

Michael Walzer

Town Meetings & Workers' Control

A Story for Socialists

Introduction

There are 13 arguments for socialism; they have to do with distributive justice, equality, the need for planning, self-respect, fraternity, and so on. But the one that seems to me the easiest and best is a political argument, an extension of the defense of democracy. It has been put forward often over the last 100 years, but it has never, in this country at least, commanded general acceptance. I suppose no doctrine commands general acceptance that is, as Hobbes wrote, "contrary to any man's right of dominion or to the interest of men that have dominion." And yet there is some sense in which we are all democrats, so I shall start from there, assuming that we have good reasons, and see how far I can go.

The central commitment of socialist politics has often been put in a phrase that must be intuitively appealing to democrats: *the abolition of the power of man over man*. Neither democrats nor socialists begin with an assertion of popular sovereignty. Since they everywhere encounter established sovereigns, authorities, hierarchies, conventional claims to rule, they begin with denials and rejections. They are abolitionists. They aim at abolishing two kinds of authority relations, those in which men and women are directly, and those in which they are indirectly, subject to the arbitrary will of another. I will consider these

two separately. Direct subjection suggests the immediacy of bondage; it describes the slave, the serf, the servant, all those who bow before some powerful person, defer to him, obey his every command. Direct subjection is pervasive in the old regime, and it is not missing in the new. One recognizes it in those forms of speech, those bodily postures and motions that connote weakness, inferiority, humility, a certain zeal for service, which we are disinclined to accept as spontaneous or voluntary.

Indirect subjection is not so easy to recognize, for it has to do not with relationships but with systems of relationships, and the systems are invisible. What is at issue here is the right of a single person, acting on his own, for reasons of his own, to make decisions seriously affecting the welfare of his fellowmen, without the agreement of those whom his decisions affect. Now we all make decisions all the time that seriously affect others: when I decide to accept a job, for example, my decision has an immediate impact on the life of the next candidate, who would have received an offer had I declined. But it would be odd to think of him as my subject, and I am certainly not required to seek his agreement before making up my own mind. In every society, however, there are positions of recognized power, offices within

some organizational structure, from which decisions of a different sort are made. The best way to characterize these is to say that they are authoritative decisions, for that invites us to inquire as to the source of the authority. And what is crucial in systems of indirect subjection is that the subjects are not the source. Men and women ruled by an absolute monarch are directly subject in that they must obey his commands and indirectly subject in that they must live with the consequences of his political, economic, and military decisions. Clearly, democratic argument must challenge and does challenge both these forms of subjection.

The principle of the second challenge is nicely expressed in an old maxim, a rule of law, I believe, in medieval times, honored regularly in the breach: *what touches all should be decided by all*. It's not every decision affecting others that must be democratically made, but only those affecting everyone. That does not mean everyone in the world; I think we should take it to mean everyone associated in some common enterprise the existence or success of which requires that decisions be made. Thus the medieval maxim was invoked in disputes about authority relations in guilds, churches, towns, and states. No doubt, there are problems with this (and every other) restriction on the reach of the maxim, for decisions made within some particular association are certain to affect not only members, but nonmembers as well—and may affect them seriously indeed, as the example of state decisions and international politics suggests. But since this is a general difficulty for democratic theory, and not a special difficulty for socialists, I am going to put it aside (I'll come back to it briefly later on). My own argument requires only this much: that for any authoritative decision seriously affecting others, there is some subset of those affected who ought to authorize the decision or to make it or approve it themselves. The subset includes, but is not necessarily limited to, those people whose association makes the decision possible or necessary—as the association of Frenchmen, for example, makes

possible the French king's decision to go to war or requires him to oppose an armed invasion.

The argument also assumes that the king cannot decide to break up the association (or to cooperate with the invaders) rather than allow its members to join him in decision-making. It is not the case that the authorities can seek support for their decisions just anywhere. Thus Bertolt Brecht's satiric poem, written in Berlin, 1953:

After the rising of the 17th of June
The Secretary of the Writers' Union
Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee
In which you could read that the People
Had lost the Government's confidence
Which it could only regain
By redoubled efforts. Would it in that case
Not be simpler if the Government
Dissolved the People
And elected another?

