

UNDEMOCRATIC DEMOCRACY:
THE AMERICAN SYSTEM AS A REALIZATION OF VOLUNTARY SERVITUDE

by
Germayne Knoelle Eaton

A thesis submitted to the Department of Political Science,
College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in Political Science

Chair of Committee: Dr. Brandon Rottinghaus

Committee Member: Dr. Jeffrey Church

Committee Member: Dr. Nancy Young

University of Houston
December 2022

ABSTRACT

Acting according to one's own wants and needs demonstrates a capacity to exert free will. Consensually and willingly participating in subjection under a sovereign leader is also demonstrative of an ability to exercise free will. Correspondingly, the idea of voluntary servitude is the same; it functions as a way to work for and benefit authoritative and sovereign figures, while also requiring an individual's active consent. Voluntary servitude is not exclusively physical. People, who choose to serve, relinquish part of their freedom and work to maintain the systems that keep their leaders in power. The choice is made, often without the promise that their compliance will personally benefit them, or the guarantee that their leaders will fulfill their duties because, in this system, those in power can almost never be held accountable. These leaders maintain their authority through the political, class, or social hierarchies, and are empowered by the consent of the public. It is the French philosopher, Étienne de La Boétie, who explicates this behavior, identifying attempts to achieve upward social mobility, adoration, and habit as the reasons citizens might decide to submit to a higher authority. Approaching this topic in a manner similar to Boétie, I use this paper to explore the concept of voluntary servitude, to comprehend why Americans willingly partake in submission under the American government. Furthermore, I analyze how the topic is related to and presents itself in systems of democracy; specifically, America's "democracy". To do so, this paper will explore the philosophical thought that both inspired and challenged democracy in America. Ultimately, this paper will explore the ways in which voluntary servitude is conceptualized by different thinkers. Additionally, and most importantly, this paper will determine how voluntary servitude functions as an inherent feature of democracy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| ABSTRACT | i |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | ii |
| Introduction | 1 |
| I. Étienne de La Boétie | 7 |
| Voluntary servitude according to Boétie | 7 |
| Involuntary Servitude | 9 |
| Free Will vs. Free Agency | 12 |
| Justification of Servitude | 13 |
| II. The American System | 17 |
| The Constitution | 17 |
| Enlightenment Thought | 20 |
| Democracy in America | 22 |
| III. Voluntary Servitude and Democratic Theory | 30 |
| Democracy According to Other Philosophers | 30 |
| Alexis de Tocqueville | 30 |
| Baruch de Spinoza | 32 |
| Edmund Burke | 41 |
| IV. Voluntary Servitude in America | 43 |
| Ambitions and Abuses | 43 |
| How do Americans participate in voluntary servitude? | 46 |
| Nationalism | 46 |
| Capitalism | 48 |
| Hierarchical Structure | 50 |
| Conclusion | 52 |
| References | 55 |
| Appendix | 60 |

Introduction

The unpredictability of a nation's government is a direct consequence of the impulsive nature of its people. For this reason, the original idea behind the American form of government has evolved in a way that could not have been thoroughly predicted. In addition to its volatile nature, the execution of government is equally difficult to control or predict because its efficiency is primarily dependent on the actions of the citizens who participate in this government. In the case of America's government, the "democracy" constructed is unpredictable because it was forged by the collective ideas of revolutionaries whose intent was to create a system that was unsusceptible to the influence of the monarchy they fought to escape.¹ Though influenced by ideas of the Enlightenment, the American experiment employed ideas that were formerly theoretical, and had not yet been executed, resulting in a system that was vulnerable to the unpredictable behavior of the citizens it governed.

Understood according to the ideas of the founders, American democracy would ideally encourage political participation,² and promote a more inclusive type of leadership; one where the ideas of a majority faction could not dominate over those in the minority. Pragmatically, the intentions of the founders would only be realized to the extent of which the leaders in government possessed goals akin to those of the founders. Despite this, the approach to American government had never been physically practiced; therefore, in this Early American form of democracy, there exists a dichotomy between

¹ The word 'democracy' will be used as an umbrella term throughout this paper. 'Democracy' will be used interchangeably with the terms 'representative democracy' and 'Democratic-Republic'; all of which will function according to the definition of representative democracy. Any use of the term 'direct democracy' will be referenced, directly, by its name.

² Political participation, specifically, for the voting members of society. Excluding non-white, non-landowning, and non-elite individuals in the nation.

its intended function and its actual execution, complicating the ability to conceptualize this democracy.

Theoretically, the founders intended to establish a republic, explicitly condemning the idea of democracy (Madison, 1991). This condemnation was in response to their prior subjection to British authority, which prompted the construction of a government that would not allow an individual to obtain absolute power over the nation. Despite these intentions, the founders' idealized form of government realistically translated to a system that was piloted by a single, high-powered authority, and also possessed a form of representation that stifled the input of the majority of the citizens. Legally, voting rights and representation have increased in inclusivity since the eighteenth century. Practically, however, the system remains oppressive in the way it was intended to be. As for the citizens of the post-revolutionary era, they were offered representation in government and freedom under the new American system. Additionally, to further distance themselves from the English monarchy, the founders enlisted a new executive authority, alongside a legislature employed by majority vote. Despite these efforts, there remain significant system limitations, because the form of government established at the time paralleled the familiar, form of government the founders claimed they wanted to prevent.

Driven by the hope that those in power, elected by and for the citizens, will fulfill their promises and act according to the will of the people, citizens continually participate (politically and monetarily) in a system that does not guarantee satisfaction for its citizens. That is to say, citizens willingly subject themselves to the authority and laws of a government that makes decisions of which citizens have little influence over. To reach this point, citizens actively support individuals by putting them into positions of power

with the potentially false perception that these individuals will govern in a way that best benefits the general public. This understanding is idealistic because there is no guarantee that any individual will have their needs met by the means of a Congressperson whom they elected. The checks and balances instituted in the American government solely pertain to the members who govern. Generally, these members are only accountable to each other and are held only temporarily accountable by constituents through elections. The problem with this organization is that citizens consciously accept a lower rank on a theoretical hierarchy,³ and function in a way that maintains the authority of those already in power, consequently cementing these power dynamics.

Voluntary servitude, as an idea, presents itself through the power dynamics in America. The original concept presented by French philosopher, Étienne de La Boétie, suggests that the power of a sovereign individual comes from the people. It is through the will of the people that this sovereign remains in power; therefore, the sovereign is only granted the authority that people provide them. According to his essay, *The Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*, voluntary servitude refers to the acts of which a citizenry promotes and propels the power of a sovereign being. Though Boétie associates this concept with tyranny, I will use this paper to consider how this concept functions in America, based on the reasons Boétie provides, which explains why a nation might voluntarily choose servitude.

This paper's objective is to examine the role of voluntary servitude through both its conceptual and practical functions, in order to demonstrate how the American system's approach to democracy intrinsically requires the presence of voluntary servitude

³ A hierarchy of class, wealth, power, etc.

to remain operative.⁴ I will argue that democracy naturally requires the use of voluntary servitude to both function and ensure civility among the public. Due to the limitations of Boétie's argument (his association of voluntary servitude with only one form of government: tyranny), I will focus on Boétie's definition of the concept to expand his argument and display its applicability in a form of government other than tyranny. This analysis will center voluntary servitude in terms of its connection to democracy as a theory, but will also focus on how the American system illustrates the connection between voluntary servitude and democracy in practice. Ultimately, I will use this paper to explore the ways in which voluntary servitude performs as an inherent form of democracy.

The concept of voluntary servitude is not fixed; namely, it is a spectrum. The form of voluntary servitude, conceptualized by Boétie, requires the presence of free will, while other interpretations are more consistent with the definition and idea behind slavery (involuntary servitude).⁵ Boétie's *Discourse* describes the specific criteria he believes will foster voluntary servitude in a state, somewhat restricting the ability to conceptualize his ideas in situations not specified in the essay. Nevertheless, this paper will expand upon and adapt his criteria, ensuring its applicability to alternative systems and situations. Understanding Boétie's discourse, outside his recommended application to systems of tyranny, allows for a consideration of the potential environments that could operate in tandem with the system of voluntary servitude.

⁴ This paper will examine American democracy, as well as significant parts of America's general structure of government (as delineated in the Constitution). The latter will be referred to as the "American System" throughout the paper, for the sake of brevity. Additionally, because I will not cover the entirety of the Constitution in this paper, the specific aspects of the "System" mentioned, will be specified and explicated.

⁵ Examples of "other interpretations" include Baruch de Spinoza's interpretation of voluntary, as well as the ideas of John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and Edmund Burke. Spinoza, in addition to the other philosophers, will be discussed later in the paper.

In order to identify these environments, this paper will begin with a thorough analysis of Boétie's concept of voluntary servitude, as well as his general philosophy. Conversely, I will also define involuntary servitude, and distinguish the two concepts, for the sake of clarity. Following the topic of servitude, I will then consider the American system, as a whole. This includes an analysis of the primary influences on American democracy; specifically, philosophers of the Enlightenment and the founding fathers. This means an in depth consideration of John Locke's philosophy concerning the topics of freedom and consent, as well as the writings of the founders, specifically, the Federalists. They will be analyzed so that I can identify which concepts of theirs best promoted the idea of voluntary servitude. Primarily referring to the ideas and opinions presented in the Federalist Papers, their writings will be understood collectively, according to their interpretations of democracy, to identify the progression of American democratic thought and how it relates to the concept of voluntary servitude.

The paper will then establish an association of the key topic of voluntary servitude with the topic of the American system to demonstrate my understanding of how Boétie's philosophy relates to other forms of government. Additionally, the association will serve to support my main argument: voluntary servitude is an inherent function of American democracy. To make these assertions, I will first analyze the relevant writings of philosophers Alexis de Tocqueville, Baruch de Spinoza, and Edmund Burke to consider voluntary servitude in the context of other theories of democracy. These philosophers will be studied for two specific reasons. First, their conceptualizations of voluntary servitude will be compared to Boétie's in order to demonstrate the many ways the topic can be interpreted. Second, their theoretical interpretations will be compared to

the practical American system to illustrate how voluntary servitude functions differently in theory and in practice.

