An Apprenticeship for Life in Common:  
Jean Jaurès on Social Democracy and the Modern Republic  

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Social Democracy as a Republican Moment  
The standard version of the story of the republican political tradition begins in classical Greece and Rome, continues with the Renaissance and the revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and then stops abruptly either at the end of the eighteenth century\(^1\) or in the first third of the nineteenth.\(^2\) A reader of much recent scholarship on republican political thought might be forgiven for thinking that this tradition received no further development in the political life of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and exists now only as an intellectual artifact reconstructed by historians and political theorists. This story is incomplete. I aim to contribute here, in a small way, to its fuller telling. But to rediscover the way republican ideas have been used in the more recent past is not only a matter of getting history right. It is also a means of developing a more useful political theory for our times.

The consequences of founding a contemporary republican argument on a truncated history are evident in the work of Philip Pettit.\(^3\) Because Pettit derives his influential argument about non-domination from republican writers of the early modern era, Pettit’s republicanism falls silent when confronted with problems that have appeared since then, in the era of

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capitalism. A partial list of the new political problems of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries would include widening material inequality, the dissolution of old forms of community, and the difficulty of meaningful political participation. Pettit’s argument about non-domination contains little room for concepts of equality and community, except as modifiers for or characteristics of freedom. Pettit does argue that republican freedom is best achieved as equal freedom, and as a common good, but equality and community with regard to anything other than freedom—for instance, what Pettit calls “material egalitarianism”—are out of the question. Pettit’s dependence on the horizon of his early-modern republican sources also restricts him from grappling substantively with problems of political participation. Pettit offers a categorical distinction between institutional concerns (which he claims as the province of the “neo-Roman” republicanism he inherits from his seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources) and a concern with participation and civic virtue (which he ascribes to a rival “neo-Athenian” form of republicanism). Whether contemporary republicanism might need to ask questions about the latter set of concerns, or whether the two sets of concerns are mutually exclusive in the first place, are not possibilities Pettit has positioned himself to consider.

To reconstruct a fully modern republicanism, it will be helpful to attend to moments when republican ideas have been put to work in political life within the more recent past—in particular, moments when thinkers and movements on the left have taken up and refashioned republican themes. Pettit’s republicanism involves only a shallow account of equality, community, and the civic virtue learned through participation, but these concerns, I will argue, have received more adequate treatment by republicans on the left within the past two centuries.

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4 Ibid., p. 110-126.
In particular, I will look here at a republican moment that occurred just over a century ago: the emergence of social democracy at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Between the 1890s and the First World War, a new way of thinking about politics developed within the “reformist” wings of the socialist and labor parties of the industrialized countries. This new way of thinking led to the political position that has come to be called social democracy. Social democracy effected its differentiation from previous socialist thought and politics in part because at its point of origin social democracy drew not only on the Marxism that had informed nineteenth-century socialism, but also on the republican tradition. What matters here for republican theory today is that social democracy’s founding rested on elements of the republican tradition different from those on which Pettit draws. A contemporary republican theory that attends to the social democratic republican moment might discover intellectual resources useful in supplementing the valuable but limited republican inheritance with which Pettit presents us.

For anyone who wants to explore the social democratic republican moment, no figure is more useful than the French scholar and politician who was arguably the most prominent exponent of reformist socialism in the first years of the twentieth century: Jean Jaurès. Jaurès made justice the central normative principle of his republicanism. For Jaurès, republican justice was the reconciliation of the co-equal principles of freedom and solidarity—or, more precisely if less elegantly, non-domination and non-loneliness—and entailed a commitment to a robust

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material egalitarianism. Jaurès’s intellectual debt to the republican tradition was not exclusively in the area of normative ideas, however. Indeed, Jaurès argued that the decisive question for political life should not be the question of ends—that is, norms of justice—but of political “method” or means, and he called accordingly for a socialist reformism defined by its commitment to mixing the class conflict and the common good. Jaurès offered an account of the plausibility of this reformist method by refashioning, for a modern context, the classical republican insight that political institutions and civic consciousness act on one another reciprocally.

In what follows I will briefly introduce the reader to Jaurès and will then reconstruct the argument of the book he published three years before his assassination—the only book-length exposition of his political ideas that he ever completed, showing how Jaurès drew on the republican tradition to develop ideas about justice, sociality, reform, and political education.

Jean Jaurès and Republicanism

Born in southern France in 1859, Jaurès graduated from the École normale supérieure in 1881 and was elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1885 with the support of the local republican club in Toulouse, where he was at the time a professor of philosophy in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. After losing his re-election bid in 1889, he earned a doctorate in philosophy from the Sorbonne. Returned to the Chamber in 1892 from the strike-torn coal-mining town of Carmaux, Jaurès aligned himself with the Chamber’s small socialist caucus. A talented orator and writer, he rose to prominence a few years later with his advocacy of Alfred Dreyfus.