The satire depends on the commonly accepted principle that the dissolution of the government is a popular right. But it should also be said that the dissolution of the *people* is a popular right. The cohesion that makes it possible to speak of "touching all" and being "decided by all" can only be dissolved by all. And this is true however the association was made and whatever the role of the king or the authorities in making it. The argument is not dependent upon an original contract; it works whatever stories about the origin and foundation of the common enterprise are accepted by the participants, including stories about great men, godlike acts, vanguard revolutions, and so on.

Now, it is the socialist claim that these two forms of arbitrary power—the power of persons and positions—have not been abolished through the establishment of a democratic state. For the state is not our only common enterprise; nor do the laws of the state constitute the only disciplinary system to which we are subject. The capitalist economy proliferates what are plausibly called private governments. Within capitalist organizations a process of decision-making can be marked out, dominated by officials, which has the

crucial characteristics of a political regime. The process has outcomes that seriously affect thousands and hundreds of thousands of people, including men and women whose cooperative activity underlies the organization and who are in some sense its members. These outcomes take the form of decisions and rules that can be opposed or ignored by the members only at the risk of penalties. Here are participants who are subjects, officials who act with authority. What is the source of that authority? It clearly does not derive from the participants, else it would not be called private. It derives instead, or it is said to derive, from the ownership of the organization by particular persons. Their claim to govern, to make decisions affecting others, rests on the legal and, what is more important, the moral implications of private property. Socialists argue that this is not a tenable claim, and it is at this point that many democrats part company with them, insisting that economic enterprises are unlike political associations precisely because the former are subject to ownership and the latter are not.

It should be said, however, that in their time democrats also challenged the implications of ownership—as these were understood within the feudal economy. For feudalism, like capitalism, rested on a certain view of property rights, specifically on the view that the ownership of land entitled the owner to exercise direct disciplinary (judicial and police) powers over the men and women who lived on the land and also to make decisions (to go to war with some neighboring landowner, for example) seriously affecting their lives. In the course of many years of political conflict and revolutionary activity, the formal structure of feudal rights was abolished and the disciplinary powers of the feudal lords were socialized. Taxation, law enforcement, conscription: all these ceased to be property rights. In Marxist terms, the state was emancipated from civil society, that is, from the property system. The implications of ownership were redefined so as to exclude certain sorts of decision-making that, it was thought, could only be authorized by the political community as a whole. This redefini-

tion established the central division along which social life is organized today. On the one side are activities called political; on the other, activities called economic. On both sides, men and women make authoritative decisions affecting others, but the maxim *what touches all should be decided by all* applies only in the realm of politics. Hence socialism has commonly been described as the extension of democratic decision-making from the political to the economic realm.

But this description may be misleading, for the two realms do not seem to me at all distinct. They are subject, of course, to conventional definition; but there is no need for us to accept the conventions of 1789. Indeed, the political argument for socialism is strongest insofar as it suggests the radical similarity of decision-making in the two realms. What justifies the contemporary version of property rights, we are commonly told, is the entrepreneurial zeal, the risk-taking, the inventiveness, the capital investment, through which economic enterprises are founded, sustained, and expanded. Whereas feudal property was founded on armed force and sustained and expanded through the power of the sword (even though it was also traded and inherited), capitalist property rests upon forms of activity that are intrinsically noncoercive. The factory is distinguished from the manor, the disciplinary system of the first is upheld and that of the second condemned, because men and women come willingly to work in the factory, drawn by the wages, working conditions, prospects for the future that the owner offers, which are made possible by his energy and enterprise, while the workers on the manor are serfs, prisoners of their noble lords. All this may well be true; in any case, I will not question it now; it helps us understand why feudalism was not an ideal political or economic arrangement. But it does not draw the line between democratic politics and the capitalist economy, nor does it justify the present authority of owners. For political communities are also created by entrepreneurial energy and enterprise, and it's not implausible to say of cities and towns, if not

always of states, that they recruit and hold their citizens by offering them an attractive place to live. Yet ownership is not an acceptable source of governmental authority in cities and towns. If we consider deeply why this is so, we will have to conclude, I think, that it should not be acceptable in companies or factories either. What is necessary is to imagine a man who claims to own a town, to tell a story—it must be a success story—about the life of a political entrepreneur.