Finally, I will identify and exemplify the attributes of the government system that are susceptible to voluntary servitude. To do so, I will distinguish the theoretical and practical examples of voluntary servitude in America to demonstrate how the structure of the American government could foster an environment that would support and encourage voluntary servitude. Alongside this analysis, I will demonstrate how freedom under the American system is illusory. With this approach, I ultimately intend to illustrate how voluntary servitude is realized through the American system, as well as why voluntary servitude is so easily perpetuated in the system.

I. Étienne de La Boétie

The term “voluntary servitude” was coined by philosopher, Étienne de La Boétie, as a mode of defining the complexities of citizenry under tyrannical rule. Boétie exclusively associates voluntary servitude with tyranny; however, his definition of the concept is applicable to other forms of government (e.g., democracy). Boétie’s book, *The Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*,⁶ conceptualizes the topic of voluntary servitude by illustrating an understanding of man’s disposition to tolerate subjugation. In his discourse, Boétie (2008) demonstrates his interest in the topic through an inquiry, questioning the rationale behind man’s willingness to suffer under a tyrant who is only capable of ruling with the power provided by his subject (p.42). This question is asked to, first, emphasize the power man has over his own free will. Additionally, this question serves as a critique of both servitude and the citizens who voluntarily participate in it. Boétie’s assertion that these power dynamics only exist because of free will allows his argument to be transferred and applied to other forms of government.

Voluntary servitude according to Boétie

The idea of voluntary servitude, as presented by Étienne de La Boétie, is predominantly associated with tyranny, limiting its applicability to other forms of government. Due to these limitations, connecting voluntary servitude requires a larger understanding of Boétie’s philosophy. Murray N. Rothbard, author of the introduction to Boétie’s *Discourse*, provides insight into Boétie’s logic. Rothbard (2008) denotes that the book is “structured around a single axiom,” nullifying the idea that Boétie’s concept of voluntary servitude is exclusive to systems governed by tyranny (Boétie, p. 13). Rothbard

⁶ The “Discourse on Voluntary Servitude” is the English translation of Boétie’s original French essay: *Discours de la Servitude Volontaire*.

explains Boétie's association between voluntary servitude and tyranny, yet emphasizes the larger goal of Boétie, which is to demonstrate the applicability of his concept to the "State apparatus," as a whole. Given Rothbard's analysis, a general understanding can be conceived regarding the necessary factors of a government/state that must be present for voluntary servitude to exist.

The origin of this voluntary form of servitude can be accredited to the evolution of society, leading to a division between the rulers and the servants. These conditions established a foundation which solidified and maintained the hierarchical structures that perpetuated this division. Boétie specifically identifies tyranny as the form of government best suited to foster voluntary servitude because of its oppressive nature. This nature is also the reason he condemns those who voluntarily submit to a tyrant. Boétie notes the unpredictability of these leaders, labeling the situation of those subject to the leadership as unfortunate (2008, pp. 41-42). He then identifies the situation of those having several masters as being "that many times unfortunate," alluding to the potential adaptability of his argument.

Understood according to its function in the general nature of State rule, voluntary servitude is maintained and propelled by the approval of the general public, which Boétie identifies as a leader's power source. He asserts that individuals who participate in this system "acquiesce in their own subjection," advancing his argument to explicate the importance of popular support for the prosperity of any type of government (2008, p. 13). This argument is relevant, specifically to the concept of democracy, because of Boétie's emphasis on the role of freedom. The crux of voluntary servitude is the word '*voluntary*.' Boétie utilizes the bulk of his argument to emphasize his idea that the self-imposed

servitude of the people is the single mode of power acquisition for an *oppressor*.⁷ The idea is heavily articulated throughout his *Discourse* to supplement his complementary argument that this oppressor does not force the service of his people. In this way, Boétie creates a foundation of which he is able to substantiate his argument that voluntary servitude can only persist by means of citizen's active consent.

The power of the sovereign is fully dependent on the submission of the people. Specifically, this power can neither persevere nor thrive by means of coercion. Furthermore, there exists a negative association between the sovereign and the subject, meaning the sovereign gains power and the ability to oppress his subject more harshly as the subject makes themselves weak, simultaneously (Boétie, 2008, p.44). Boétie solidifies this point by clarifying that tyrants do not require force for removal, but instead, "need only be deprived of the public's continuing supply of funds and resources." Due to the lack of force wielded by the tyrant, he only receives and maintains power through the willing submission/service of his people. He supports this assertion with his understanding of freedom as something that is derived from the refusal to serve, rather than violent action (Boétie, 2008, p. 39). These opinions further exemplify the importance Boétie places upon the freedom of citizens, as it is this same freedom that reinforces the authority who contributes to their suppression.

Involuntary Servitude

Contrary to Boétie's concept of voluntary servitude, involuntary servitude does not allow a citizen their ability to use free will. The idea of involuntary servitude is not mentioned in Boétie's *Discourse*, but the inverse of his voluntary form of servitude would

⁷ The word "oppressor" will be used in the same context as "tyrant", "sovereign", or "leader" throughout this paper.

suggest a state suggest the existence of a state governed by a tyrant, who does not rule by the power the people grant him, but instead rules by force or coercion. According to Boétie's philosophy, voluntary servitude can be eradicated; in this case, the citizenry can revoke the tyrant's power through mass non-violent resistance, as the tyrant's power is granted by the people's submission. Conversely, involuntary servitude is not based on the premises of consent and natural liberty; meaning, this form of servitude operates against the will of the citizens and for the benefit of the tyrant. Under involuntary servitude, individuals have neither the right nor the natural ability to overthrow their tyrant, because the tyrant's power is not based on the citizens' consent.

Involuntary servitude is also referred to as 'involuntary slavery' or 'slavery'. In America, however, there exists a distinction between involuntary servitude and the institution of slavery, which is made clear in the Constitution's 13th Amendment, which prohibits the use of slavery or involuntary servitude in the United States (U.S. Const. amend. XIII). To differentiate the concepts, writer, B. Scullion, clarifies how slavery refers to the ownership of an individual, while involuntary servitude refers to the involuntary work of an individual who is indebted (2022). In addition to the distinction, the amendment also includes an exception that sustains the use of involuntary servitude in the American system, where slavery was outright banned. This exception allows the use of involuntary servitude (or, occasionally, slavery) in situations where an individual has been convicted of a crime.

The 13th amendment also provides other exceptions, permitting involuntary servitude to be carried out in situations involving citizens who are indebted to society, as well as situations necessitating citizens for compulsory service (jury duty or the military).

This involuntary servitude is not uncommon in America, as its definition, by Scullion, is “any form of work where the subject feels compelled to carry out the task against their will” (2022). Though the distinction between the two forms of servitude (voluntary and involuntary) are theoretically clear, the definitions are blurred when put into practice. In situations where an individual does not want to do something, but does it anyway, their decision is difficult to classify, because the presence of free will implies that they will act according to their personal wants and desires. In other words, people with free will are capable of acting in accordance with their desires; correspondingly, people with free will do not have to do what they do not want to do.

Notably, the difference between servitude and normal participation in society relates to one’s reason for participating in servitude. Under systems of government, citizens follow the rules established by their administration, making the actions performed on behalf, or for the sake of this administration (or leader, sovereign, tyrant, etc.) an example of servitude. In systems of servitude, these actions are done to benefit the sovereign authority who sets and/or enforces these rules. If people feel coerced or forced to follow these rules, the servitude would classify as ‘involuntary’. Alternatively, if they feel neither compelled nor forced to comply with the rules set by an administration, regardless of their actual desire to comply, this type of servitude is voluntary.

This definition of voluntary servitude is convoluted by situations where citizens have absolutely no choice and no other option; for example, situations of life and death. Once the variable of self-preservation is included, the ability to exert free-will no longer exists. Servitude exists on a spectrum; therefore, a citizen’s choice to comply with a

federal law, even when they do not want to, is an example of involuntary servitude. Paying taxes is an example of this situation. Despite the presence of a “choice” in this scenario, the only alternative outcome is incarceration; a state of which, would result in the complete loss of one’s rights. Though the decision was not a matter of life and death, it was made for the sake of self-preservation. In the same example, a citizen’s willingness *and* desire to pay taxes would be illustrative of voluntary servitude. The decision to participate in politics is also an example of voluntary servitude. Political participation benefits the government and keeps the officials in power; however, the decision to participate (i.e., vote) is not required, nor is it necessary for one’s self-preservation. Even if the citizen voted reluctantly, this participation only benefits the government; it is not objectively beneficial for the citizen who made this decision. For this reason, political participation is completely voluntary; people act in ways that perpetuate the authority of those already in power, and do so only through their own free will.

Free Will vs. Free Agency

The idea of “free will” is complicated because it is often conflated with the concept of free agency. Free agency is difficult to identify in a fixed government system because “free agency” is contingent on the presence of “free will”. Agency allows humans to make their own decisions, “choosing as they please in the light of their sense of right and wrong and the inclinations they feel,” according to theologian, J.I. Packer (2001). Conversely, free will has been defined as “the ability to choose all the moral options that a situation offers.” Under voluntary servitude, citizens are granted free will; however, through their decision to actively participate in servitude, their actions are restricted by the authority they subject themselves to, indicating their lack of free agency.

Similar to Locke's concept of tacit consent, the active decision of citizens to participate in society, expresses their tacit consent to comply with the rules and laws of that society, effectively restricting their agency but, ideally, maintaining their free will.

Justification of Servitude

Despite his disapproval of those who voluntarily serve, Boétie provides reasons as to why he believes citizens unnecessarily subject themselves to higher authority. This "relinquishment of freedom," is understood by political scientist, Saul Newman, as "a result of apathy or laziness [because] we find it easier to obey than to resist" (2021, p. 131). Despite this suggestion, Newman continues by acknowledging Boétie's understanding of the participation in voluntary servitude as active rather than passive, noting it as "something we continuously, even energetically and enthusiastically, participate in." This distinction is made to emphasize the willingness of individuals to submit. Furthermore, by highlighting the role people take in their own subjection, it bolsters Boétie's argument that servitude cannot be coerced by a tyrant.