Between 1898 and 1905, socialists in France and throughout Europe divided into “reformist” and “revolutionary” factions. First within France and then within the Socialist

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8 Biographical information on Jaurès in this section is drawn from Goldberg.
International, Jaurès became one of the leading proponents of socialist reformism. Jaurès argued—in his journalism and topical essays, some of which were collected in his 1901 *Études socialistes*, in various speeches, and in the multivolume *Histoire socialiste, 1789-1900* which he edited and which began publication in 1900—that socialism inherited the project of previous republican movements. Where previous generations of republicans had confronted monarchy and the overweening power of the Church, republicans in the twentieth century would need to confront the power of capital and the threat of aggressive war. Jaurès proposed that French socialists see their immediate political activity not as preparation for the revolutionary overthrow of existing republic institutions, but as an ongoing effort to deepen and extend republican politics. The emergence of this new reformist socialism out of the frustrations of nineteenth-century revolutionary dreams, Jaurès suggested, was a political moment that demanded the retrieval and reconstruction of republican ideas.

Jaurès’s social democratic republicanism was thus an alternative to the revolutionary socialisms of leaders in his generation such as Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue in France or Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg in Germany. When he argued against anti-patriotism or for an appreciation of the consequences of political institutions, Jaurès broke with many who had in the 1880s and 1890s been his comrades. Just as significantly, Jaurès’s position was distinct from that of radical republicans and radical-socialists of the center-left like Léon Bourgeois and Camille Pelletan. There were several currents within the republican mainstream during the era of France’s Third Republic, but one idea shared by most French republicans during the Third Republic was a certainty that class conflict and the pursuit of the common good were incompatible. Solidarity for the radicals meant harmonious cohabitation of the classes within the political architecture of

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9 By 1904, the term “Jaurèsism” was used, even outside France, to describe reformism. See Daniel DeLeon, *Flashlights of the Amsterdam Congress* (New York: New York Labor News, 1904).
For Jaurès, in contrast, solidarity meant a commitment to the reconstruction of the Republic through class conflict—albeit a class conflict made peaceful by adherence to republican norms and legal by the extension of republican institutions into the economic sphere.

Nowhere is Jaurès’s relationship with the republican tradition more decisive for his political thought, and nowhere does he more directly contribute to the development of a modern politics in a republican idiom, than in his 1911 book *L’Armée nouvelle* (“The New Army”).11 Here, Jaurès proposes that France replace its professional standing army with a citizen militia.12 What is of interest today is not Jaurès’s policy proposal itself but the way Jaurès used the occasion of this proposal to develop a social-democratic extension of republican thought.

**Moral Force in the New Army**

The premise of Jaurès’s argument in *L’Armée nouvelle* is republican in a sense that political theorists today will immediately recognize. Working by analogy with older forms of republicanism, Jaurès argues that opposition to domination of one kind ought to entail opposition to domination of other kinds. Here is a characteristic summation:

> To revolt against the despotism of kings or the tyranny of bosses and capital and then to submit passively to the yoke of conquest and the domination of foreign militarism would be a contradiction so childish, so miserable, that at the first sign of it all one’s reason and instinct alike should rise up and sweep away the very notion.13

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13 AN, pp. 361-362. (All translations from Jaurès here are my own.)
Monarchy, capitalism, and lack of national self-government are objectionable on the same grounds, and those who object to any of these threats should object to all of them, Jaurès suggests. Throughout *L’Armée nouvelle*, Jaurès insists that socialists ought to be concerned with national defense, just as they ought to be resolute defenders of the republic against monarchy, and that all republicans ought to seek a method of securing national defense compatible with republican principles and aims. The bulk of *L’Armée nouvelle* is a detailed defense of a citizen militia—or, to use the French term, a “nation in arms” (*nation armée*)—based in part on the Swiss model. But for Jaurès, the idea of a militia “will not be an isolated fact [but] will necessarily be part of a comprehensive program of social policy” reforms.\(^{15}\)

Jaurès’s militia proposal is as follows.\(^{16}\) Every able-bodied male citizen between the ages of 20 to 34 would be assigned to a local unit corresponding to his place of residence. Each citizen-soldier would spend six months in barracks-based training, and would attend eight three-week training periods spread out over the remainder of his fourteen years of service, in addition to occasional voluntary local marching and rifle-practice. Men from the ages of 35-45 would have less rigorous military duties. No more than one third of the officers could be career soldiers, extensive provision would be made to ensure that men of all classes had opportunities for training and promotion to the officer ranks, and officer training would be housed within the liberal arts and sciences faculties, rather than in separate military academies.

The particular attractiveness of this proposal for Jaurès’s fellow socialists, he proposes, is that a popular army would not have its own institutional interests separate from those of the labor movement. A militia in which workers numbered among the soldiers and among the officers

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\(^{15}\) AN, p. 358.

\(^{16}\) The proposal is summarized on AN, pp. 549-557.
would not be prone to illiberal conspiracies in the manner of the Dreyfus Affair, and would be reluctant to fire on striking workers. Moreover, a militia composed largely of men in their later twenties and early thirties, organized in local units, would be ill-suited to any but defensive wars. Such men, whose lives would be dense with “bonds of affection”—toward families, friends, neighbors, fellow union members—would be more likely to resist deployment in a war of “conquest and pillage” than would be rootless youths or members of a centralized national army.