The Story

LONG AGO, when the frontier was still somewhere east of the Great Plains, a young man named J.J. set out to make his fortune. He was bold, adventurous, energetic, and very smart, and he left Boston and New York, even Pittsburgh and Cincinnati behind him. After hardships and excitements not worth mentioning, he staked out a claim to a large and rich piece of land at the bend of a river, one of the smaller western tributaries of the Mississippi. But J.J. was not a farmer. He hated domestic animals, and while he could plow as straight a furrow as anyone in the West, the accomplishment gave him no joy. Soon, he acquired land on the other side of the river and built a ferry, which he ran himself. It was a well-built and well-run ferry. J.J. was a gregarious man, and he entertained his passengers as he took them across; he was warm and funny and full of stories. The enterprise was a success, and after a year or so a few men settled nearby, a storekeeper, a blacksmith, even a preacher, renting the land from J.J. He provided a small lot for a small church and happily watched the settlement grow. When word came of a threatened Indian attack, he organized its defense, bringing in (and paying for) vital supplies from the East. There was an attack of sorts, though only by a small raiding party, and J.J. was in the forefront of the defenders—12 or 15 people now, mostly heads of families, who recognized and accepted him as their leader. He would have been the newest of new men in Boston or New York, but in this little

settlement, he was the oldest, the richest, the most well-established of the inhabitants.

About this time, J.J. went East to borrow some money. He now had visions of a city, for the river bend was a good location, the ferry was busy, there were new farms on both sides of the river, and the farmers needed supplies, schools, sermons, and company. He got the money from a young banker who was bold, adventurous, energetic, and very smart. Back home, he bought more land, laid out a square, set aside lots for a school and a town hall. Though no one had yet died in the settlement, he provided a cemetery too, sure that people would die and not unhappy about that. Dead bodies lend dignity to the place where they lie; a town with a cemetery has staying power. He incorporated the town in accordance with territorial law and gave it the name he had always had in mind: J-town. The law did not specify any particular form of government, but J.J. again had something in mind. When the town hall was built (at his own expense), he moved in. The settlers were not surprised; nor was there any opposition. J.J. was still a gregarious man; he knew them all, talked to them all, always consulted with them about matters of common interest. As at the time of the Indian raid, his leadership was recognized and accepted. Anyway, they all paid him rent, and it did not seem strange to pay him taxes too—a per-capita levy for the salary of the schoolteacher, the maintenance of public buildings, and other minor expenses. J.J. himself took no salary. His ferry was doing well, and he had begun to transport goods up and down the river. His enterprises expanded as the town grew and, to a considerable extent, the town grew because his enterprises expanded.

Years went by. J.J. prospered, paid off the loan, delighting himself and the Eastern banker. J-town prospered; new settlers arrived every year; there was money in the treasury. The town lines were redrawn. Now there were tax-payers who did not pay rent to J.J., though he still owned most of the town and continued to serve as mayor. When it became necessary to appoint other town officers, he talked to his friends and neighbors and always

picked the right man. He had a knack for making decisions, not only decisions that paid off, but ones that pleased people. And if anyone wasn't pleased, he could always move on; J.J. would pat him on the back and talk about the wide Western spaces. He treated criminals the same way. He didn't like locking people up, and he thought it enough of a punishment to have to leave J-town.

J.J. was a natural leader, a man of substance, a man of power. He proved himself again when the flood came, risking his boats on the rapidly rising river in order to evacuate the settlers and their movable possessions, contributing freely to the relief fund. Later on, he went East for a second time to raise money, signing the papers in his own name and bringing home the capital that made it possible to rebuild J-town. The townspeople could hardly imagine another mayor. Nor could J.J.

LIFE WAS PLACID in J-town; time passed quickly. Revivalist preachers came and went; a labor organizer arrived one day and departed the next; the Republican party sent someone to talk to J.J. and the visitor did not find it necessary to talk to anyone else. The dissidence of dissent was absent. Or so it was until J.J., aging now, appointed his son chief of police. Perhaps there had been murmurings before that, but they were scarcely audible. Many of the new settlers did not remember J.J.'s earlier days, did not really believe the stories of his heroic exploits, or—what was worse—did not think the stories mattered. But the town was well-run, and they were content not to worry about it; they didn't think of politics as something that was missing from their lives; to all appearances they didn't think about it at all.

Still, the appointment of his son was a political mistake—J.J.'s first. His son wasn't particularly bold, adventurous, energetic, or smart, and everyone in town knew it. A few of the newer inhabitants called a meeting at the Odd Fellow's Lodge (the town hall had no assembly room). Only a small number of people came, but they shouted a lot, worked one another up, formed a citizen's committee,

and called another meeting. This time more people came; the speeches were exciting, and the participants went home feeling differently about J-town than they had ever felt before. There was a third meeting, and on the following afternoon a delegation of citizens called on J.J.