First, Boétie argues that men continue to submit themselves to voluntary servitude because they became accustomed to it. He suggests that servitude driven by custom is also habitual, stating "men will grow accustomed to the idea that they have always been in subjection, [because] their fathers lived in the same way" (Boétie, 2008, p. 60). He links the concepts of obedience and freedom to exemplify his belief that voluntary servitude is perpetuated by habit. Boétie assumes governments (or tyrants) harness the authority granted by the citizens' habitual servitude to conceal any lack of legitimacy. The perceived legitimacy of government (or a leader) is perpetuated by an electorate out of habit (Tim, 2013). This perpetuation contributes to a system that sustains

both the authority of the sovereign and the servitude of the people. Continuing his argument about the effects of habit on voluntary servitude, Boétie (2008) states, “[subjects] will think they are obliged to suffer this evil, and will persuade themselves by example and imitation of others, finally investing those who order them around with proprietary rights, based on the idea that it has always been that way” (p. 60). Through this quote, Boétie demonstrates how citizens provide their leader with power, maintaining that their lasting customary support for a leader develops into a source of legitimacy for the authority.

Following his description of “habit’s” role in voluntary servitude, he lists manipulation as another significant driving force of voluntary servitude. In practice, a sovereign leader may manipulate their citizens through attempts to influence or change their perceptions. Boétie’s concept of a sovereign leader, or “tyrant”, is unjust, but is not exclusively abrasive. A tyrant may strive to impress his citizens to both maintain their support and facilitate admiration. The methods of the tyrant used to uphold this illusory approach to governance are described by Boétie as “instruments of tyranny” (2008, p. 24). To elaborate, Boétie ascribes the successful upkeep of this illusion to the “bread and circuses” approach to governance by tyrants who wish to secure their authority and power.⁸ He asserts that the citizens’ participation in the practices and entitlements offered by the tyrant is the price of their liberty (Boétie, 2008). In this example, citizens willingly subject themselves to servitude and, notably, they also display a desire to do so. The tyrant’s provision of aesthetic needs through “bread and circuses” demonstrates his

⁸ The phrase ‘bread and circuses’ refers to the efforts of a leader to distract their constituents with the provision of superficial needs for the sake of public approval and support. In the example provided, Rothbard references ‘bread and circuses’—a term coined by Roman poet, Juvenal—to explain Boétie’s reference to the actual Roman practice of providing grain dole and circus games to the poorer citizens of society. Grain dole and circus games were both cheap supplies of which the Roman leaders were able to leverage their political power. (Juvenal, Satire 10.77–81 in Aldrete, 2021)

ability to support his citizens in ways other than what is required of him. In doing so, he provides his citizens with additional reasons to serve and adore him or, at the very least, acquiesce in their subjection.

Finally, Boétie extends his argument by going beyond his examination of the reasons citizens willingly participate in servitude, and considers how the system is maintained. In addition to ‘custom’ and ‘manipulation’, Boétie asserts that voluntary servitude is maintained by a hierarchy. Figuratively, this hierarchy acts as a pyramid and serves as a foundation to shield and preserve the position of a tyrant at the top. Additionally, it is maintained by the efforts of an electorate to secure or advance their rank in society. Those who successfully navigate this hierarchy for their benefit, are the ones who maintain the hierarchy; their success is contingent on the continued subordination of the portion of the citizenry who exist under them.

The framework of this hierarchy’s organization is illustrated by Murray Rothbard, who describes it as a “hierarchy of privilege [which] descends from the large gainers from despotism, to the middling and small gainers, and finally down to the mass of the people who falsely think they gain from the receipt of petty favors” (Boétie, 2008, p. 29). Citizens, at one level, support those at the level above them because they are demonstrative of the potential for growth in society. These individuals are advantageous, according to Boétie (2008), and will choose to participate in the schemes of the tyrant to share in their triumph. In this case, the support for the tyrant is vicarious and exists only at the end of the ladder of patronage. Citizens at one level reinforce the power and authority of the group above, and the pattern continues to the top, where support, or consent, for a tyrant is the indirect result of this hierarchy of support. This hierarchy

demonstrates the desire of people to subject themselves to a higher authority with the hope that their decision might advance their attempt to achieve upward mobility, ultimately protecting the status and power of the sovereign.

II. The American System

The Constitution

Driven by their need to escape the rule of Britain's monarchy, and inspired by the thinkers of the Enlightenment, the American Founders established a system of democracy that soon devolved into a system that required the use of voluntary servitude to maintain its authority. The founders drafted the Constitution to create and construct a form of democratic republicanism that was intended to suppress both the ambitions of citizens and the greed of leaders. The waning of political power for the electorate can be attributed to the evolution of America's democracy, leading to a post-democratic society. Ultimately, America's susceptibility to evolve in this way can be attributed to faults in the Constitution's design.

Several of the political freedoms listed in the Constitution are accompanied by some form of check or exception, used to distance the citizens from governance. Author Sheldon Wolin (2008), names the systems of checks and balances, separation of powers, checks and balances, judicial review, and the electoral college as ways the founders attempted to prevent democratic intervention in their burgeoning republican state (p. 155). He identifies this general effort to stifle democracy as "managed democracy," naming the founders as the original arbiters of this trend. Furthermore, a 'managed democracy' thrives with the division of electorates, as it is easier to prevent a majority from forming. The ability of the federal government to control the ambitions of the public, while simultaneously evading the responsibility of representing them, is not only legal, but also Constitutionally supported.

The first three articles of the Constitution address the checks and balances that were to be established to prevent abuse of government. The structure has shifted over time, but originally, the legislative branch, (House of Representatives and Senate), and the executive branch were independent of the judicial branch to prevent intimidation, the Senate was intended to be elected by the House, and the executive branch had not yet been introduced to the ability to invoke unilateral action increase their authority. Because the branches were all accountable to each other, and were in control of legislation and executive action, the branches were able to expand their own authority according to their will. The founders provided the only people who could change the law, the responsibility to hold each other accountable. Additionally, they established a system that made accountability by the citizens extremely difficult.

The branches do function according to their assigned purpose, but the legislative branch circumvents their authority through grid-lock, or filibuster. Though these are not abuses of power, it is a way to shirk their responsibilities, keeping them in power, while halting the political process. Regarding actual abuse of authority, political science, Adrian Pabst (2015) acknowledges the lack of impact representatives make due to their lack of interest in the people (p. 92). He states, “growing numbers of elected representatives are professional politicians from ever narrower socio-economic backgrounds who are seen as neither connecting with ordinary voters, nor governing in the interest of the majority, nor addressing the long-term needs of society.” Moreover, he acknowledges the American system’s shift to an oligarchical type of government, attributing this shift to the apathy exhibited by government officials.

In addition to the legislative branch, the executive branch, specifically, has the most authority to abuse their power. This aforementioned unilateral action can be invoked in time of danger, temporarily expanding the scope of authority for the President, for the benefit of the country. An example of this is 9/11. Following the event, the military powers were expanded, separate military commissions were established, and enhanced interrogation techniques were allowed (Carlisle, 2021). This expanded executive was in place for years after 9/11, and because they were executive orders, they never required Congressional approval. Though 9/11 is only one example of executive overreach, the president is allowed to take these actions in times requiring increased national security.

Political Scientist, Edwin Corwin (1968), a scholar who understood the Presidency only in terms of the position, rather than the person. He explained how the position, over the years, has increased in authority because each President acts according to what they can do, rather than what needs to be done. Based on Corwin's argument, a President distinguishes himself through temporary moments of increased authority, typically in response to a situation that requires it, such as an emergency. Understood according to Corwin's argument, the President does not act for the people, he simply acts according to what his position allows.

Functioning as a product of wealthy, white, land-owning men of the eighteenth century, the construction of the Constitution was inherently biased, contributing to the ease in decline of America's democratic republican government into a system that would be easily subjected to both the corruption and politics of modernity. The government that the Constitution established would benefit from modernization as the American trends of exclusivity (racism, sexism, etc.) would correspondingly decline. Consequently, however,

the role of corruption in this form of government would also shift in a way that enabled the tyrannical ambitions of the leaders elected, effectively challenging the purpose of establishing a democratic republic in the new American system.

Enlightenment Thought

The Enlightenment ideas that influenced the American system, specifically from the ideas of philosopher John Locke, identified an understanding of the original state of nature which developed into theories describing the role of humans in the states. These natural states, however, were not relevant to Boétie's ideas because his theory of voluntary servitude was driven by the belief that humans were not always participants in servitude, but instead were once free and devolved to accept their subjection. This understanding illustrates the reason America, specifically, was inherently vulnerable to the adaptation of voluntary servitude; it was established on the principles of freedom, but constructed in a way that left it invulnerable to unwanted foreign influence or input. Under the new American system, the use of voluntary servitude was inevitable because a hierarchy of power was present. Inherently, the idea of voluntary servitude is facilitated by a discrepancy in power dynamic, and maintained by the use of free will. Despite the idea of "equality" promoted during the formulation of America, the existing class/power hierarchy prevented an equal exchange of respect and authority between the citizens and the government, establishing a foundation of which was suitable for the presence of voluntary servitude.

The acknowledgement of democracy's establishment and evolution in America also requires an acknowledgement of the political thought that influenced America's democracy. Consideration of the ideas that inspired the founders is critical to the

understanding of democracy's association with voluntary servitude in its various forms, prior to its existence in America. Philosophers, John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, contributed ideas that addressed their version of a social contract.

Despite the fact that Boétie disagreed with the existence of social contracts in systems involving voluntary servitude, Enlightenment thinkers are relevant to the conceptualization of voluntary servitude in America.⁹ Their ideas contributed to the formation of the Constitution, as well as America's ideas of freedom, representation, and human rights. This understanding of their influence on the establishment of America's approach to government and opinion of society exemplifies the reasons why the American system would best nurture and reinforce the use of voluntary servitude.

John Locke's philosophy derives from his belief in the inalienable rights of humans. Locke's "state of nature" assumed humans to be completely free as they participate in a society meant to preserve and protect their rights. Locke's idea of freedom, dictated his understanding of consent. Similar to Boétie, John Locke's concept of government is driven by consent, and guided by his belief that citizens can only be subjected by their consent. Leaders are valid as long as their authority is consented to. This idea that consent is the basis for any right to rule, supports the possibility that voluntary servitude can function as part of a democracy. In his second treatise (1690), Locke acknowledges that every man is "naturally free", which is why he cannot be subjected without a "sufficient declaration of [his] consent" (Locke, Chap. 3, Sect. 199).

