polybius, Cicero, and Livy, the tradition inspired defenders of the independent Renaissance city-states—Machiavelli of the *Discourses on Livy* prominent amongst them—and spread from Italy to fuel the English revolution of the 1640s, to become the lingua franca of politics in the eighteenth-century English-speaking world, and to ignite the great revolutions at the end of that century.<sup>5</sup>

C13.P13

For all that Berlin strictly argues in his open-doors account of the access that gives you freedom, you may be at the mercy of a doorkeeper who can close any door as they wish, should they take against you. Provided that the doorkeeper is indulgent enough to let you choose as you wish, you will find that all the doors in any

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<sup>5</sup> On the republican credentials of the view see, for example, Pettit (1997), Skinner (1998), and Viroli

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relevant choice are open. Hence his account raises the question as to whether your freedom in a choice requires, not just that all the doors be open, but that they should remain open, regardless of the wishes of any other person as to what you choose. Does freedom also require that there should be no doorkeeper with the power of shutting down any one of your options at will?

C13.P14

Suppose that you go to the meeting but that I am in a position of power over you, being able to frustrate you in the choice of any option: I may be your boss, for example, with a power to fire you at will. Imagine now that I tell you that, short of a change of mind in the course of the meeting, I am happy for you to speak or stay silent, depending on what you prefer. Do you enjoy freedom when, absent a change of mind on my part, you avail yourself of the opportunity to say your bit or to

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C13.P15

It may be hard to make a judgment on a particular instance of choice like this. But suppose that when it comes to speaking in general on any public matters—to exercising the type of choice illustrated in this particular instance—you can do so only if I do not exercise my power as a doorkeeper: only, in effect, if I give you permission to speak. Would we say that you enjoy freedom of speech under such a condition: that you enjoy all that freedom of speech requires? Hardly. In the situation imagined, it is I and not you who is ultimately in control of whether you speak on a public issue or not. If you manage to enjoy a certain latitude at my hands, that is because I indulge you, and not because you enjoy something we would naturally describe as freedom of speech: certainly not as freedom of speech, in the fullest sense of that right.

While you may not suffer actual interference in the condition envisaged—I leave all the options open, after all—you do suffer domination. You operate in the presence of a power of interference on my part that I can exercise as I wish insofar as there is no significant difficulty or cost to inhibit me. Thus, you depend on my permission to be able to speak or stay silent, depending on what you wish. As we saw earlier, Berlin argued against the one-door view of free choice that it would have the absurd consequence of allowing you to make yourself free by adapting your preference to whatever is available. As against his own open-door view of free choice—the view that does not rule out doorkeepers—we may argue that it too has an absurd consequence. It would allow you to make yourself free, say, in the event that I do not want you to speak, by toadying and fawning



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paradigmatically expressive of subjection rather than  
freedom.

C13.P17                Berlin (1969, 155) himself displays sympathy for  
the republican point of view when he writes in another  
context about what it is to be “one’s own master.” If I am  
to count as free in the sense of being my own master, he  
says, there must be “room within which I am legally  
accountable to no one for my movements.” You will  
clearly be accountable to me for what you say—  
effectively, if not legally accountable—if I am in the  
position described. You will certainly have to account for  
yourself, for example, if you use the latitude I give you to  
denounce me or mine; in such a case you can expect to  
suffer the penalty of my interference: if I am your  
employer, for example, you can expect me to fire you.

C13.P18                To say that your freedom in a certain type of

Freedom and Harmony maintains, is already to hold that you should enjoy non-frustration robustly or resiliently. Where the Hobbesian view says that freedom requires actual non-frustration—the option you happen to choose is not frustrated—Berlin's view says that it requires non-frustration robustly over variations in what you prefer to do.

C13.P19

The republican view makes freedom even more robustly demanding. It requires you to be able to choose as you will robustly over variations both in what you prefer to do and in what I or anyone else prefers that you do. According to this view, you must not be frustrated in doing what you wish, regardless of how you yourself wish to choose and regardless also of how others wish you to choose: in particular, regardless of whether they are happy to let you to choose as you will.