No one took notes that afternoon, but what was said was repeated all over town. The citizens told the mayor that he could appoint his son to any position he liked in J's River Haulage, Inc., but the town, they said, was not one of his businesses. Town government was the *public* business, and henceforth the public would have to be brought into it in some regularized manner. What touches all should be decided by all, they said. They demanded that elections be held, and they intimated that they had a candidate for mayor in mind whom they preferred to J.J.

J.J.'s reply was a passionate defense of entrepreneurial rights. What do you mean? he said. *This is my town.* I found this place; I built my ferry here, and other people came because of the ferry. I risked my life against the Indians. I risked my capital to buy this land and raise on it the buildings people needed. Your children are studying, right now, in schools I made possible; your dead are buried on land I gave. When the flood came, I did it all again, giving money, raising money, organizing reconstruction. This town wouldn't exist without me and, what's more, I still own most of it. All of you came here with your eyes open; you knew how this town was run; you knew who made the decisions around here. Don't talk to me about elections . . .

J.J. had never lacked for words. And everything he said was true. He did not have to make things up, for he was indeed a great man and had done great things. If it were possible to own a town, he certainly deserved to own this one. The citizens insisted, however, that it wasn't possible. J.J. was the founder, not the owner of J-town, they said, and they would happily put up a statue of him in Central Park. (On land I gave you, muttered J.J.) He was entitled to honor and glory, but not to obedience. He was entitled to

rent, but they would tax themselves. They did not mean to sound ungrateful, they said, they weren't ungrateful, but political foundation and public service did not give a man the right to tyrannize over others.

How can I be a tyrant, shouted J.J., when it's my own town?

The next weeks were exciting, but the events are not worth mentioning here. The citizens' insurrection was successful. J.J. fell. His son never became chief of police. J.J. withdrew from public life, did not vote in the first town elections, never attended town meetings, turned away from his friends and neighbors. When he died, not long after, the town council commissioned a statue, as the insurgent citizens had promised. The new mayor made a fine speech when the statue was unveiled. J.J., he said, was a heroic figure, a man of the pioneering past, a founding father. The town owed him a profound debt, a spiritual debt, of which the statue could only be a lasting reminder. It was true, the mayor said, that J.J. had occasionally confused business and politics, but, after all, that was a confusion not uncommon in American life.

J.J.'s son had occasion to reflect upon that last remark when the town council, only a few years later, tried to take over the river haulage company. They would have paid him handsomely, had the state supreme court allowed the take-over, but money, they insisted, was all he was entitled to in return for his father's investment. Decisions about whether or not to expand the ferry service, buy new boats, and so on—those could not be made by one man, they said, considering only his private profit. The whole town was a transportation center; all its citizens depended on the haulage company; most of them worked for it. And what touches all, they said, should be decided by all. . . .

Interpretation of the Story

I HAD originally planned to write about a company town, drawing upon actual historical accounts. The story would then have described how the owners of an economic enterprise created a political community, so

to speak, on the side, as a place for their employees to live. Upon reflection, it seemed better to imagine a case where the major entrepreneurial activity was focused on the town itself, so that J.J. would stand in the great tradition of the political founder. He represents the liberal form of that tradition, which is to say, he has no deep convictions about the shape of the town or the moral character of its citizens. He merely wants them to live peaceably and to prosper. But he is clearly comparable, despite that, to the figures celebrated by Machiavelli and Rousseau—Lycurgus, Solon, Romulus—who made or remade the political community. Now, in that tradition, founding or reforming the state generates no right of ownership and none of the subsidiary rights that ownership brings with it in feudal manors or in capitalist factories or companies. Most important, it does not give rise to any sort of disciplinary authority over those who join the new community. That authority belongs to the members, even if they were passive or entirely absent during the period of foundation.

Why are economic associations any different?

Not because of the entrepreneurial vision, energy, inventiveness, and so on, that goes into the making of the company: the making of J-town required exactly the same qualities. There are certainly objects in the world that a man can acquire through enterprise and invention. Making them or mixing his labor with them, as John Locke argued, produces at least a presumption of ownership. But it's not the case that *anything* can be acquired that way, and if towns cannot be, there is no reason to think that companies can. These two are much nearer to one another than either is to the land I cultivate, the wood I cut, the chair I build, the book I write—the examples that Locke had in mind. What brings them close together is that both of them involve other people, shared interests, cooperative activity.