As concerned as he was with labor’s stake in the militia model, Jaurès seems most interested in the advantages of a militia system for the nation as a whole. The fundamental problem with the existing professional army, Jaurès argues, was that it weakened France’s defenses. The professionalized “active” army was not only cut off from the life of the nation—sequestered in its barracks, governed by an officer corps with distinct sensibilities and interests—but was also too small to resist the massive army of Germany, France’s most likely enemy. Moreover, Jaurès argues, the so-called “active” army was in fact passively obedient and dispirited. Its soldiers could handle weapons or move in formation with a certain “sterile formalism.” But those basic soldierly skills could be learned in a few months, and the years of barracks life to which active duty soldiers were assigned, in which basic skills were drilled endlessly, had no purpose but to reduce soldiers to machines containing no “mechanism to confront the questions of life and death that the ever-changing drama of combat poses to combatants.”

The fundamental question in the design of military institutions, Jaurès proposes, is the kind of education that different institutions provide to soldiers—and, thus, to citizens.

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17 AN, pp. 344-358.
18 AN, p. 45-46.
19 AN, p. 24.
Here is the heart of Jaurès’s argument about the efficacy of the new army. By limiting training in military skills to an initial period of three months and then refreshing those skills in three-week training periods every few years thereafter, the new army would allow the citizen-soldier to live primarily as a citizen, and to receive the moral education of civilian life as well as the skill-training of a soldier. Thus the new army would have a kind of power unavailable to the old, a power invisible to those who think about politics in terms unsuitable for republican life.

Just as minds shaped by the habits of life under a monarchy can recognize the majesty of power only when it is concentrated in a family or in a man…so minds shaped by our military tradition can recognize the power of the army only in a distinct, self-directing, self-contained institution…Just as there is no power more majestic than law that gives form to the will of all, so there is no army so strong and brilliant, so able to give moral authority and full respect to leaders who are truly in harmony with it, as one that is the nation itself, passionately committed to its independence and organized for its own defense.20

The French Republic would remain insufficiently republican, Jaurès suggests, as long as the army failed to recognize that its greatest potential power would be drawn from impassioned and organized citizens.

The enemy against which Jaurès directs his argument in L’Armée nouvelle is, above all, the model of military organization developed by Napoléon Bonaparte. The Napoleonic model—a large, professionalized, centralized army designed for offensive strategies—represented, Jaurès writes, “a compromise between the Roman monarchical tradition and the French Revolution” but with the latter “reduced to being no longer a principle, but merely an energy than can be subordinated and made use of.”21 The Napoleonic model adopts some distinctively modern techniques of mobilization and organization, techniques derived from the French Revolution, Jaurès writes, but it rejects the best fruits of the Revolution. The “boldest and most sweeping” innovation of the republican moment within the French Revolution was that it attempted at the

20 AN, p. 39.
21 AN, p. 101.
same time “to inspire passion and also to impose discipline throughout a mass of combatants, through the power and the enthusiasm of an idea.” That idea was “the great love of the Republic, the great enthusiasm for liberty and for human dignity.” Napoleonic soldiers might be effective, up to a point, but they shared neither passion nor idea with one another, or with those who directed their activity.  

22 A Napoleonic army might achieve a certain level of “military force,” but it would lack “moral force.”  

23 “Moral force” Jaurès writes, is the power that appears when “all souls thrill to a common will.”  

24 Although Jaurès does not use the term “civic virtue,” he seems to have in mind something analogous to that old republican idea. Like civic virtue, Jaurès’s “moral force” is a characteristic of citizens, not of institutions. It is an interior capacity that manifests in action. It flows from citizens up (or out) to the political community, rather than down (or in) to citizens from the community’s leaders. Jaurès is careful to point out that the moral force with which he is concerned must be “summed up and concentrated in an idea.”  

25 It has a component that can be described with words like emotion, passion, or inspiration—but for a society imbued with a modern “spirit of autonomy,” Jaurès writes, the appropriate moral force is one that is also subject to intellectual appropriation, and thus to critique.  

Moral force makes possible an effective national defense, Jaurès argues. The merely military force of a Napoleonic army, Jaurès fears, will not be sufficient to defend France against an attack by Germany’s larger army. This would be true above all given the Fabian military strategy Jaurès recommends in the event of an invasion. An invading army, he proposes, should be allowed to gain French territory. Local militias would constantly harass the invading army, but

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22 AN, p. 85.  
23 AN, p. 1.  
24 AN, p. 8.  
25 AN, p. 9.
would avoid decisive battles until the time and place were right for the “nation in arms” to mass itself and strike. This strategy would, no doubt, require incredible patience and solidarity on the part of militia members and civilians alike. A large and well-equipped army that lacked moral force might conceivably win a conventional offensive war. But only an army and a populace with redoubtable moral force could follow as pure a defensive strategy as Jaurès recommends.

Loneliness as Injustice

But how, in a modern society, was such moral force to arise? Not in the ways possible in pre-modern societies. The method of military organization (or, more broadly, of social and political organization) used by “monarchies and oligarchies, governments of brutality and plunder” is to demand mechanical obedience, Jaurès writes. But the hallmark of the modern era is a “new spirit of autonomy.” Through the political activity of the labor movement, Jaurès writes, this spirit has worked its way into the economic system, albeit in partial and gradual ways. As it does so, Jaurès writes, “all social relations and all institutions will be transformed, step by step.” The consequence: “It is not possible to impose the old forms of obedience, discipline, and patriotism on men who now demand full political and social liberty.”