C13.S3

**The Issue of Range**

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C13.P20

Let us assume that freedom in the fullest sense requires the robust or resilient form of access to options upheld in the republican tradition. The idea is not necessarily that this is the only right way to think of freedom—ordinary usage may leave that matter indeterminate—but that it is at least the way of thinking under which the demands of freedom are richest or most demanding (Pettit 2019).

C13.P21

This assumption about the access that freedom requires allows us to address the second question advertised earlier. In what range of choices should you enjoy suitably robust access, if you are to count as a free person? In what range of choices should you and other citizens enjoy freedom and count equally as free persons?

C13.P22

If you are to enjoy access to any choice robustly over variations in what others individually prefer you to do—if you are to enjoy it regardless of whether they are

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protected against their interference, or perhaps even  
given resources needed to exercise the choice without  
depending on them. And, assuming that you and others  
are to enjoy freedom, that means that you have to be  
protected and perhaps resourced under a rule of law—  
presumptively, a democratic rule of law—that does not  
express the will of any particular individual or body of  
individuals. If it did express the will of such a power—  
say, a benevolent dictator or elite—then you would be  
dominated by that power; you would live under its  
thumb. Like other people, you would be dependent on the  
goodwill of that agency for being able to choose as you  
will.

C13.P23

The need for legal protection and resourcing  
means that the choices in which you can hope to enjoy  
freedom must be limited to choices such that the law can

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in their exercise; all the members of a free society must be able to enjoy freedom, after all, not just you alone.

Thus, the choices cannot include just any old choices, since many choices will involve harming others. And neither can they include all those choices that do no actual harm to others, since many such choices cannot be protected for all (Pettit 2012). A choice like selling your house at the current market price cannot be protected, since it is not possible for everyone to sell at that rate; all that might be protected is the right to sell at the best rate available. And a choice like that of speaking to a meeting cannot be protected just as such, since it would have no value if everyone chose to speak at once; all that might be protected is the choice of speaking under a system like Robert's rules of order.

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are those choices—those not unnecessarily restricted  
choices—that satisfy the following condition: that it is  
possible for everyone to exercise and enjoy any one of  
them at the same time that others exercise and enjoy any  
one of them. Law is going to be needed in order to  
identify the range of co-exercisable and co-enjoyable  
choices that that it should protect in any society, since  
there is bound to be indeterminacy about the  
interpretation of this condition. And the law needed must  
include evolving case law as well as constitutional and  
statutory law. A choice that was once capable of being  
exercised and enjoyed by all—say, the choice of  
dumping your waste in a local river—will cease to have  
that status under industrial circumstances, and the law  
will need to keep track of such changes in order to make  
clear where protection is to be extended and freedom

C13.P25

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The idea that the law, and hence the state, should be involved in determining the range of choices in which citizens are to enjoy freedom—the freedom that consists in being secured resiliently against interference—jars with the current neo-liberal assumption that freedom pre-exists law. But the idea has a provenance deep in tradition, including the tradition hailed among neo-liberals. It was in this spirit that John Locke (1960, s 57) held that “where there is no law there is no freedom.” It was in the same vein that Immanuel Kant (1996, 297) argued that “a lawful constitution...secures everyone his freedom by laws.” And it is surely with the same thought in mind that Berlin (1969, 123, lx) himself says that the “area of men’s free action must be limited by law” and has to be “artificially carved out, if need be.”

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C13.P26

The generic choices likely to be deemed worthy

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traditionally, including in the republican tradition

(Libourne 1646), as the basic or fundamental liberties.

Defined differently in response to different technological and cultural pressures, they have generally been taken to include variations on the following schematic liberties:

- C13.P27 • The liberty to say and otherwise express what you think
- C13.P28 • The liberty to practice the religion of your choice
- C13.P29 • The liberty to associate with those willing to associate with you
- C13.P30 • The liberty to own and trade under local property rules
- C13.P31 • The liberty to change occupation and employment
- C13.P32 • The liberty to move and settle within the



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C13.P33

- The liberty to spend your leisure time in one or another activity

C13.P34

Choices like these, which are privileged in the Western tradition, are all neutral choices in the sense that any human being, regardless of gender or age or position, might be able to exercise them. But there is no reason in principle why a society might not also protect various gender-relative, age-relative, or position-relative choices as well as more neutral liberties. Women might be guaranteed certain liberties, for example, and men might be guaranteed others.