Not because of the investment of capital: J.J. invested his own money in J-town without becoming an owner. Nor do men and women who buy municipal bonds come to own the municipality. They acquire no political rights

at all. Unless they are already citizens, they cannot even participate in deciding how to spend their own money. They are entitled to a specified rate of interest, and that is their only entitlement. The members of the political community are conceived to have rights of a different sort, simply by virtue of their membership, whether they have invested money in the community or not. There seems no reason not to make the same distinction in economic associations, marking off investors from participants, a just return from authoritative decision-making.

Not because men and women join a company voluntarily, with full knowledge of the established structure of authority: the settlers in J-town arrived freely, and the same knowledge was available to them, as J.J. told the citizens' delegation. If I settle in a state founded and ruled by a powerful despot, my knowledge of his despotism does not make the act of settlement into an act of consent. Nor is my prompt departure the only way I can express my opposition to despotic government. That may be the case with a man who joins a monastic order requiring strict and unquestioning obedience. Here the new member seems to be choosing a way of life, and his choice entails a particular disciplinary rule. We would not be paying him proper respect if we denied the efficacy of his choice; its purpose and its moral effect is precisely to authorize his superior; he can't withdraw that authority without himself withdrawing from the common life it makes possible.

But that is not true of a man who joins a company or who comes to work in a factory. In these associations, the common life does not require unquestioning obedience, and we respect the new member only if we assume that he does not seek subjection. Of course, he encounters supervisors, foremen, company police, as he knew he would, and it may be that the success of the economic enterprise requires his obedience, just as the success of the political association requires that citizens obey public officials. But in neither case do we want to say (what we might say to the novice monk): if you don't like these officials and the orders they give, you can always leave. It is

important that there be options short of leaving, connected with the appointment of the officials and the making of the rules they enforce. We see this clearly in the case of towns and also, curiously, in the case of labor unions. In the U.S. today, the democratic rights of union members are legally protected. But the rights of company employees are only indirectly protected insofar as they are unionized (and insofar as their union has won some share in company decision-making).*

Entrepreneurial vision, capital investment, the freedom to join or not to join: none of these satisfactorily distinguish economic from political associations. None of them accounts for, let alone justifies, the privacy of a private government.

But there are two differences between towns and companies that I have not yet considered. First of all, a town is an association of residents; a company is an association of workers, who live somewhere else. Perhaps the maxim, *what touches all should be decided by all*, only applies to residential communities. Monasteries and unions are immediate counterexamples, monasteries because they are residential communities to which the maxim does not apply, unions because they are non-residential communities to which it does apply. Nevertheless, it is true that ordinary democrats have generally tried to organize people where they live, socialists where they

*There are other sorts of organizations that raise more difficult problems. What about bureaucracies, for example, or schools? Or consider an example that Marx used (in *Capital*, Vol. III) to illustrate the nature of authority in a Communist factory: cooperative labor requires, he wrote, "one commanding will," and he compared this will to that of an orchestra conductor. A strange comparison, for conductors have historically been tyrannical figures. Should their will be commanding? Perhaps it should, but I doubt that Marx's comparison is a good one, for orchestras must express a single interpretation of the music they play, while patterns of work in a factory are more readily negotiated. The political rights of individuals are relative to the character of the activities in which they voluntarily engage. But this general principle needs to be worked out in detail.

work (though not only there), and some distinction might be drawn along these lines. The self-government of residents, it might be said, is more obvious and important than that of workers. Men and women must collectively control the place where they live in order to be safe in their own homes.

There is certainly no other place where it is so important to be safe. Hence another ancient maxim: a man's home is his castle. I will assume that this maxim expresses a genuine moral imperative. What does it require? Not self-government, but rather the protection of a private sphere, a piece of nonpolitical space for withdrawal, rest, secrecy, and solitude. As a feudal baron retired to his castle to brood over public slights, so I retire to my home. But the political community is not a collection of brooding places, or not only that. It is a common enterprise, a public place where we are seen and heard by others, where we quarrel over the public interest, where we sometimes work together. That is why the meetings in J-town were so exciting. They represented the discovery or creation of a local republic, a *public thing*, which by its very nature had to be shared once it was known to exist. And in this sense, an economic enterprise seems to be very like a town, even though, or in part because, it is so unlike a home. It is not a place of withdrawal, but of cooperative activity. It is not a place that anyone needs to own in order to safeguard his independence and solitude. No one ever thought of saying, a man's factory is his castle. The moral independence of the men and women who work in a factory requires shared decision-making and not the protection of a private sphere. Surely we grant that point whenever we require union democracy, and having done that, there seems no principled reason to stop short of company democracy.