The moral force of a modern republic cannot come, thus, from the old sources: traditional hierarchies, religion, the glory won by rulers. Modern patriotism has a subtler source and more radical political implications. The moral force of the modern patrie, Jaurès writes, is “inseparable from organic habits, from the manner of speaking, looking, walking, smiling, thinking, from the countless memories, happy or sad, by which the life of each person in a human group, at once

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26 AN, pp. 140-141.
27 Condemnation of offensive war was a staple of socialist party platforms in Jaurès’s era. See Joll, p. 112.
28 AN, p. 47.
29 AN, p. 7.
30 AN, pp. 10-11.
delimited and vast, is mixed with the life of all.”31 Common public life is what constitutes the patrie, for Jaurès. A society without traditional means of instilling a common will cannot achieve the “tremendous surge of shared passion” that would be required for a militia defense “without a foundation of common experiences formed in the imperceptible depths of consciousness through many days of familiarity.”32 Only “by shared environments, the community of language, of work and of festivals, by all the turns of thought and feeling common to all the individuals within a group, under the multiple influences of nature, history, climate, religion, war, or art” are people made into citizens of a common patrie.33

But this shared public life is not to be taken for granted. In a passage remarkable because it is one of the few autobiographical moments in his published works, Jaurès writes:

I remember that it was about thirty years ago when I arrived in Paris, just a youth. Alone in the immense city one winter night, I was overcome by a sort of fear for society. I thought I saw thousands upon thousands passing each other by without recognition, an uncountable crowd of lonely ghosts unmoored from all human connections. And I wondered with a sort of impersonal dread how all these beings accepted the unequal distribution of good and ill, how the enormous social structure did not crumble and fall. I saw no chains on their hands or feet, and I said to myself: by what marvel do these thousands of suffering and harrowed individuals endure all this? Of course I could not see: the chain was on the heart, but a chain the burden of which the heart itself could not feel. Thought was bound, but by a bond that it did not know. Life had imprinted its forms in their spirits, and habit had fixed those forms in place. The social system had shaped these men, and in some way it had become their very substance. They did not rebel against reality because they had wrongly identified themselves with it.34

Jaurès has not forgotten his earlier comments about the insuppressible modern “spirit of autonomy;” he goes on to note that some members of this society—most importantly, members of the labor movement—have, “through a prodigious effort of the spirit,” become able to

32 AN, p. 450.
33 AN, pp. 449-450.
34 AN, p. 365.
“glimpse, beneath the present social order, the possibility of a new order.” They, at least, have been emboldened to “rebel against reality.” But the image of the “uncountable crowd of lonely ghosts” remains. The character of the isolated individual appears in a great deal of modern literature and social commentary. Jaurès emphasizes something, however, that not all prophets of modern discontent have noted: namely, a circular relationship between loneliness and inequality. The lonely ghosts are not only “unmoored from all human connections” but also suffering from “the unequal distribution of good and ill.” Loneliness has the inward consequence of rendering individuals less apt to question their social positions, and thus less likely to challenge inequality. Inequality, in turn, makes impossible the genuinely common experiences that ground common feeling. Loneliness also has the outward consequence of undermining the moral force that makes possible effective national defense, and thus republican self-government—or, perhaps, it simply marks the absence of such moral force.

Aside from its consequences, loneliness is, for Jaurès, important in and of itself, because it is an element of or aspect of injustice. He turns briefly to this theme in a later passage.

Even for someone exploited and subjugated, a human group in which he has at least some defined place—some hours of peaceful sleep at the bottom of the palace steps—is worth more than all the world outside, filled with absolute hostility and total insecurity...The slave, says the great Homer, has only half his soul, but even this half he risks losing if he becomes separated from the social milieu where he has at least some shelter, some reciprocal bonds of affection.

To be a slave is to experience injustice, certainly. But to be lonely is also to experience an injustice not reducible to any other. Jaurès does not offer a single name for the state of being not lonely or not isolated—solidarity, socialism, harmony, and justice are all words that occur...

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35 AN, p. 365.
36 Most noteworthy, perhaps, is the resemblance to the idea of *anomie* in the writings of Jaurès’s École normale supérieure classmate and friend, Emile Durkheim, by whom he was influenced and on whom he was, most likely, a reciprocal influence. See Steven Lukes, *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work, A Historical and Critical Study* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1985), pp. 46-48.
37 AN, p. 449.
frequently in Jaurès’s writings and that have, as he uses them, overlapping definitions—but the resonance with the old republican emphasis on the common good, and the older Aristotelean themes of community and friendship, would be hard to miss.