C13.P35

Like neutral choices, such relativized choices can be universally defined in the manner associated with liberties. A relativized liberty would give you the freedom, if you are a man, to do or attempt such-and-such; the freedom, if you are a woman, to do or attempt

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enjoy one set of rights; the freedom, if you are not, to  
enjoy another. Or the freedom if you occupy this office,  
to act in one fashion; the freedom, if you occupy that  
office, to act in a different manner.

C13.P36

With any proposed set of protected liberties,  
especially with any set that includes relativized choices,  
there are two questions that naturally arise. One is  
whether the set of choices proposed is appropriate for a  
free society: a society in which all citizens are to count as  
equally free. And the other is whether the degree of  
protection provided is appropriate to ensure that result.  
We must look at how to resolve these questions before  
moving on to a discussion of harmony.

C13.S4

## The Eyeball Test

C13.P37

In addressing the questions, the republican tradition relies  
on an image of the free person as someone who can relate

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degree of protection provided, and the domain of choices in which it is provided, can be best determined by asking whether, by local criteria, they would enable people to deal with one another in a forthright manner, without reason for feeling vulnerable: or at least without reason for feeling vulnerable that derives from differences in the choices protected by law or in the level of protection provided for them. John Milton (1953–82, V 8, 424–425) endorsed something like this test when he argued in the seventeenth century that in a “free Commonwealth,” “they who are greatest...are not elevated above their brethren; live soberly in their families, walk the streets as other men, may be spoken to freely, familiarly, friendly, without adoration.”

The image of the free person deployed in the tradition suggests a direct correlation between being a

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the point where you can be forthright in dealing with others. The idea in a distinctively Western idiom is that free persons are nothing more or less than people who are protected in such a domain and to such a degree that they are able to look one another in the eye without reason for fear or deference. They are able to pass this eyeball test despite the fact that some may be wealthier or more privileged—some, in Milton’s phrase, may be greater—than others. The idea is that any differences that remain in people’s powers of interfering in the basic liberties of others should be so insignificant that there is no reason, by local criteria, for any of them to be fearful or deferential in dealing with others; if they are fearful or deferential, that is because by those criteria they are excessively timid or cowardly.

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is unfortunate phrasing, since it appears to rule out traditions of reverence to rank or age. While it fits with Western traditions and Western idioms, it may seem out of kilter with Confucian ways of thinking, for example. Hence it may be better to resort to the earlier formulation and say that what the test requires is that that no one should have to feel vulnerable to others because of a lesser standing in the society; whatever their standing in a society, it should enable them each to be relatively forthright in dealing with one another.

C13.P40

There is no reason in principle why a society that differentiates on lines of age or role, in the manner envisaged in the Confucian tradition, should force those in one category to feel any vulnerability in relation to those in another: that is, to feel vulnerability just on the grounds of belonging to that category, and not because of

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invulnerability associated with the eyeball test might well prove capable of satisfaction, not just in the sort of society that is hailed in Western republican thought, but also in social worlds where differences grounded in the distinct combinations of roles that people occupy are foregrounded in how they look on one another. The legal protection of choices in such role-prioritizing worlds may still enable people to avoid the feeling of vulnerability that testifies to unfreedom.

C13.P41

However a society is organized on this front, the eyeball test requires a two-way connection between the freedom of the society and the absence of any reason for a sense of vulnerability on the part of some members in relation to others. If a society is free, then we may expect its members not to be exposed, just by virtue of their social position, to a feeling of vulnerability in dealing

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members to such a feeling of vulnerability in dealing  
with others, then we may expect it intuitively to  
constitute a free society, a society in which members  
count equally as free persons.