But let's think about stopping short, exactly as we presently do. Imagine that the inhabitants of J-town, instead of calling for elections, had organized a citizens' union and bargained collectively with J.J. and his heirs. It is interesting to speculate on the range of issues they might have bargained about. Which

matters would lie beyond their reach, once they had conceded the issue of ownership? Presumably, they would not have had much to say if J.J. had decided to relocate the town (since it was "his" town). But they could have bargained in detail about living conditions within it, about zoning laws, traffic control, sewage disposal, and so on. They could not have vetoed his choice for chief of police, but it is possible to imagine grievance machinery that would function somewhat like a civilian board of review. The picture is not entirely unattractive, but it is not what we mean by democracy or, at least, it is not all that we mean. Particular groups of city employees do form unions and negotiate with the mayor, but their members also vote for the mayor with whom they negotiate. Members of pressure groups participate in the same dual way, though the arrangements are less formal. They bargain and they vote, acting simultaneously as men and women with particular interests and as men and women with general interests. That seems the right arrangement for economic enterprises also, whose participants are concerned both with their immediate returns and with the well-being of the enterprise as a whole.

The second difference between towns and companies follows from the separation of residence and work. The citizens of a town are also the consumers of the goods and services the town provides—and they are, except for occasional visitors, the only consumers of those goods and services. But the "citizens" of a company are producers of goods and services; they are only sometimes consumers, and they are never the only consumers. Hence there are large numbers of other people, outside the company, who have a direct and material interest in what goes on inside. What should their role be in company decision-making? The question is often raised in the literature on workers' control, and it is variously answered. Here I don't want to answer it again, only to insist that the sorts of arrangements required in a fully developed industrial democracy are not very different from those required in a political democracy. For we don't, after all, grant absolute

authority to town governments, even over the goods and services they produce for internal consumption. We enmesh our towns in a federal structure, and we regulate what they can and cannot do in areas like education, criminal justice, environmental use, and so on. No doubt, companies would be similarly enmeshed. In a developed economy, as in a developed polity, different decisions are made by different groups of people at different levels. The division of power in both these cases is only partly a matter of principle; it is also a matter of circumstance and expediency.

THE CASE IS SIMILAR with the particular constitutional arrangements necessary within companies and factories. There will, of course, be many difficulties in working these out; there will be false starts and failed experiments, as there have been in the previous history of political democracy. Nor should we expect a single resolution of all problems. Proportional representation, single member constituencies, mandated and independent representatives, bicameral and unicameral legislatures, city managers, regulatory commissions, public corporations—the common business is done and should continue to be done in many ways. What is important is that it be known to be common and that our participation in it be recognized as a matter of right.

Today, there are many men and women who preside over enterprises in which hundreds and thousands of their fellow citizens are involved, who make decisions that shape the lives of their fellows, and who defend and

justify themselves exactly as J.J. did. I own this place, they say, I built this factory, I founded this company, I risked my capital, I make the decisions around here. It has been my purpose to argue that people who speak this way are wrong. They misunderstand the prerogatives of foundation and investment. They claim an authority to which they have no right. It has not been my purpose, however, to deny the significance of entrepreneurial activity. In both towns and companies one looks for energetic people, willing to innovate and take risks. It would be foolish to create a system that did not bring them forward. They are of no use to us if they just brood in their castles.

On the other hand, nothing they do or can do gives them a right to rule over others—unless they win the agreement of the others. This means that at a certain point in the development of an enterprise, it must pass out of entrepreneurial control. Its founders have created, or they have led other men and women in creating, a *public thing*, which must now be run in some public way. It is often said that economic entrepreneurs will not come forward if they cannot hope to own the companies they make. The best response is to point to the other side of that all-important but entirely conventional dividing line: we do not lack for political entrepreneurs, though they cannot hope to own the state. Possession is not the goal of public life, but that does not mean that there are not attractive and even compelling goals. For one thing, we can go on building statues of worthy men and women—the founders but not the owners of our common wealth. □