The Method of Reform

Jaurès has made clear that he wants to prevent domination of France by other nations, and thus wants effective national defense. He wants to prevent monarchical, clerical, or capitalist domination within France. And—alongside and not reducible to anything else—he wants to confront the problem of loneliness. For Jaurès, this combination of concerns leads to a politics of socialist reform or social democracy. Early in L’Armée nouvelle he had argued that socialists should support military reform along the lines of the “new army.” In the later chapters of the book, he argues that the idea of the “new army” itself—that is, the idea of effective national defense in the modern era—pointed toward a politics of reformist socialism or social democracy.

Jaurès’s argument about reform has two parts. First, Jaurès draws a policy conclusion from his earlier arguments about moral force and loneliness. If moral force requires common experience, but if a capitalist society tends to render its members “lonely ghosts” by undercutting the possibility of common experience, then there should be public policies that counteract the “despair” of the people by “attenuating their misery.” Accordingly, Jaurès sketches out what later generations would call a welfare state.

Insure the workers against the consequences of illness, unemployment, disability, and old age, so they do not come to the point of going on strike with their hearts already embittered by excessive suffering…Make sure the child of the worker can attend school and remain long enough to gain something that cannot be lost: a hunger for greater knowledge, for a methodical and reflective way of life. By a legal limit on the working day, give workers enough leisure so they can live, as well as the two things that make for serenity and balance: enough family life and enough life out of doors…Give the working

38 AN, pp. 358-359.
masses—too often crammed into slums or exploited by the usury of rents—sufficient and
decent lodging at a price that will not overwhelm them. Institute a minimum wage in all
the household industries...which are like shadowy hollows where ignored miseries, silent
despairs, and implacable grudges accumulate...Add to the schools medical services to
monitor children for the first signs of inherited disabilities, and respond to their effects
with appropriate aid. Fortify, thus, the nervous balance of the working class.\textsuperscript{39}

Much of this is familiar to us. Social insurance, public education, public housing, a
minimum wage, and public health measures have, since Jaurès’s time, become the core of the
policy models pursued by social democratic parties. Notice, however, the purpose implicit in
Jaurès’s policy proposals. The welfare state protects against bitterness, fosters enlightenment,
allows for a life of “serenity and balance,” ends the geographic segregation of the poor.
Exploitative home industries not only generate “miseries” but, just as importantly, hide those
miseries from public view and sympathy. Poor health threatens the “nervous balance” of the
working class. Jaurès is concerned with the exclusion of the working class from wealth and
property largely because this exclusion leads to a kind of moral deprivation. The normative
foundation of Jaurès’s welfare state is a concern with the inner life of the citizen, and above all
with the danger that each person’s inner life might be cut off from the rest. Thus Jaurès
concludes his call for a welfare state by writing:

Let there be not one single soul who feels ignored, lost, condemned by his isolation to a
life of the deadened resignation or furious revolt that add an overflow of anger and built-
up hate to times of crisis. In all the complex life of modern society, let there be not one
miserable and obscure corner where shines no ray of social justice, where penetrates none
of the kindness of society’s mutual obligations, no glimmer of new hope.\textsuperscript{40}

Jaurès makes clear here that he is not envisioning a society in which class has been
abolished or in which a pre-modern simplicity has been recreated. Instead, Jaurès calls for the
amelioration of a particular aspect of injustice that he here calls isolation and that he has
elsewhere referred to as being lonely. His is a characteristically socialist argument in that it traces

\textsuperscript{39} AN, pp. 359-360.
\textsuperscript{40} AN, p. 359.
the roots of injustice to the class divide of a capitalist society, and insists that inclusion in the human community requires some redistribution or socialization of material goods. It is at the same time an argument in a republican idiom in that it places as one of the chief ends of political action what we might call common public life. The amelioration of loneliness, in Jaurès’s argument, is not achieved in private life alone, but rather in the “mutual obligations” of society’s members toward each other, and in the visibility of society’s members to one another. We are to picture society’s members in a shared space filled with light: a city square, perhaps.

At the same time, Jaurès argues that this common public life is a means for eliciting approaches to political action that do not themselves threaten common public life. Common public life, in other words, reinforces itself.

Give the working class confidence in the power of progress through law. Design mechanisms by which it will have access, as a class, as an organized and united collective, to the vast wealth of modernity. Draw a broad, straight path before it...And as the republican nation makes an effort to attain justice, it will be the duty of the working class, in return, to voluntarily organize and discipline itself. It will also be in its interest. It has nothing to gain by putting its protests into a brutal form...Acts of destruction not only have the effect of betraying humanity...but by giving the illusion of immediate power, they also distract the workers from the pursuit of true power, which lies in forming ever larger groups and in taking ever more methodical action.  

As workers are included in the legal rights, material wealth, and common prospects of the nation, Jaurès proposes, their organizations acquire a duty to choose nonviolent methods. In other words, there are pedagogical consequences to the entrance of previously excluded people into a nation’s common public life. Once they have a legal right to organize, once they experience a welfare state and other policies that promote egalitarian redistribution or socialization of wealth, once they share the public spaces of the nation on something like equal terms with members of other classes, workers have something more to lose than their chains. When they had not experienced

\[^{41}\text{AN, p. 360. Emphasis in the original.}\]
common public life, they did not know its value; now that they have experienced it, they realize that they must refrain from disrupting it.