C13.S5      **13.2.      The Harmonious Society**

C13.S6      **The Grounding of Freedom and Harmony**

C13.P42      The freedom of a society is grounded in the freedom of  
the members or citizens of that society, by the account  
given in the first section. And the members of the society  
will be free just to the extent that they are adequately  
protected and resourced under a public rule of law in the  
exercise of their basic liberties, neutral or relativized.  
They are protected and resourced—they are guarded  
against domination—to the point where they can all pass  
the eyeball test. They are not exposed to a sense of  
vulnerability because of differences in the powers of

interference enjoyed by different categories: any differences that exist are too insignificant to matter.

C13.P43

The harmony of a society is not grounded in the same way in the harmony of individual members. But as the freedom of a society, understood in a republican sense, is a function of how members relate to one another—that is, in a non-dominating fashion that guards against vulnerability—so the harmony of a society is a function of the relationships that prevail among members. And as a society will be free only if all its members are free—it is a universally demanding value—so, by assumption, a society will be harmonious only if all its members enjoy harmony in their relationships with others. Like freedom, the ideal of harmony makes a universal demand; a society will not count as harmonious if only some of its members share in the harmony.



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C13.S7

Freedom: Feeling Vulnerable:: Harmony:

Feeling Resentful

C13.P44

That a society fails to be free must show up in the presence of a sense of vulnerability among some members in dealing with others. That a society fails to be harmonious, plausibly, will show up in something parallel: the presence of resentment on the part of the members in one category at the privileges or powers of the members in another. That resentment may or may not get to be expressed in opposition to the status quo, or in hostility toward those in the allegedly superior category. But even if it does not lead to action in that manner, its very existence counts as a sign that the society is not in harmony.

C13.P45

Or at least it counts as a sign of disharmony, if the resentment is well-grounded: that is to say, if people have

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people will feel resentment at the institutional arrangements under which they live, and at the advantage those arrangements seem to give some over others, when that feeling is entirely groundless. This parallels the possibility in the freedom case that some people will feel vulnerable in their relations with others when that feeling is also groundless: it springs from excessive timidity.<sup>6</sup>

C13.P46

But how to decide if people have reason to feel resentful rather than feeling resentful in an ungrounded way? The most plausible answer parallels the answer given in the freedom case. Whether people have reason to

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<sup>6</sup> There is a complexity here that I ignore, for reasons of simplicity. This is that some people may be led to feel timidity even when it is currently groundless, because of a history and culture of relationships in which it was entirely intelligible. How to rule on such a residue of

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feel resentful at the powers of others has to be determined

by local criteria, like the issue of whether people have

reason to feel vulnerable in dealing with those others.

And as it is possible for people to feel vulnerability out of

excess timidity, not because of a fault in the public

institutions, so it is possible for people to feel resentment

out of envy and not because the arrangements under

which they live provide solid grounds for resentment.

C13.P47

This observation argues that the presence of resentment, just in itself, is not a sign of the disharmony of a society. In order to constitute a reliable sign, the resentment should be well-grounded, by criteria operative in the society itself. It will be a sure sign of disharmony if those in less elite positions have reason to feel resentment at their institutional superiors by criteria that are taken for granted in the society: for example, by criteria that might

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justify resentment of their fellows even among those superiors.

C13.P48

If the presence of well-grounded resentment is a sign of disharmony in a society, what is a sign of harmony? It will not be enough to say, the absence of resentment at the powers or privileges of some. For resentment might be absent due to a failure of attention, a lack of reflection, or adaptation to the status quo; or it might absent, indeed, due to the congeniality of those in more privileged positions. What is essential, presumably, is that there should be no reason for some members of the society to feel resentment at the position of others. And there may be reason for some members to feel resentful about their position even if it happens that resentment does not surface.

C13.S8

**The Tests for Freedom and Harmony**

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C13.P49

This suggests a nice parallel between our tests for the free society, on the one side, and the harmonious society on the other.

C13.P50

A society will be free just insofar as members have no reason by local criteria to feel vulnerable in dealing with others, unfree just insofar as they have good reason for such a feeling. And they may have good reason for feeling vulnerable even when they do not actually have this feeling: say, because they have only preferences that others are unlikely to oppose or because others may happen to be indulgent enough to let them choose as they will.