⁹ French anthropologist, Pierre Clastres, describes a theory explaining power dynamics in primitive societies, that implicitly answers the primary question of Boétie's *Discourse*, which asks "Why do people desire their own domination?" Clastres theorizes a state of nature that was once free, but was divided between the dominators and the dominated, effectively alienating people from their natural freedom, and leading them to desire servitude. Clastres's theory relates to Boétie because it describes the existence of a state developed in good faith, but evolved to function through voluntary servitude, supporting Boétie's connection between servitude and corruption. (Clastres, 1994, p. 169; Newman, 2010, p.3).

Through the legislature, laws are formed, but the power rests with the people who elect these legislators to power. Locke understood the consent of the people as a safeguard against abuses of power.

The structure of the American government materializes the ideas of Locke; however, in practice, the free will of the people in America is limited by their lack of total agency.¹⁰ This limitation is explicated through Locke's concept of *tacit consent*, which discloses how people are obliged to follow the rules of their government irrespective of whether they expressly consent to do so (Locke, 1690, Chap. 3, Sec.119). In America, the idea that powerful figures can be held accountable by the people is an illusion. Though government officials are elected and can be removed from office, citizens have limited influence over the way these officials govern. Locke's concept of tacit consent demonstrates how American citizens are able to exercise free will, but are limited by the conditions of their environment. That is to say, Americans can make their own decisions; however, these decisions are limited to the rules of the government, which they cannot directly participate in.

Democracy in America

The concept of democracy as understood by the founding fathers is not the concept of democracy that entails the direct participation of citizens. Democracy was never the initial goal of America, which is why the definition of democracy in America is so convoluted. Simplistically defined as "rule by the people," the system of democracy was unpopular among the founders, particularly, the Federalists.¹¹ As a solution, a form of republicanism was established to act as a safeguard against direct political participation

¹⁰ The distinction between "free will" and "agency" is described on page 12.

¹¹ "Rule by the people" is the definition of democracy. (See *Democracy* by Council of Europe).

(policy decision-making without a representative interference) by the American citizens. Madison clarifies the distinction between these systems by stating: “In a democracy, the people meet and exercise the government in person; in a republic, they assemble and administer it by their representatives and agents. A democracy, consequently, will be confined to a small spot. A republic may be extended over a large region” (Federalist No. 14, 1991). This concept establishes the foundation of which Madison would base many of his future arguments, alluding to his desire to construct a system devoid of the ability to devolve into that of tyranny.

This mixed (intentionally “non-democratic”) system was established to abate the chance of a potential domination by any majority group in the political decision-making process. Hamilton acclaims this approach to government in his letter to Gouverneur Morris, asserting his preference for “a representative democracy, where the right of election is well secured and regulated and the exercise of the legislative, executive and judiciary authorities, is vested in select persons, chosen *really* and not *nominally* by the people” (Hamilton, 1777). Hamilton’s quote demonstrates how and why the system of government, instituted by the founders, subsumed both republican and democratic ideals.

‘Democracy’, as it exists in America, is susceptible to failure because there is no real safeguard for citizens who are subjected to governmental authority, against this governmental authority. James Madison utilizes Federalist No. 51 to exemplify the extent of which he valued and desired a system of accountability to maintain civility among the participants of the forthcoming American system.¹² In the essay, Madison emphasizes the necessity for checks and balances to neutralize the potential threat of an abusive government through his argument, stating, “In framing a government which is to be

¹² ‘Participants’ is used to refer to civilians who are not members of government.

administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself” (1991). Despite the efforts of Madison, alongside the other founders, to prevent any potential abuse of power, they did not account for the necessary magnitude of these “checks and balances” required to offset the ambitions of the people in power. The Founders’ inability to identify and prepare for potential maladministration or abuses of power contributed to the ease of which the American democratic system was able to devolve into an exploitative system.

Republicanism, as a form of government, was ideal to the Founders, because they believed it to be a preventative solution for any potential abuse of power. James Madison heavily advocated for this form of government, viewing it as a safeguard against the threats that could arise, specifically, from issues with power dynamics and majority rule. His condemnation of pure democratic systems, stemmed from his belief that this form of democracy was “subject to the evil of factions,” because, “a majority bound together by a private interest, relative to the whole, has the capacity to impose its particular will on the whole” (Bristow, 2017). Expanding on this point, Federalist No. 10, an essay drafted by Madison to voice these concerns, identifies republican democracy as the most appropriate form of government for the emerging state, and simultaneously identifies the flaws of direct democracy to demonstrate why it was considered to be the least reasonable approach to government.

In Madison’s efforts to frame republican democracy as a form of protection against the dangers of factions, he commends the ability of republicanism to prevent tyranny of a majority. He acknowledges the “relief supplied by the republican principle”

for minority factions (Madison, 1991, Federalist No. 10). Continuing, Madison asserts that this relief, which enables the majority to defeat its sinister views by regular vote...it will be unable to execute and mask its violence under the forms of the Constitution.” Madison’s quote demonstrates the importance he placed on determining the most effective form of government. He used his essays in the Federalist Papers to ensure the developing nation established a system that would not enable the disproportionate domination of one group’s opinions in government. Despite his best efforts, Madison championed the idea of republicanism, which was only an effective protection against majority factions on a small scale. Madison’s belief that elections would serve as the primary solution to his concerns, ultimately limited his argument, as it lacked an acknowledgement of any potential impediments to his solution that might emerge with the country’s growth and evolution.

In contrast to the pro-liberty rhetoric present in the Federalist papers and The Bill of Rights, the founders did not establish the form of government that could execute the ideals promoted in these documents. While still in development, the emerging American government was heavily influenced by the Federalists, who sought to establish a system that would allow its citizens to politically participate without granting them the ability to exercise their influence over government. Furthermore, the founders intentionally limited the liberty of non-white and non-land-owning individuals, and restricted their ability to participate in politics. In rejecting the implementation of direct democracy, the founders constructed and encouraged a type of indirect democracy that would function according to republican principles.

In addition to constricting the ability to politically participate, the founders also limited the public's access to the government by authorizing only one branch, the House of Representatives, to be popularly elected (Mekouar, 2021).¹³ Because this form of democracy is not direct, citizens are not granted complete sovereignty over their freedom, despite the fact that they fully maintain their free will. This approach to governing is relevant to the topic of voluntary servitude because it exemplifies the priorities of the founders by demonstrating their willingness to construct safeguards at the expense of their citizens' freedom because of the way they were threatened by any potential form of tyranny.

Accountability between the government and its citizens is only available through the electoral process. Furthermore, the legislative branch is the only avenue of which citizens are offered to uphold their influence in government. The lack of direct democracy maintains the dependency of the citizens on the competence of their representatives. The American government holds itself accountable through the systems of checks and balances, but collectively retains ultimate authority over the people who participate within it. Functioning as a check on the legislature, both their positions and authority require the maintenance of public support. However, this support is the only means of accountability; the electorate is only able to hold the government accountable through elections. This concern is explicated by writer, Laurence Hunter, who recognizes the ability of 'checks and balances' to function on a small-scale, i.e., local governments, while also acknowledging that power abuse exists in all levels of governments and is

¹³ This sentence references a quote from Dr. Andrew Wehrman in Dora Mekouar's article, "Today's Democracy". Wehrman does offer clarification for the "one branch" assertion, acknowledging the direct roles of the Electoral College and the commander in chief in the elections of the President and Supreme Court justices, respectively. Additionally, he notes the original way senators were elected: by state legislatures.

difficult to subdue on a larger scale (2011).

The electoral system put in place to check the officials in power is insufficient at holding them accountable because, while in office, they are able to leverage their power to pursue personal interests.¹⁴ Hunter continues this argument through his criticism of Madison's lack of forethought about factions, (specifically, concerning their ability to evolve with the growth of the nation), by labeling his structural solutions of tyranny as useless. In his article, Hunter identifies the ability of factions to form alliances and majorities, effectively circumventing Madison's restrictions, as this growth allows them to assert their interests at the expense of others (See Appendix). Under this authority, the public has no choice but to participate in society according to the laws set by those in power, without a guarantee that this compliance will benefit them.

Should the public find their Representatives insufficient at voicing the concerns and acknowledging the needs of their constituents, citizens are allowed the right to protest; serving as an alternative approach to uphold their influence on the government. Even with these freedoms, the public is not guaranteed an auspicious outcome. Furthermore, they are only allowed the ability to protest according to the rules of the government; therefore, they remain subject to authority even through their attempt to challenge components of this authority. They have no true ability to challenge this system, until they become a part of the system. Their only alternative is to leave.

Dr. John P. McCormick acknowledges the potential for abuse among those in power and suggests the use of direct democracy as a solution, stating, "The insatiable appetite of elites to dominate necessitates popular participation that transcends the

¹⁴ According to Hunter, these powers include: The allowance of standing armies in peacetime, access to the regulatory instruments of torture they use to command and control individuals' behavior, and access to individuals' pocketbooks and bank accounts through their power of direct taxation.

politics of elections and is not only active but also antagonistic” (McCormick, 2011, p. 264).¹⁵ Furthermore, McCormick establishes his dissent against the authority of representative legislators, by advocating for the empowerment of the citizenry, as individuals, as he believes they are “at risk for domination” in the deliberative processes (p. 271). These criticisms bolster the argument that legislators can adopt tyrannical habits, given the power to do so, ultimately, demonstrating the way these representatives can evolve to fit the description of tyrannical figures described by Boétie in his *Discourse*.

Alongside Dr. McCormick, Dr. Ian Shapiro holds a similar opinion that democracy’s legitimacy is based on its ability to prevent abuses of authority. Shapiro supports the concept of popular participation as the ideal form of political participation. This is clarified through his claim that democratic participation should “strengthen the hands of those whose basic interests are vulnerable in particular settings” (2003, p. 147). With this statement, Shapiro not only establishes his preference for inclusive political participation, but he also demonstrates his belief that political participation works best when decisions are made on a case-by-case basis according to the interests of the affected individuals or groups (p. 53).