This is not a simply civic pedagogy. Notice that Jaurès introduces three forms of commonality in this passage, and that they come in a sequence from more immediate to more remote. The common political experience of a class that is included in the nation leads to a realization of duty toward humanity. Class and nation appear here as forms of proximate commonality that point beyond themselves toward a commonality that is higher than either, and more difficult to realize. When the labor movement declines to act in “brutal” ways, it is demonstrating its loyalty to humanity. It is also learning that human loyalty in a new way.

Jaurès has made a negative argument here about the duty to refrain from violence. He has also made a positive argument about the alternative to violence that he wants to recommend to the labor movement. In this second argument, he appeals to criteria of effectiveness and plausibility. “True power,” he writes, is based on “methodical action,” the gradual and prosaic project of building mass-membership organizations capable of strikes, demonstrations, election campaigns, and the public argumentation that his generation called “propaganda.”

While this was not a view universally accepted by leftists of Jaurès’s generation—anarchist bomb-throwing was still a recent memory in 1911—it did have wide currency, even among self-styled “revolutionary” socialists. The significant difference between reformist and revolutionary socialists during the two decades prior to the Russian Revolution was not with regard to the choice of tactics, but rather with regard to the estimation of what could be achieved through those tactics. Revolutionaries saw peaceful organization-building as a prelude to a moment of revolutionary crisis that would arrive at some point in the future, prior to which the

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power of the movement would have to be held in reserve, because no power short of the power to make an economic and social revolution could bring significant change to society. For the revolutionaries, socialism was a plan of society to be achieved completely, during a relatively short period of time—but not just yet.\footnote{In the words of German socialist leader Karl Kautsky, nicknamed the “Pope of Marxism,” the party to which he belonged was “a revolutionary party, but not a party that makes revolutions.” (Kautsky, \textit{The Road to Power}, trans. Raymond Meyer [Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1992], p. 34.)} For Jaurès and other reformists, socialism was an ideal to be realized by degrees or a commitment to be worked out steadily, beginning right away and perhaps never achieving fullness. As Jaurès put it in a 1900 speech, socialism should be understood not as a political “paradise” to which entry would be granted in the future but as a political “state of grace” that might ground the labor movement’s daily efforts in the present.\footnote{Jean Jaurès, “Bernstein et l’évolution du méthode socialiste” in \textit{Oeuvres}, ed. Max Bonnafous, vol. 6 (Paris: Rieder, 1939), p. 135.} The great question that divided reformists and revolutionaries, thus, was the question of whether the labor movement’s organizational strength and “methodical action” generated a kind of power that could plausibly be used to bring about social changes now, within a society dominated by the power of capital.

Jaurès’s defense of the plausibility of political reform—that is, his defense of the efficacy of \textit{political} power in the face of economic power—rests on a certain conception of commonalities and common goods. Republican governing institutions, Jaurès argues, presuppose at least a minimal common public life, and go on to generate other or richer commonalities. Political power is the power to preserve and extend those commonalities, and it is founded on those commonalities. Class conflict complicates and limits these commonalities, but never eclipses them. Marx and Engels had insisted in their \textit{Manifesto} that the state was nothing but the executive committee of the ruling class. To accept this view would be to deny the possibility of collective self-government by the two classes together, but Jaurès proposes that at least within
the democracy of today,” the state “expresses the relationship between classes.” Thus while the modern democratic state—that is, a certain arrangement of political power—does tend to reflect the primacy of whichever class is more powerful, it also has the function of “maintaining and protecting the guarantees of the common existence, order, and civilization of the two classes,” because the relationship between the classes necessarily includes not only their conflict, but also the common life of their members.

The governing institutions of a republic based on popular sovereignty, Jaurès writes, are accordingly not “a homogenous block” but are penetrable and malleable. Thus collective self-government by that group of people is possible, despite their conflict. Because class conflict does not have the last word about political life, there is room—at least within a republican state composed of representative institutions—for political power to bring about the reform of economic and social arrangements.

Conflicting classes in any era might be said to have a common life in this limited sense, of course. Jaurès argues that the two dominant classes of a modern society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, have in common something more specific as well. The bourgeoisie may be guilty of all the “repugnant selfishness” and “insidious violence” of which Marx accused it, Jaurès writes, but Marx was also right to note “the grandeur of the bourgeoisie’s work” in breaking all the ancient forms, dissolving all the old powers and all the old beliefs, changing the habits of the world profoundly and reinventing its own techniques incessantly, unchaining the tragic beauty of unlimited productive forces, taking the dead property of Church, nobles, and kings and making it into a living and energetic property, and throwing all the great sleeping forest of traditions into its ever-moving monstrous furnace blaze.