C13.P51

A society will be harmonious just insofar as members have no reason by local criteria to feel resentful at the position of others, disharmonious just insofar as members have good reason for such a feeling. And again,

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when they fail to feel it; this failure may be due to their own gullibility or the congeniality of others. The vulnerability test offers an intuitive criterion for identifying free societies; the resentment test offers an equally appealing criterion for recognizing harmonious ones.

C13.P52

The Western tradition in which the free society is hailed as an ideal tends, as we saw, to assume that the members of such a society will be protected in the exercise of the same generic choices to the point where they have no reason for fear or deference—more generally, no reason to feel vulnerable—in dealing with others. The spirit of the tradition can be extended, so we argued, to encompass the idea of a society where the choices protected are relativized to gender or age or position. But it is most at home in the more homogeneous

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C13.P53

The tradition in which the harmonious society is hailed as an ideal generally assumes a diversified rather than a homogeneous society. It assumes that the members of such a society will be protected, not across a generic set of neutral choices, but across a set of choices whose specification reflects a locally highlighted spectrum of social roles.

C13.P54

But as the idea of freedom can be extended from the homogenous to the diversified community, so the idea of harmony can be extended from the diversified to the homogeneous. In any society, including any that conforms to the neo-republican ideal, there are likely to be differences of power and fortune among individuals. It is important from the point of view of freedom that these should not provide reason for some members to feel vulnerable to others. And equally, from the point of view

reason for some members to feel resentful at any differences between their position and that of others.

C13.S9

### 13.3. The Freedom-Harmony

#### Connection

C13.S10

#### Two Social Values, Two Attitudinal Profiles

C13.P55

The discussion in the first section defended a conception of freedom under which there is a rupture with contemporary—in particular, contemporary neo-liberal—ways of thinking. It associates the freedom of a society, in the test it ultimately defends, with a certain attitudinal profile among members. Negatively formulated, this profile involves the absence of a sense of vulnerability on the part of members from one category when they deal with those from another. More positively expressed, it involves what we may describe as a sense of social



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C13.P56

The discussion in section 13.2 defended a conception of harmony that also makes a link with a certain attitudinal profile. In this case, the profile involves an absence of resentment, in particular an absence of resentment at the differences that distinguish different categories among the membership: say, differences in the sorts of choices protected for men and women, the young and the aged, those in some positions and those in others. But, like the profile associated with freedom, this can also be given a positive as well as a negative formulation. More positively cast, it consists in what we may describe as a sense of social satisfaction: a sense of satisfaction with their lot on the part of members in different categories.

C13.P57

The association of the two ideals with distinct attitudinal profiles makes it possible to explore the

Freedom and Harmony  
convergent, how far divergent. With the attitudinal  
linkages in place, we can sensibly ask about whether the  
ideals are likely to go together or to pull apart. The  
linkages give us something like a metric to determine  
how near or how far they stand from one another.

C13.S11

## The Grounding of the Profiles

C13.P58

The association between the ideals and attitudinal  
profiles has a distinctive feature in each case. It does not  
strictly require that the attitudinal profile should actually  
materialize in you and others: that a sense of social  
security on the one side, social satisfaction on the other,  
should be present across the society. That profile might  
fail to materialize in you as a result of excessive timidity  
in the one case, excessive envy in the other. What it  
requires is rather that there should be reason for you and  
others to have a sense of social security or social

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requirements negatively, for any of you to feel vulnerable  
or resentful in the relevant manner.

C13.P59

These observations show that both the freedom and harmony of a society have to be grounded in the basic structure of its institutions and norms, to borrow a phrase from John Rawls (1971). That structure should provide for a suitable balance in the protection of basic liberties in order to make the society free. And in order to make the society harmonious it should provide for a suitable balance in the variations allowed between different categories of members. In each case the structure should mean that, barring a psychological failure—barring an excess of timidity or envy—people will feel a sense of social security or a sense of social satisfaction; the basic structure will give them reason to feel that.