Through elections, citizens enable those who are already in power with the ability to remain in power. Additionally, the concept of the American dream provides citizens with something to aspire to, or work towards. This dream is achieved through capitalist ideas; those of which further legitimize the hierarchical class system. As citizens work to advance themselves to the proximity of those at the top, they participate in and maintain

¹⁵ McCormick’s concept of ‘popular participation’ is similar to that of direct democracy. Also known as ‘public participation’, which includes “any process that directly engages the public in decision-making and gives full consideration to public input in making that decision.” (See “Public participation guide,” 2022).

the system that further benefits the individuals already in power. The accounts of both Dr. McCormick, and Dr. Shapiro are essential to the understanding of the benefits and detriments of ‘democracy’, as the founders understood it. Additionally, their analyses of democracy’s disadvantages are comparable to the failings of voluntary servitude, further establishing the connection between voluntary servitude and American democracy.

Both McCormick and Shapiro provide examples of political participation, in opposition to the representative form of democracy in America, to demonstrate the forms of government that would excel as alternatives to the preventative measures put in place by the founders. Furthermore, their ideas bolster my argument that the American approach to representative democracy is susceptible to the unpredictable ambitions of leaders who might abuse their authority.

III. Voluntary Servitude and Democratic Theory

America's interpretation of democracy was easily corruptible because it was exposed to the real ambitions of people. Other, theoretical, conceptualizations of democracy are necessary to comprehend why America's democracy was suitable for voluntary servitude. By grasping how democracy would ideally or defectively progress in the theoretical assessments of non-American philosophers, I can discern if and why America's system differed. Additionally, analysis of their writings will assist in the comprehension of how democracy differs theoretically and practically.

Democracy According to Other Philosophers

Alexis de Tocqueville

French philosopher, Alexis de Tocqueville, is best known for his commentary on America's democracy; having authored a book about it, entitled *Democracy in America*. Tocqueville's thoughts on America are essential to understanding the dichotomy between theoretical democracy and democracy in practice because he observed the nation during its early development and was able to identify trends and potential threats to democracy. America's government began with an entirely clean slate, as the land was both isolated and ungoverned. This new land offered the opportunity to test and implement any form of theory desired, which is why America's adaptation of democracy was admired by Tocqueville.

Tocqueville's primary reservation with American democracy concerned the culture's propensity towards individualism. Though he valued America for its dissociation from aristocratic values, but worried that the lack of an established hierarchy would prompt the creation of one. Individualism, on its own, was not the problem, but

unchecked individualism would devolve into selfishness, which is why Tocqueville both noted the happenings in America, and contributed his ideas and warnings about America's progression with its form of government.

Tocqueville concerned himself with the dangers of both the authority of the state (or lack thereof) and the unchecked attitudes and ambitions of the citizens. In line with Boétie's "habitual" justification of voluntary servitude, Tocqueville identifies complicity as the main impetus for the state's power. Joseph Femia (2001), describes this ideal as a balance between "an apathetic public who are happy to concentrate on private satisfactions and a government intoxicated with the delights of unlimited control" (p. 51). In consistent comparison to aristocracy, American democracy is repeatedly observed according to its propensity towards competition and materialism. Tocqueville warns about the dream American citizens chase, but can never reach. The frustrations that result from constant competition and unfulfilled ambitions are the feelings that leave citizens vulnerable to the words of any leader that promises relief. Tocqueville notes the ease of which a new leader can take advantage of the citizens' melancholy, and describes how voluntary servitude can result from this dynamic, stating:

The supreme power then extends its arm over the whole community. It covers the surface of society with a net-work of small complicated rules, minute and uniform, through which the most original minds and the most energetic characters cannot penetrate, to rise above the crowd. The will of man is not shattered, but softened, bent, and guided: men are seldom forced by it to act, but they are constantly restrained from acting: such a power does not destroy, but it prevents existence; it does not tyrannize, but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes, and stupefies a

people, till each nation is reduced to be nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd ... it might even establish itself under the wing of the sovereignty of the people. (Tocqueville, 2002, p. 171)

With this quote, Tocqueville does two things. First, he establishes his understanding of servitude; describing how the sovereign comes to power, how the citizens allow them to take their power, and how this power is maintained. The second thing Tocqueville does with the quote is emphasize how closely he associates democracy and voluntary servitude.

Given Tocqueville's statement, Femia (2001), makes the assertion, "Inherent in the logic of democracy is the willingness of people to surrender more and more of their liberties to the state, since they regard state power not as an alien imposition but as an institutionalized expression of their own preferences." Femia's statement, bolsters Tocqueville's assertions because he, during the early nineteenth century, was able to recognize this association between democracy and servitude and comprehend it as inevitable. Regarding his democratic theory, Tocqueville did not form his argument using conditional statements, he emphasized his belief that *when* democracy reaches a certain point, the citizens will openly agree to the exchange of their liberty for state authority, effectively establishing a system of voluntary servitude to institute some form of hierarchy and structure.

Baruch de Spinoza

Expanding on the topic of voluntary servitude and democracy, I will use the philosophy of Baruch de Spinoza to demonstrate how democracy and servitude relate to

each other, outside the American context. Philosopher, Baruch de Spinoza, is used to substantiate this idea, because his conceptualization of democracy includes an understanding of servitude that is unrelated to America's system, bolstering my argument that voluntary servitude is an inherent function of democracy. Though America's government system was not influenced by Spinoza, his writings possess an interpretation of democracy that present similar goals to the ideas constructed by the founders. Spinoza's writings also inadvertently illustrate the instability of democracy, fundamentally revealing the many attributes of the system that function in the same way as the system of voluntary servitude.

Baruch Spinoza¹⁶ was a Jewish-Dutch philosopher whose writings heavily promoted the concepts of rationalism and freedom. Spinoza understood democracy as “any system of popular governance in which the governing members acquire the right to participate by virtue of their civil status rather than by election” (Steinberg, 2008). For Spinoza (2007), democracy existed to maintain civility among the citizens of a nation, as he believed it promoted the common good and upheld accountability for both the citizens and the sovereign. At the heart of Spinoza's philosophy is the prioritization of the natural rights of citizens, specifically as they navigate these rights in their communities. This philosophy is exemplified through Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise¹⁷ (2007), where he asserts his belief that all citizens transfer their natural rights to the whole of

¹⁶ Baruch Spinoza was born ‘Bento’. In Latin, his name is ‘Benedictus’. In Hebrew, his name translates to ‘Baruch’, which is the name he will be consistently referred to in this paper, and also may differ from the Reference list.

¹⁷ Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* translates to *Theologico-Political Treatise* or *Theological-Political Treatise* in English. Spinoza's first essay, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, will be referred to as “TTP” throughout the paper. His second essay, *Tractatus Politicus*, was published posthumously. This paper will primarily reference Spinoza's “TTP”, however, references to the second essay, *Tractatus Politicus*, or *Political treatise* (English translation by Elwes and Cordasco, 2004), will be cited as “PT”

society to maintain equality in society (TTP, p. 202). This theorized society, constructed by Spinoza, parallels Rousseau's state of nature, as they both maintain that men are free, through the cooperation of everyone else in society. Additionally, Spinoza's statement touches on the ideas of Boétie, as both philosophers assert their belief that men, in society, relinquish part of their power with the assumption that the decision might ultimately be beneficial.

Regarding the subject of 'politics', Spinoza views it as a way to achieve comfort and security, which he clarifies in his *Political Treatise* through an illustration of his ideal society; one that he believes to be the "most secure, most stable, and least liable to reverses" (TP, p. 46). Spinoza praises the idea of democracy in his *Treatise*, because of his belief that it provides citizens the optimal amount of freedom. In his conceptualization of democracy, he emphasizes the importance of allegiance, from the people, to a sovereign, asserting, "laws should be so drawn up that people are restrained less by fear than hope of something good which they very much desire; for in this way everybody will do his duty willingly" (Spinoza, TTP, 2007, p. 73). This statement advocates for a mutual respect between the citizens and the sovereign. Furthermore, it suggests that people both support and admire their sovereign, guiding their decisions to participate in and maintain their society. Both philosophers implicate a belief that the members of a society, relinquish part of their power with the assumption that the decision might ultimately be beneficial. This willing support of a sovereign, by means of free will, provides an avenue of which Boétie's idea of voluntary servitude can be applied to Spinoza's concept of democracy.

Spinoza's ideas conflict with the American democratic system because he understands democracy as an exchange between the people and their sovereign authority. The American system, alternatively, promotes a hierarchy of order, rather than a mutual and respectful agreement between the citizens and the government. Spinoza believed laws were meant to function as positive incentives, as they would in a system intended to contribute to the wellbeing of society. Conversely, systems that implement laws as threats of punishment, would require the rule of an external authority, as the role of authority in this type of society differs from one that functions with a mutual respect between the sovereign and the people. The sovereign, according to Spinoza, is in power to protect the citizens; in exchange, the citizens are expected to obey the sovereign. He views this exchange to be better for a society, in comparison to any other approach to government because the people, in accordance with the sovereign's authority, are not only protected from the potentially harmful actions of their peers, but they are also protected from their own potentially harmful desires and actions.

Spinoza recognized the potential for instability in democracy and constructed theories of how servitude and slavery might function under this type of government. Similar to Boétie, Spinoza's understanding of servitude, is not related to his understanding of democracy. Spinoza's understanding of servitude is associated with the concepts of deception, coercion, and fear; all of which he believes cannot exist under a democracy. Despite this discrepancy, French philosopher, Miguel Abensour, denotes the connection between the Spinoza and Boétie, clarifying that the primary difference between the two men lies in the way they identify the causes of voluntary servitude. According to Abensour, Boétie recognizes the "dissolution of plurality" as the primary

cause of a state's "disposition to voluntary servitude" (2015, para. 9). In doing so, Boétie ultimately identifies servitude as the source of support for the framework of monarchical regimes. Conversely, Abensour accredits Spinoza with the opposite opinion, labelling his understanding of voluntary servitude as an internal effect of monarchical regimes. Basically, while Boétie identifies the populace as the reason voluntary servitude is perpetuated in a state, Spinoza believes that the sovereign, or leader, should be accredited with the enforcement of the system.