45 AN, pp. 433-435.
46 AN, pp. 367-368.
The bourgeoisie and the proletariat have a common spirit of rebellion and progress.⁴⁷ From the Reformation to the Enlightenment to the revolutions of the eighteenth-century, the bourgeoisie had demonstrated to the proletariat how to rebel, and in learning that lesson the proletariat had begun to rebel in its turn against the bourgeoisie. But this new rebellion did not make the bourgeoisie’s own rebellious legacy obsolete. The “reciprocal education” of the two classes will continue, not only despite their conflict but through their conflict, Jaurès writes.⁴⁸ The bourgeoisie's work of breaking apart the pre-modern social order is not finished, and the proletariat’s work is to make democratic the modern world the bourgeoisie had brought about—to apply the bourgeois ideas of popular sovereignty, equal rights, and the constitutional limitation of power to economic and social life, as well as to the state.⁴⁹

A modern republic, Jaurès suggests, must be founded on the common life of all its citizens and also on the common modernist project of its two dominant classes. The presence of orderly representative and legal institutions like those of France’s Third Republic, then, allowed for or even generated a second set of commonalities, which secured and deepened the first. Once class-based political parties competed in elections, and once unions were legally recognized and collective bargaining at least tacitly encouraged, the class struggle was “organized” and “systematized,” Jaurès writes, and so it could become “amplified” without becoming “so bitter that no common ground can remain, that the terrain is broken under the clash of the combatants.”⁵⁰ From larger, more encompassing strikes, Jaurès notes, come larger and more encompassing collective bargains.⁵¹ Against both revolutionary socialism and mainstream French republicanism, Jaurès thinks that the energy of class conflict can be conducted through

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⁴⁷ AN, p. 398.
⁴⁸ AN, p. 402.
⁴⁹ AN, pp. 402-403.
⁵⁰ AN, p. 411.
⁵¹ AN, pp. 430-431.
institutional and legal forms that both sustain those energies and turn them to constructive uses. When socialists turn toward parliamentary politics and collective bargaining, Jaurès suggests, class conflict does not dissipate, but takes on a new character. Morally and institutionally bounded by an orientation toward bargaining and compromise, class conflict gains structure and purpose. Instead of being expressed in sporadic outbursts that always end quickly and often yield increased misery for workers, class conflict shaped by and for republican political institutions becomes a continuous project of political and social reform.

The welfare state thus appears as both a condition for the inclusion of the working class within the nation and as the outcome of the working class’s turn toward reformist politics. Social inclusion and egalitarian public policy are mutually reinforcing, Jaurès suggests. Reformist politics, in other words, has a cumulative and self-limiting logic. Each reformist achievement, however limited, makes more likely further reforms, even as the moderating effects of increased social inclusion preclude a leap to a radically different form of society. Reforms lead away from revolution; Jaurès concedes that much to his revolutionary critics. But what the revolutionaries fail to see is that reforms lead to further reforms. To adopt the political “method” of reform is to accept the longevity of capitalism and to work for a piecemeal socialization of property, rather than expecting a complete reordering of society. The revolutionary alternative promises perfect justice in the future, but Jaurès wants that alternative to be judged according to its immediate method rather than its ultimate end. The revolutionary method—were revolutionary parties to actually employ it—would fail the test of republican justice, because it would rupture the tentative human bonds that do survive in a capitalist society. At the same time, mainstream republican methods make such inadequate gestures toward either equality or solidarity that they also fail the test of republican justice. A political method of republican class conflict, however—
a labor movement oriented toward collective bargaining and the gradual construction of a welfare state—can pass that test.

**Politics as Education**

When Marx and Engels proclaimed in their *Manifesto* that the workers of the world have no country, Jaurès writes, they were guilty of a disastrous exaggeration.\(^{52}\) Taken seriously, the “sarcasms of the *Manifesto*” would render the labor movement nothing but “an odd sect of powerless and destructive visionaries.”\(^ {53}\) The labor movement should seek not to abolish the patrie, but to turn the patrie into a forum for republican justice. Justice is necessarily a humanistic and international ideal, Jaurès writes. But there is no necessary conflict between patriotism and internationalism. Indeed, the pursuit of humanistic ideals can only take place within distinct polities.

As democracies are developed and nations constituted, the passion of the proletariat is naturally carried on toward other objects. New problems arise. Political democracy must be fulfilled by social democracy. The international spirit must enter each autonomous country and the evolution of social justice must be assured by the concerted effort of the workers of every country, in a context of international peace. But democracy and the nation remain the essential and fundamental preconditions of all higher and superior creations.\(^ {54}\)

There is no question for Jaurès that internationalism is “higher” than the particular polity. But that the higher depends continually on the lower is, he writes, not only a political fact but a fundamental and permanent feature of existence: “Throughout the hierarchy of life the superior presupposes the inferior. The higher overcomes the lower by transforming it without abolishing it.” Just as within the properly ordered human psyche feeling submits to the rule of reason without losing its importance, Jaurès proposes, so “nations ascend to humanity without being

\(^{52}\) AN, p. 436.
\(^{53}\) AN, p. 440.
\(^{54}\) AN, p. 442.
dissolved." The work of the labor movement always takes place within the patrie, even though the movement aspires to achieve a “human patrie.”