C13.P60

Putting this in other terms, we may say that what the structure should ground is a robust or resilient pattern of feeling security or satisfaction among the citizenry. People may feel secure contingently on the fact that despite others having great powers of interference, they themselves only want what those others endorse, or those others are happy to let them choose as they will. And people may feel satisfied contingently on the fact that despite others having significant advantages of position, they themselves have adapted to accept the status quo or the more advantaged are actually very accommodating and congenial. But such contingency in the attitudinal profile would mean that there is no guarantee of freedom in the one case, and no guarantee of harmony in the other.

C13.P61

It is only if the associated profile can materialize

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of others—that the relevant social value is realized. In the  
free society, people will be disposed in the absence of  
timidity to feel secure and to feel secure robustly over  
variations in what they prefer to choose or others prefer  
them to choose. In the harmonious society, people will be  
disposed in the absence of envy to feel satisfied with their  
lot and to feel satisfied robustly over variations of a  
similar kind: variations in their own adaptation to the  
status quo or variations in the congeniality of those in  
advantaged positions.

C13.S12 **The Question about Freedom and Harmony**

C13.P62 With this parallel set out, we can turn finally to the  
question we wanted to explore. Is the free society likely  
to count as harmonious? And is the harmonious society  
likely to count as free? These questions are tractable in  
light of the attitudinal profiles associated with the two

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that suffices for the one profile is sufficient also to ground the other.

C13.P63

If the basic structure of a society enabled people to deal with one another without reason for feeling vulnerable, would it also enable them to deal with one another without reason for feeling resentful? And if it enabled them to relate to one another without reason to feel resentful at their different privileges, would it also enable them to relate to one another without reason for feeling vulnerable? In other words, would the grounding for a sense of social security also ground a sense of social satisfaction? And would the grounding for a sense of social satisfaction also ground a sense of social security?

C13.P64

The answer in each case, plausibly, is affirmative. Suppose that the basic structure of the society really gave each member reason to feel secure in dealing with others,

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they could feel such social security ensure that, by any

likely criteria, they could also feel the level of social

satisfaction associated with harmony? Without any

reason for feeling vulnerable in consequence of their

position in relation to others, why would they have any

reason to feel resentment at that position?

C13.P65

They might feel resentment at the better looks, the

greater intelligence, or the more numerous successes of

others. But no halfway feasible or desirable social

structure could be designed to eliminate such feelings.

Harmony can only require a guarantee of people's social

satisfaction with their general position in the society and

can only support a safeguard against resentment based on

the character of that position. And the fact that,

regardless of their position, a free society would give all

members a sense of social security in dealing with others

Freedom and Harmony  
would seem to be enough to ensure the presence of such  
a guarantee and the reliability of such a safeguard.

C13.P66

Suppose on the other side that the basic structure of a society really gave each member a reason to feel satisfied with their lot, as harmony requires: a reason not to feel resentful at the differences between the position they occupy and the position of any others. Wouldn't that ensure that they could also feel secure in their dealings with others, as freedom requires? For suppose that they did not feel secure in those dealings. Suppose that they had reason to feel vulnerable—reason to be fearful or deferential—in their interactions with those in another social position. Wouldn't that be enough by any plausible criteria for them to have reason to feel resentful at the differences between their position and that of those others? The answer, surely, is that it would.



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C13.P67

These considerations are hard to resist and they combine to suggest that if a society satisfies the requirements of freedom it will also satisfy the requirements of harmony, and that if it satisfies the requirements of harmony it will also satisfy the requirements of freedom. Let the structure of the society be enough to provide members with a reason to feel secure in dealing with one another and it will be enough to provide them with a reason to feel satisfied with their lot. Let it be enough to provide members with a reason to feel satisfied with their lot and it will be enough to provide them with a reason to feel secure in their dealings with one another. No freedom without harmony; no harmony without freedom.