Similar to Boétie's theory that voluntary servitude is maintained through habit and adoration, the American system also perpetuates voluntary servitude both subconsciously (through custom), and consciously (through adoration). One of the explanations Boétie provides as a reason for the willing subjectivity of citizens concerns how "tyrants, in order to strengthen their power, have made every effort to train their people not only in obedience and servility toward themselves, but also in adoration" (2008, p. 25). This adoration began with the founders, as a result of their intentional disavowal of the rights of minority groups in the Constitution. Not allowing non-white, non-land owning, and non-male individuals to vote or participate in the political process established a hierarchy that legally legitimized the existing class system. In this way, they distinguished themselves from the general public, and situated themselves in positions of power, granting them freedom that citizens would inevitably covet. This intentional act of self-aggrandizement, coupled with the growing stability of the hierarchy structures, cemented the idea of nationalism in America.

Boétie describes voluntary servitude as a type of theoretical slavery; a system where one willingly submits themselves to promote and maintain the power of the tyrant.

However, he does not describe the actions that constitute “servitude”. The lack of a concrete example of servitude complicates the ability to apply Boétie’s definition to the American system. Boétie demonstrates his understanding of servitude as a type of required obedience; yet his consistent conflation of servitude with slavery indicates a more extreme understanding of the concept. Despite Boétie’s hyperbolic diction, his idea of slavery, like his idea of servitude, is consistent with the concept of obedience; specifically, obedience at the partial expense of one’s own autonomy. This dichotomy is explained by psychologist, Erich Fromm, who describes the different forms of obedience in order to exemplify the varying degrees of which an individual can exercise their free will. In situations where individuals allow their autonomy to be superseded by the will of someone other than themselves, Fromm assigns the term “heteronomous obedience,” which, he considered it to be a form of submission (2010, p. 7). Conversely, obedience according to one’s own reason or conviction is a type of affirmation that was given the term “autonomous obedience” by Fromm.

Using Fromm’s ideas in the current context, his concept of heteronomous obedience is equivalent to Boétie’s concept of voluntary servitude. Fromm’s qualifications of obedience go to validate Boétie’s understanding of customary voluntary servitude through his proposed concept of “authoritarian conscience” as an extension of heteronomous obedience. Fromm elaborates by writing from a first-person perspective, stating: “Authoritarian conscience is still obedience to a power outside of myself, even though this power has been internalized. Consciously I believe that I am following my conscience; in effect, however, I have swallowed the principles of power” (Fromm, 2010, p. 8). Similar to the philosophies of Boétie and Fromm about this topic, philosopher

David Hume (1777), describes one of his principles, supporting the idea that individuals practice servitude through obedience out of habit and adoration, stating:

Nothing appears more surprising to those who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye, than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few; and the implicit submission, with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers...Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. It is therefore, my opinion only that government is founded; and this maxim extends to the most despotic and military governments, as well as to the most free and most popular (p. 38).

As these ideas relate to the American system, the concept of the authoritarian conscience can be heavily attributed to the sense of American nationalism established early, during the nation's formative years. Furthermore, Fromm's concepts contribute a better understanding as to *why* Americans maintain their positions of submission, yet falls short of explaining *how* they are submitting, or what this submission practically looks like in America.

In accordance with Baruch Spinoza's concept of servitude, the idea of voluntary servitude should be considered in terms of the many reasons citizens might acquiesce in the system. Miguel Abensour interprets Spinoza's explanation of servitude as a concept that should be measured by degrees, and likens this servitude to the concept of obedience to establish how it is "neither entirely voluntary nor entirely forced, but the point where the two intersect" (Abensour, 2015, paragraph 15, as cited in Read, 2018). Abensour identifies the forms in which servitude can present itself, describing the way in which it can be passive, as a "result from fatigue or indifference," or active (in the way that

Boétie's concept of servitude originates from action) (2015, para. 15). Similar to Boétie, Spinoza provides a set of caveats which he believes might justify one's decision to voluntarily serve a sovereign. He lists, "fear of punishment, hope of reward, love of country or the impulse of some other passion," as reasons citizens would act according to the benefit of a sovereign power, as opposed to their own (TTP, p. 209). Spinoza's ideal society promotes the equal exchange of respect between a sovereign and their citizens, which is why Spinoza emphasizes the role of free will, even through an individual's decision to participate in servitude.

This concept of servitude, comparable to Fromm's concept of heteronomous autonomy, is explained on the same page of Spinoza's *Treatise*, where he notes that the willing decisions of individuals might not be made for their personal benefit; instead, it might be influenced by the will of the state (TTP, p. 209). Through this quote, Spinoza illustrates his philosophical similarity to Boétie, by emphasizing his understanding of free will. Furthermore, his quote establishes the extent of which he values free will in any form of society, emphasizing its presence and importance even in situations that inherently lack free will.

In addition to these specific factors, Spinoza's *Treatise* demonstrates the plethora of other factors existing within a state that might contribute to an individual's willing compliance under the system of voluntary servitude. His inability to identify a sole reason for which a nation of citizens might choose submission is exhibited through his quote concerning the mystery of despotism, which states:

It may indeed be the highest secret of monarchical government and utterly essential to it, to keep men deceived ... so that they will fight for their servitude

as if they were fighting for their own deliverance, and will not think it humiliating but supremely glorious to spill their blood and sacrifice their lives for the glorification of a single man. (Spinoza, 2007, p. 6)

Expanding on his brief recognition of religion as a significant cause, Spinoza exemplifies a better understanding of the complexity of voluntary servitude through the provision of the story of Moses and the Hebrews. This story is discussed to demonstrate Spinoza's understanding that a myriad of circumstances must exist to influence a nation into embracing the concept of servitude, voluntarily.

Spinoza openly acknowledges the connection between theocracy and voluntary servitude due to his theory, which briefly acknowledged the possibility of religion as a significant driving force. This form of governance demonstrates Boétie's hypothesis of voluntary servitude as being driven by citizens' adoration of a higher power. Utilizing the example of Moses and his position as a liaison, or representative of God, for the Hebrews, Spinoza demonstrates his understanding of voluntary servitude as a concept driven by servitude, rather than obedience. Moses was able to obtain the trust of the Hebrews as a messenger of God's, eventually serving as an intermediary, of whom was entrusted with the authority to appropriately extend the words and wishes of the God who the Hebrews unreservedly devoted themselves to.

This type of relationship (between Moses and the Hebrews) establishes a form of association in-between the concepts of democracy and obedience which Miguel Abensour writes about in his interpretation of Spinoza's words, exemplifying how Moses was able to "internalize constraint" through his introduction of religion to the republic (Abensour, 2015, para. 38). He also asserts that Moses was able to obtain his power

driven by his substitution of devotion for fear, rather than one of hope for fear. In this way, Abensour reformulates the concept of voluntary servitude to fit Spinoza's perception, labeling the actions of the Hebrews as "becoming-voluntary of servitude," which can be understood as "the point at which a lived, and even coerced situation, becomes actively embraced" (Abensour, 2015; Read, 2018). In the context of American democracy, this type of devotion is emblematic of the nation's sense of nationalism. The citizens accept the terms of government, and even praise it, because of the ability of the founders to establish a new form of government that was favorable in contrast to the British monarchy. However, this trust began to present itself as devotion when the citizens allowed themselves to be subject to the rules of the Constitution that they had little to no influence over and kept them submissive and responsible to a government that they had little to no influence over.

Edmund Burke

A key critic of democracy was philosopher, Edmund Burke, as he understood democracy as a stepping stone for dictatorship. Burke's philosophy, due to his criticism of democracy, is a great point of comparison for American democracy. This is because he viewed populist democracies as too idealistic and criticized the inclusion of equality, believing it to be an unnatural sect of society. The forced equality under the representative democracy would only provoke tyranny. It would also transfer any existing hierarchical power to whichever group could take advantage of the system, essentially, reestablishing the elites. Because of this, Burke criticizes all democracies, believing them to be the most effective at encouraging individualism. Burke makes his philosophy clear by asserting that men's will and inclinations should be controlled and thwarted,

respectively (Burke, 1987p. 52). He follows this by clarifying, “This can only be done by a power out of themselves; and not ... subject to that will and to those passions ... In this sense the restraints on men, as well as their liberties, are to be reckoned among their rights.” These statements are indicative of his beliefs on voluntary servitude.

Furthermore, Burke’s assertions, though they are not fully applicable to American democracy, assist in the identification of the American system’s weaknesses. This is beneficial because it provides an essential understanding of the in terms of how it relates to voluntary servitude, both theoretically and pragmatically, allowing for an ease in understanding the many flaws of the American system that might leave it susceptible to voluntary servitude.

IV. Voluntary Servitude in America

America's susceptibility to voluntary servitude can be accredited to the founders' institution of an electoral system, as it was not impervious to the ambitions that James Madison sought to avoid. Author, Bülent Diken (2021), recognizes this flaw in the democratic structure, asserting that "other forms of government can be 'perfected' towards democracy, democracy itself can only be corrupted or perverted towards other forms of governments" (p. 56). Prior to, and during, the Constitutional convention, the debate around the structure of government contributed to strong opinions about the appropriate system that would best foster their ideals, (specifically, concerning political participation and representation). The ideas of the Enlightenment influenced the system that propelled the government's construction, contributing to the decision to establish a representative democracy. Despite the checks in place to prevent abuses of authority, the elected officials in America were still capable of facilitating the system of voluntary servitude because they still had the ability to govern like tyrants.

Ambitions and Abuses

Should the public find their Representatives insufficient at voicing the concerns and acknowledging the needs of their constituents, citizens are allowed the right to protest; serving as an alternative approach to uphold their influence on the government. Even with these freedoms, the public is not guaranteed an auspicious outcome. Furthermore, they are only allowed the ability to protest according to the rules of the government; therefore, they remain subject to authority even through their attempt to challenge components of this authority. They have no true ability to challenge this system, until they become a part of the system. Their only alternative is to leave.

Dr. John P. McCormick acknowledges the potential for abuse among those in power and suggests the use of direct democracy as a solution, stating, “The insatiable appetite of elites to dominate necessitates popular participation that transcends the politics of elections and is not only active but also antagonistic” (McCormick, 2011, p. 264).¹⁸ Furthermore, McCormick establishes his dissent against the authority of representative legislators, by advocating for the empowerment of the citizenry, as individuals, as he believes they are “at risk for domination” in the deliberative processes (p. 271). These criticisms bolster the argument that legislators can adopt tyrannical habits, given the power to do so, ultimately, demonstrating the way these representatives can evolve to fit the description of tyrannical figures described by Boétie in his *Discourse*.