The permanent relationship between patriotism and internationalism, Jaurès argues, should be understood not as a conflict but as a pedagogical dialogue. “Distinct countries, distinct groups, have been the precondition of the broader groups for which our evolution is preparing us,” he writes, “and in each of these groups a common life has been developed that secures and deepens the life of all and of each. A shared consciousness is formed in which individual consciousnesses are united and exalted.” A political movement committed to a humanistic ideal of justice can teach a country what its purpose is; the experience of membership in a country—or, for that matter, in a political movement—can teach the movement’s members what it is to aspire to humanistic ideals. Thus Jaurès writes:

It is not in the hazy old dream of humanity in the abstract, but within the solid and historic reality of a human group—a group sharing a life that is rich and ample, but still bounded, concrete, and graspable—that there can be an apprenticeship for life in common and for a thoroughly humane sensibility. Any human group of “graspable” scope, it seems, holds the potential to provide this apprenticeship. But the quality of the moral apprenticeship offered by any human group depends, at least in part, on how “rich and ample” a life it shares. With civic consciousness as with egalitarian public policy, Jaurès suggests, the logic of reform is cumulative. As common life becomes more ample, it prepares its members for still richer forms of common life.

Social Democracy and Republican Political Theory

55 AN, p. 456.
56 AN, p. 453.
57 AN, p. 449.
58 AN, p. 451.
Pettit has suggested that his republicanism has something to offer social democratic politics.\footnote{José Luis Martí and Philip Pettit, \textit{A Political Philosophy in Public Life: Civic Republicanism in Zapatero’s Spain} (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010).} What I have tried to suggest here is the reverse. Contemporary republican political theory, such as the form of republicanism proposed by Pettit, could benefit from attention to the historical moment at which social democratic politics emerged. The challenges Jaurès poses to the revolutionary socialists and mainstream republicans of his generation are also, in a way, challenges to contemporary republicans like Pettit.

First, while Jaurès appeals to an ideal of freedom recognizably similar to the recent neo-republican notion of non-domination, he coupled this with a concern for modern “loneliness.” This is the point at which Jaurès condemns the indifference of mainstream French republicans to social inequality. His concern with “loneliness” and his insistence on universal inclusion in common public life underpin his insistence on a robust material egalitarianism. It is precisely because Jaurès takes up the problem of loneliness that he has something to say as well about material inequality. The inability of Pettit’s republicanism to address the problem of loneliness, or any but the most narrowly construed version of the problem of common goods, seems to derive from the fact that the republican predecessors on which he draws lived in an era in which social bonds could be assumed to a degree they could not in Jaurès’s time and cannot in ours. The consequence of Pettit’s disregard for the republican tradition’s themes of public space and public good is that his republicanism is left incapable of adequate attention to one of the most dramatic political developments of recent times, especially in the United States: the expanding material gap between the wealthy and everyone else. A political theory incapable of confronting the most glaring problems of its times is a political theory with profound problems.
Second, Jaurès argues that reform is a plausible method for socialist politics because of the cumulative logic of successful reforms. Institutions and “moral force” have reciprocal effects on one another, so that a modest change in either can foster a change in the other. Here, he departs from the revolutionary socialists’ insistence on the monolithic and immovable character of the capitalist state. He also undermines Pettit’s contention that we must choose between the concerns of “neo-Athenian” and “neo-Roman” republicanism. If Jaurès is right, civic virtue and institutional design are best understood as a pair of mutually-shaping elements of political life, not as competing orientations.

Third—the idea that links the two others—is Jaurès’s notion that an “apprenticeship for life in common” is a necessary piece of the reformist pursuit of republican justice. Political life, Jaurès argues, is an educational process. The ends of political life emerge out of the means by which political life is pursued. Jaurès refuses the exclusive attention to the question of norms that has characterized so much academic political theory in our time. Instead, Jaurès suggests the question of method as a concern of equal, if not greater, importance for political thought.

The pursuit of a modern republic, in Jaurès’s account, requires a politics of socialist reform—that is, social democracy. Jaurès advocates an ideal of republican justice in which both non-domination and common public life are valued. This ideal is to be worked out, then, through a political method of constructing, participating in, and sustaining institutions that organize conflict into legal and representative forms and create the conditions for a common public life—most notably, parliamentary government, collective bargaining, a welfare state, and a military that depends on the moral force of citizens. The relationship between the method and the ideal of social democratic politics, Jaurès argues, is best understood through the symbol of education. The public good and the work of organizing the public fit together, in the end, because political
life is always a pedagogical endeavor. A fully just society is outside anyone’s experience, and so if we are to take up the work of pursuing justice, political life must teach us something about justice as we participate in it. It must generate a “moral force” as well as producing material results. Because only the advancement of a complex republican justice can engage us in justice-seeking politics, a politics of gradual reform is necessary. Because institutions and civic virtue have reciprocal effects on one another, republican politics is always an “apprenticeship for life in common,” and a politics of reform is always possible.

Republican political thought today needs ideas from the left. One might also put the point the other way around: political thinkers on the left can learn from the tradition of republican thought. Jaurès’s version of social democracy holds together as a distinct political theory precisely because every part of it is indebted to the republican tradition. The old idea of a regime of mixing and balancing, the priority of “public things” for both political analysis and normative orientation, a strong sense of the intimate connection between public spaces—not least, political institutions—and inner life: these themes provide the framework for Jaurès’s thought. Jaurès’s social democracy works as a political theory, in other words, not only because it draws useful elements from Marxism and liberalism, but also because its structure is republican.