C13.S13

## 13.4. Conclusion

C13.P68

The argument of this paper leads to an unlikely

Freedom and Harmony often assumed to be mutually antagonistic. In drawing the discussion to a close, however, it is worth noticing that the reason for this common belief may be a conception of each value under which it makes only contingent not robust or resilient demands; and that the case for connecting the values in the manner of this paper rests on taking the demands in each case to have a robust character.<sup>7</sup>

C13.P69

Freedom in a choice, as we saw earlier, may be taken in the Hobbesian fashion to require only that you as agent get what you want. This construal, however implausible Berlin showed it to be, is arguably the most commonly endorsed in neo-liberal circles today. That is probably because of the dominance of economics and the tendency among economists, with some notable

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<sup>7</sup> On the ways in which values may vary in the robustness

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exceptions, to equate freedom with preference-  
satisfaction.<sup>8</sup>

C13.P70

If you think that the free society is simply the society in which people's preference-satisfaction is maximized then you are likely to think that it is a free-for-all in which the law allows options to be indefinitely multiplied, and competition in the pursuit of satisfaction to be maximized; this, at any rate, subject to the condition that violence, theft, and such salient forms of harm are forbidden. Under that image, the free society is not one where individuals enjoy the publicly protected, perhaps public resourced status that enables each to live with others in a shared sense of social security. Rather it is a society where individuals are entitled and encouraged, so

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<sup>8</sup> The most outstanding exception is Amartya Sen; see Sen (1983, 1985, 2002). For an overview of the issue see

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long as they stay on the right side of a minimal law, to pursue their own advantage at whatever cost to others.

C13.P71

If freedom is identified in this way with actual preference-satisfaction, then that is enough to break the freedom-harmony connection for which we have argued here. For there is no way in which the free society, on this understanding of freedom, would give people reason not to be resentful about the differences between their position and that of some others; advantages will multiply and will give some a decided edge over others.

C13.P72

But there may well be a failure in the conceptualization of harmony that matches this failure in the conceptualization of freedom. And like the failure in the conceptualization of freedom, this would provide a second reason—a second bad reason—to question the connection between the two values.

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C13.P73

The failure in the case of freedom, by the perspective adopted here, is a failure to see that freedom requires not just actual non-interference but a form of non-interference that is robust over variations in the agent's preferences and in the preferences of others for what the agent chooses. It is the robust demands of freedom that explain why freedom requires protection under a rule of law—or else the non-interference will not be robust—and why such protected freedom has to be limited to the basic liberties: otherwise it can hardly be available equally to all. And so ultimately it is this feature of the value of freedom that explains why it pairs off with members having structurally grounded reasons not to feel vulnerable in their relations with one another.

C13.P74

Our conceptualization of harmony makes it into a value of broadly the same robustly demanding kind,

## Freedom and Harmony

grounded reason not to feel resentment at differences between their position and that of any others. They might escape resentment and feel social satisfaction without having good, structurally grounded reasons for that attitude. They might escape resentment and feel satisfaction just because of their own adaptive acceptance of the status quo or the accommodating attitude of those in positions of greater advantage. Under our conceptualization, however, that would not be enough to make the society harmonious. Social harmony requires that the feeling of satisfaction be robustly grounded in the structure of the society itself, and not in any such contingency of attitude.

C13.P75

When people speak about the value of social harmony—perhaps in Confucian circles—they may not always think of it as robustly demanding in this way. And

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that are robust over variations in people's attitudes—then  
that would also be enough to break the freedom-harmony  
connection defended here. For the harmonious society  
might then be the society in which the government and  
media combine to elicit and maintain a set of attitudes  
where people are generally satisfied with their lot. And  
such a society would not necessarily count as one where  
everyone had reason to feel security in dealing with  
others. By no metric could it claim to exemplify freedom,  
however freedom is conceptualized.

C13.P76

The upshot, then, is that freedom and harmony go  
together under an interpretation of each value—and only  
under an interpretation of each value—that makes it  
robustly demanding. Let freedom be taken to require a  
structurally grounded reason for feeling social security,  
and let harmony be taken to require a structurally

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case it will follow that the requirements of the two values  
converge. But if either value is interpreted in a less  
robustly demanding fashion, then their requirements will  
come apart.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> I was greatly helped in revising this paper by comments  
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