Alongside Dr. McCormick, Dr. Ian Shapiro holds a similar opinion that democracy’s legitimacy is based on its ability to prevent abuses of authority. Shapiro supports the concept of popular participation as the ideal form of political participation. This is clarified through his claim that democratic participation should “strengthen the hands of those whose basic interests are vulnerable in particular settings” (2003, p. 147). With this statement, Shapiro not only establishes his preference for inclusive political participation, but he also demonstrates his belief that political participation works best when decisions are made on a case-by-case basis according to the interests of the affected individuals or groups (p. 53).

Through elections, citizens enable those who are already in power with the ability to remain in power. Additionally, the concept of the American dream provides citizens

¹⁸ McCormick’s concept of ‘popular participation’ is similar to that of direct democracy. Also known as ‘public participation’, which includes “any process that directly engages the public in decision-making and gives full consideration to public input in making that decision.” (See “Public participation guide,” 2022).

with something to aspire to, or work towards. This dream is achieved through capitalist ideas; those of which further legitimize the hierarchical class system. As citizens work to advance themselves to the proximity of those at the top, they participate in and maintain the system that further benefits the individuals already in power. The accounts of both Dr. McCormick, and Dr. Shapiro are essential to the understanding of the benefits and detriments of ‘democracy’, as the founders understood it. Additionally, their analyses of democracy’s disadvantages are comparable to the failings of voluntary servitude, further establishing the connection between voluntary servitude and American democracy.

Both McCormick and Shapiro provide examples of political participation, in opposition to the representative form of democracy in America, to demonstrate the forms of government that would excel as alternatives to the preventative measures put in place by the founders. Furthermore, their ideas bolster my argument that the American approach to representative democracy is susceptible to the unpredictable ambitions of leaders who might abuse their authority. In Boétie’s *Discourse*, elected officials are also considered to be tyrants because they possess the power and ambition, as well as the support of their constituency, to support their objectives. Boétie acknowledges that elected leaders are “more bearable,” but expresses his remaining criticism, stating:

They are always intriguing to convert the election into a hereditary despotism [and] surpass other tyrants ... in cruelty, because they find no other means to impose this new tyranny than by tightening control and removing their subjects so far from any notion of liberty that even if the memory of it is fresh it will soon be eradicated. (Boétie, 2008, p. 21)

These tyrannical elected officials differ from Boétie's original concept of tyrants because the elected leaders govern with the immediate support of the electorate. In America, this aspect of voluntary servitude is not negative; however, the ability of democracy to mirror the system of voluntary servitude does not conform with the original ideals of American governance.

How do Americans participate in voluntary servitude?

Nationalism

In a fully developed state like America, voluntary servitude that is influenced by adoration can present itself through nationalism. Serving as my second example of voluntary servitude's realization through the American system, the concept of nationalism in America functions in the same way as the concept of adoration in Boétie's examples of tyranny. Specifically, in America, this nationalism is perpetuated by the idea of the American Dream, which promises freedom and security in exchange for the hard work of citizens.¹⁹ This dream attracts individuals willing to assist in the formation of structures that reinforce the strength and legitimacy of the government. As the nation evolved, the open adoration for America was normalized, effectively instilling a sense of nationalism in all future generations, ultimately illustrating one of the many ways that the American system perpetuates the illusion of American exceptionalism.

Political scientist, Saul Newman, identifies this similarity through his description of modern democracy as "voluntary servitude on a mass scale" (Newman, 2010, pp. 3-5). He asserts that democracy acts in a similar form to voluntary servitude, as it encourages

¹⁹ "The American Dream" is defined as the national ethos of the United States. It is acknowledged according to its concept of 'freedom', which can be understood as the "opportunity to achieve prosperity and success, as well as upward social mobility, by means of hard work in a capitalist society" (See *American Dream* in References).

“mass contentment with powerlessness and a general love of submission.” This description is consistent with Boétie’s “habit” justification of servitude; however, Newman departs from Boétie’s philosophy by denying the existence of an illusion used by the government to maintain support. Furthermore, he denounces the idea that “[citizens] are deceived by elites into thinking they have a genuine say in decision-making,” rejecting Boétie’s “adoration” and “structure/hierarchy” justifications (Newman, pp. 3-5). Newman’s rejection of the two justifications demonstrate a pragmatic understanding of voluntary servitude in systems other than tyranny; however, theoretically, Boétie’s other two justifications are present in and relevant to the structure of America’s government.

The habitual or customary nationalism that results from this normalization is passive and resembles Boétie’s justification of customary/habitual servitude. Alternatively, active nationalism can exist as a result of voluntary servitude, either guided by adoration or maintained through hierarchical class/social structures. Regarding the latter, the hierarchy exists in America through class (economic) systems, e.g., capitalism, and also through social structures. These structures are best understood through the stratification theory of German sociologist, Max Weber, which distinguishes the functions of class, status, and party, to explain the role of power in society. Weber’s philosophy is relevant to the understanding of nationalism’s role in the perpetuation of voluntary servitude because his theories of power dynamics, partially explain why these dynamics influence citizens’ perceptions of a hierarchy and nationalism.

Capitalism

One way that the American execution of servitude presents itself is through capitalism. Serving as an example of Boétie's three justifications, (servitude by habit, adoration, and hierarchy), Americans participate in capitalism because of its indelible position in the American system. Additionally, American citizens lack an alternative. They willingly participate in this society, not necessarily for the benefit of the sovereign, (who, in this case, would be those at the top of the class hierarchy, rather than the political hierarchy), but instead, to maintain and or advance their societal class rank. In terms of America, the citizens' willingness to serve is beneficial for the government, as the support maintains its position and power/authority.

Boétie does acknowledge this concept by criticizing citizens' propensity to subject themselves for profit; however, this concept is best explicated by Belgium writer, Raoul Vaneigem, in his book, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*. Vaneigem asserts that citizens function under this type of subjugation with the aim of potentially growing their own power, thus maintaining, or raising their status in the representational hierarchy. "Slaves are not willing slaves for long" without compensation for their submission, argues Vaneigem (1994, chapter 3, paragraph 1). He continues by clarifying that the reason individuals, ("slaves"), are so eager to be governed is because they are offered access to "a form of initiation [which] is also the medium of exchange of individual sacrifice, and in this sense performs a compensatory function." Vaneigem's statement demonstrates how this servitude is not executed for the sake of the government. Instead, it is influenced by the selfish ambitions of the citizens so that they may elevate themselves in the hierarchy, which indirectly maintains support for the sovereign.

The term voluntary servitude, particularly in a Marxist context, is controversial because the idea of free will is complicated when executed under a system (capitalism) in which a citizen's agency is limited. Writer, J. Read, identifies this Marxist perspective as "a fundamental redefinition of voluntary servitude [where] no longer is it a voluntaristic account of subjection where people could simply choose obedience or freedom, but an account of how people actively embrace what they are compelled to live, actively fighting for what they never simply willed or chose." French philosopher, Frederic Lordon, criticizes Boétie's idea of "voluntary servitude", because he views it as an oxymoron, asserting that it "is doomed to remain an insoluble enigma under the metaphysics of subjectivity" (Lordon, 2014, p. 11). He challenges Boétie's idea of voluntary servitude because of their discrepancies in understanding the concept of free will. He asserts the idea that an individual's volition, should they seek emancipation, would transcend one's willingness (or unwillingness) to remain in servitude.

Lordon (2014) presents his criticism of voluntary servitude by asking the reader: "How can one 'want' to be in a state that is so manifestly undesirable?" He continues by comparing the existence of money to other basic needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter, because they are all similar through their function as necessities. This is done to identify money as "the object of desire," and affiliate domination with employment. On his theoretical hierarchical list of "objects of desire-interest," Lordon positions money at the top of the hierarchy due to its function as a source of dependence for the other items on the list (2014, p. 11). Lordon's quote demonstrates how voluntary servitude, according to Lordon, is not possible because it functions similar to that of an employment relation, (a relation of dominance). This idea is similar to Spinoza's, as both men fail to

understand the “free will” aspect of voluntary servitude; however, Lordon’s conceptualization is important to understanding why citizens might participate in servitude because he associates servitude with capitalism.

The employment relationship, that Lordon (2014) critiques, is linked to capitalism because its existence as a social structure, “configures desires and predetermine the strategies for attaining them,” similar to the way an employer would (p. 12). This is clarified through Lordon’s assertion that the structures “of radical material heteronomy” limit an individual’s desire for biological-material perseverance to a “desire for money, which is in turn narrowed down to the desire to be employed.” This association between voluntary servitude and capitalism elicits a reference to Marxist ideology, as American servitude, understood as a function of capitalism, emulates Marx’s ideas in several ways. Capitalism is an integral function of the American system.

Hierarchical Structure

Citizens willingly and actively partake in servitude when provided evidence that it will benefit them. By witnessing the success and upward mobility of their peers, citizens might attempt to emulate the success of their peers by actively supporting and contributing to the structures that uphold hierarchy in America, rather than simply existing as participants in this servitude. This ambition and greed is described by Miguel Abensour (2011) as a consequence of an economy of rivalry (p. 342). Furthermore, he views this ambition as a prime external cause of [democracy’s] fall into servitude. For an American citizen, the American Dream, (like the idea of social climbing), can only be achieved by their personal advancement at the expense of others. This hierarchy,

maintained by citizens who serve to increase their proximity to a higher authority, creates competition, further perpetuating the hierarchy that elicits voluntary servitude.

Boétie critiques the interconnectedness of this hierarchical structure because it only perpetuates servitude (2008, p. 25). He critiques citizens who attempt to advance their own power in this structure, yet remain subject to a tyrant, as their individual ability to maintain this power is fully contingent on the feelings and actions of the tyrant. Citizens remain subject to the tyrant's authority because their individual success, under the tyrant, directly benefits the tyrant. Citizens who strive to advance their rank in society, through upward mobility, are able to successfully increase their proximity to the tyrant, only at the expense of their peers and anyone under them. Therefore, in navigating the structure, citizens do not necessarily move up, they only push others down; however, this distinction is not relevant to the position of the tyrant, because they only benefit from the successes of those beneath them.

Boétie's depiction of the citizens' repeated attempts to successfully elevate their status and increase their proximity to a sovereign, demonstrates the extent of their free will, as well as the influence of the sovereign without the use of force. For an American citizen, the possibility of advancing their position or power in society is a motivating force strong enough to encourage participation in a system of servitude. Despite the fact that participation does not guarantee an elevated status, the illusion of the American Dream perpetuates the idea that perseverance will prove to be beneficial, ultimately maintaining the support of the people that uphold this hierarchical structure.

Conclusion

The illusory belief that the government for the benefit of its people is subjective, but it remains the idea that sustains nationalism for the American citizens. The national support for the government began with the revolution and was maintained through anti-British rhetoric. By framing the new form of government as a safeguard against the British rule that they fought to escape, the founders were able to establish trust and adoration for the country. With the passing of generations, this earned trust became customary in America. Finally, as America grew, the structures that established the class, political, and social hierarchy solidified, creating a stable system of associations that ultimately work together to maintain the power of the government.

Étienne de La Boétie, the French philosopher who championed these ideas of illusion, habit, and adoration, is persistent in his criticism of the individuals who subject themselves to serve their authority. He qualifies with their reasoning, through consideration of the conditions that might have justified their actions. He acknowledges the reality of situations involving an individual who possesses a distinct form of virtue, bravery, or boldness that appeals to a nation. Furthermore, he expresses an understanding of why the people of this nation might venerate this individual. However, Boétie denounces any inclination of the citizens to grant this individual a position of higher authority because of his belief that this type of authority and role might evolve to be tyrannical, and might establish a position at the top of the hierarchy that will be upheld by the people through their voluntary servitude.

Within the system of voluntary servitude, the preservation of free will is essential to maintain the allegiance of the people. This freedom, however, is an illusion. In the

writings of the American founders, as well as Baruch Spinoza, their ideas of democracy require some preservation of illusion, as they cannot fully grant freedom to the people because of the looming potential threat of tyranny. However, they can neither completely deny freedom to the people. For this reason, they must maintain some form of illusion in order to ensure allegiance and civility from the people. According to French economist, Frédéric Lordon (2014), servitude is a way of “making the dominated happy so that they forget their domination [even though this] is one of the oldest and most effective ruses of the art of ruling” (See ‘Foreword’ in Lordon, 2014). This level of deception is essential for the maintenance of a system of domination, as it leads men to be deceived into believing that they are free.

Understood in the context of the American system, the trust for and dedication to the men who formed the government following the American revolution was justified. Despite this, as the nation progressed, the reasons for the citizens’ adoration evolved, but the justification for their servitude remained the same.

The discrepancy between the idea of American democracy and Étienne de la Boétie’s idea of voluntary servitude exists because the concepts are not compatible enough to be compared according to their notions of power, representation, or leadership. However, the best way to connect the two ideas is through their conceptualization of freedom. Though Boétie’s description of how hierarchies and relationships function under tyranny is notably similar to America’s structure of government, the comparison between freedom under both democracy and voluntary servitude, provides a more compelling association. Understanding that the limits of freedom in America’s system and Boétie’s concept are the same, bolsters the relationship between the two. Moreover,

this connection allows for a better understanding of the reasons that America's democracy so quickly evolved in a manner unintended by the founders, further supporting the idea that voluntary servitude is inevitable under democracy.

References

- Abensour, M. (2011). Democracy against the state: Marx and the Machiavellian movement. Polity.
- Abensour, M. (2015). Spinoza and the thorny question of voluntary servitude. *Asterion*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.4000/asterion.2594>
- Aldrete, G.S. (2021). “Bread and Circuses”: Ancient Rome, Modern Science Fiction, and the Art of Political Distraction. *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 51(2), 4-20. doi:10.1353/flm.2021.0004.
- Boétie, E. D., Rothbard, M. N., & Kurz, H. (2008). *The Politics of Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*. Createspace Independent Pub.
- Bristow, W. (2017). Enlightenment. E. N. Zalta (Ed.), In *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Fall 2017 ed.). Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. Retrieved November 19, 2022, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/enlightenment/>
- Burke, E. (1987). Reflections on the revolution in France. J. G. Pocock (Ed.). Hackett Publishing.
- Carlisle, M. (2021, September 11). How 9/11 radically expanded the power of the U.S. government. Time. <https://time.com/6096903/september-11-legal-history/>
- Carter, I. (2003, February 27). Positive and negative liberty (Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy/Spring 2022 edition). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved August 10, 2022, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/liberty-positive-negative/>

- Corwin, E. S. (1968). *The president: Office and powers 1787 - 1957 ; History and analysis of practice and opinion.*
- Democracy. (n.d.). Council of Europe - COMPASS, Manual for Human Rights Education with Young people. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/democracy>
- Diken, B. (2021). Neo-despotism as anti-despotism. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 38(4), 47-69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276420978289>
- Femia, J. V. (2001). *Against the masses: Varieties of anti-democratic thought since the French Revolution.* OUP Oxford.
- Fromm, E. (2010). *On disobedience: Why Freedom Means Saying "No" to power.* HarperCollins.
- Hamilton, A. (n.d.). From Alexander Hamilton to Gouverneur Morris, 19 May 1777. Founders Online. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-01-02-0162>. [Original source: *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 1, 1768–1778, ed. Harold C. Syrett. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961, pp. 254–256.]
- Hamilton, A., Madison, J., & Jay, J. (1991). *The Federalist Papers* [EBook #18]. Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg.
- Hume, D. (1777). *Essays Moral, Political, Literary (LF ed.)*. E. F. Miller (Ed.). Liberty Fund. <https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/hume-essays-moral-political-literary-lf-ed>
- Hunter, L. (2011, October 30). Why James Madison Was Wrong About A Large Republic. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lawrencehunter/2011/10/30/why-james-madison-was-wrong-about-a-large-republic/?sh=13c9b4b12449>

- Klikauer, T. (2016). Spinoza and Marx on desire and management. *WorkingUSA*, 19(4), 553-561. <https://doi.org/10.1111/wusa.12260>
- Locke, J. (1690). Of the Beginning of Political Societies. In C. B. McPherson (Ed.), *The Second treatise on civil government* (Sect. 119-22). Hackett Publishing Company.
- Lordon, F. (2014). *Willing slaves of capital: Spinoza and Marx on desire*. Verso Books.
- McCormick, J. P. (2011). *Machiavellian democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mekouar, D. (2021, January 24). Today's democracy isn't exactly what wealthy US founding fathers envisioned. VOA.
https://www.voanews.com/a/usa_all-about-america_todays-democracy-isnt-exactly-what-wealthy-us-founding-fathers-envisioned/6201097.html
- Newman, S. (2021). Power, freedom and obedience in Foucault and la Boétie: Voluntary servitude as the problem of government. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 39(1), 123-141. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764211024333>
- Pabst, A. (2015). Is liberal democracy sliding into 'Democratic despotism'? *The Political Quarterly*, 87(1), 91-95. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923x.12209>
- Packer, J. I. (2001). *Concise theology: A guide to historic Christian beliefs*. Tyndale House Publishers.
- Public participation guide: Introduction to public participation. (2022, February 17). US EPA.
<https://www.epa.gov/international-cooperation/public-participation-guide-introduction-public-participation#:~:text=Public%20participation%20can%20be%20any,input%20in%20making%20that%20decision>

- Read, J. (2018, July 19). How voluntary is your servitude? Voluntary servitude from la Boétie to Marx. *Unemployed Negativity*, Blogger.
<https://www.unemployednegativity.com/2018/07/how-voluntary-is-your-servitude.html>
- Scullion, B. (2022, October 25). Involuntary servitude and the Constitution. Constitution of the United States.
<https://constitutionus.com/constitution/rights/involuntary-servitude-and-the-constitution/>
- Shapiro, I. (2003). The state of democratic theory.
- Spinoza, B. D. (2004). *A Theologico-Political Treatise and a Political Treatise* (F. Cordasco, & R. H. M. Elwes, Trans.). Dover Philosophical Classics.
- Spinoza, B. (2007). *Theological-Political Treatise* (M. Solverthorne, Trans.). J. Israel (Ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Steinberg, J. (2008). Spinoza's political philosophy. E. N. Zalta (Ed.), In *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Summer 2022 ed.). Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. Retrieved May 14, 2022, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/spinoza-political/>
- Tim, "La Boétie: Discourse on Voluntary Servitude, April 19, 2013," *Philosophy & Philosophers*, 2013.
- Tocqueville, A. D. (2002). Democracy in America, Volumes One and Two by Alexis de Tocqueville (H. Reeve, Trans.). Pennsylvania State University.
- Vaneigem, R. (1994). *The revolution of everyday life*. Left Bank Books.

Wikipedia contributors. (2022, November 18). American Dream. Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Dream

Wolin, S. S. (2008). Democracy incorporated: Managed democracy and the specter of inverted totalitarianism. Princeton University Press.

Appendix

According to Hunter, James Madison established these restrictions by extending the republic's size to encompass both many people and much territory, exactly the opposite of the received political wisdom of his day. (See Hunter, 2011)

Madison's quote in Federalist No. 10 provides a brief explanation of his goals for the developing nation. Madison states:

The smaller the society, the fewer probably will be the distinct parties and interests composing it; the fewer the distinct parties and interests, the more frequently will a majority be found of the same party; and the smaller the number of individuals composing a majority, and the smaller the compass within which they are placed, the more easily will they concert and execute their plans of oppression. Extend the sphere, and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests; you make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens; or if such a common motive exists, it will be more difficult for all who feel it to discover their own strength, and to act in unison with each other. (Madison, 1991, Federalist No. 10)

Hunter also references James Madison's ideas in Federalist No. 51, as part of his dissent. Federalist 51 states:

The insecurity of rights under the popular form of government within such narrow limits would be displayed by such reiterated oppressions of factious majorities, that some power altogether independent of the people would soon be called for by the voice of the very factions whose misrule had proved the necessity of it. In the extended republic of the United States, and among the great

variety of interests, parties, and sects which it embraces, a coalition of a majority of the whole society could seldom take place on any other principles than those of justice and the general good; whilst there being thus less danger to a minor from the will of a major party, there must be less pretext, also, to provide for the security of the former, by introducing into the government a will not dependent on the latter, or, in other words, a will independent of the society itself. It is no less certain than it is important, notwithstanding the contrary opinions which have been entertained, that the larger the society, provided it lie within a practical sphere, the more duly capable it will be of self-government. (Madison, 1991, Federalist No. 51)