Introduction

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I.1 Neo-Roman Freedom

On 12 November 1997, Quentin Skinner delivered his Inaugural Lecture as Regius Professor of History at the University of Cambridge. On the same day, Cambridge University Press published an expanded version of the lecture: *Liberty before Liberalism*. This little book, building as it did on years of Skinner's scholarship, went on to have a transformative impact on both the history of political thought and political theory. Skinner had exhumed an old and discarded theory of freedom, according to which you are unfree if you are dependent on the will of someone else. Skinner named this theory 'neo-Roman' because it had been articulated by the jurists, moralists, and historians of ancient Rome. It was, Skinner argued, this neo-Roman view that had impressed the humanists of early modernity, been at the heart of the English revolutionary movements of the seventeenth century, and then, in the eighteenth century, been wielded against Whig oligarchy before being turned again against the crown to defend the American Declaration of Independence. Having gleamed so brightly, the theory was displaced in the nineteenth century by the liberal view of liberty that dominates anglophone political discourse to this day. According to the liberal view, and by contrast with its predecessor, you are free simply if you are not being interfered with – either by constraint or coercion.

Skinner's identification of a distinct and unfamiliar theory of liberty challenged and reshaped our understandings not only of what has been at stake historically in political conflict, but also of the most productive ways of thinking about the concept of liberty itself. Some scholars pushed back against Skinner's story, refining their own views in the process. Some found it to be a key to unlocking further stories. But nowhere has his intervention gone unnoticed. This volume brings together historians and philosophers to reflect, now more than twenty years on, on the significance of that intervention. Each contributor uses Skinner's analysis as a point of embarkation. The volume explores territory that

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he did not, such as class, chattel slavery, and the unfreedom of women, as well as authors that were outside the scope of his original investigation. The volume also, and relatedly, probes the boundaries of neo-Romanism itself, investigating its relationship to rival, or overlapping, traditions.

The volume therefore thinks with and through *Liberty before Liberalism* to open up new histories of liberty, as well as examining the historiographical and theoretical taxonomies that structure our understanding of the present and the past. It reveals and clarifies the continued power of neo-Romanism as both a normative and historical hermeneutic tool.

This introduction will outline the effect that Skinner's iteration of neo-Romanism has had on scholarship, before sketching the onward journey that this volume undertakes.

I.2 Skinner's Intervention

Skinner's identification of a concept of liberty that predated liberalism has had at least two major – and related – consequences for scholarship. First, it has refigured discussions about the genealogy and meaning of liberty. Second, it has made scholars think anew about republicanism – about what it is and how it relates to liberalism (and what that is).

Turning to the first of these scholarly debates, the discussion about what liberty was and is had, for decades, at least in certain anglophone literatures, orbited around another Inaugural Lecture, that of Isaiah Berlin. In *Two Concepts of Liberty*, delivered at the University of Oxford in October 1958, Berlin claimed that the historical record had generated one 'negative' and one 'positive' conception of liberty. Negative liberty referred to an absence, to freedom from constraint. To be free in this sense was to be left alone, not to be interfered with. Positive liberty, by contrast, referred to the ability *to* do something. While Berlin indicated that this could mean a number of different things, he associated positive liberty most prominently with self-perfection. To adhere to a positive conception of liberty was to embrace the idea that one could only be free by realizing one's true or best self.[1]

In delineating these two understandings of freedom, Berlin was not merely positing a conceptual distinction. He was also making a normative claim. He left no doubt that negative liberty is preferable to positive liberty. Negative liberty was, for Berlin, the invention of the modern, liberal West; it was a 'mark of high civilization'.[2] By contrast, the embrace of positive liberty set people on a dangerous, slippery slope,

[1] Berlin 1958. [2] Ibid., p. 14.

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inviting coercive intervention by dictatorial regimes in the name of freedom. Once you countenance positive freedom, it is a quick slide to thinking that it is legitimate, nay necessary, to force people to be free. Only thus can human beings become their best selves. As soon as you start to conceptualize freedom in any other than a strictly negative sense – to think that freedom might be about something in yourself, rather than simply refer to a space around yourself – you are heading towards totalitarianism. By contrast with negative liberty, positive liberty, Berlin warned, could all too easily serve as a 'specious disguise for brutal tyranny'.[3]

Berlin's claims were not uncontroversial. A number of scholars countered that his dichotomy was wrong-headed, that the distinction between negative and positive liberty made little sense. An early statement of this view was formulated by the philosopher Gerald MacCallum, who argued in a 1967 paper that fundamentally there could only be one concept of liberty.[4] At the same time, Berlin's normative claim – that negative liberty was the hallmark of true civilization, whereas positive liberty lent itself for use by dictators and totalitarians – was questioned. Notably, Charles Taylor dismissed Berlin's negative liberty as 'crude' and 'wrong', arguing instead in favour of 'a view of freedom as the ability to fulfil my purposes'. Moreover, according to Taylor, this 'positive notion' of freedom, far from being inimical to liberalism, occupies its 'most inspiring terrain'.[5]

Despite – or perhaps because of – this critical engagement, Berlin's dichotomy gained traction as an organizing principle within the scholarly debate about freedom. Skinner began to unpack this dichotomy in his Tanner Lectures, *The Paradoxes of Political Liberty*, in 1984, following these with a series of publications culminating in *Liberty before Liberalism*.[6] Skinner agreed with Berlin that there were, historically speaking, fundamentally different ways of thinking about liberty. But whereas Berlin had declared that there were two concepts, Skinner identified a third. This was neo-Roman liberty, formulated by pre-modern European theorists who drank at the fountain of ancient Rome, where the key source had been Justinian's *Digest* of Roman law.[7]

[3] Ibid., p. 16.
[4] MacCallum 1967, pp. 312–34. More recently, this argument has been defended from a different perspective by Nelson 2005.
[5] Taylor 1985, pp. 228–29.
[6] Skinner 1984a, p. 227; 1984b, pp. 193–221; 1991, pp. 293–309; 1998, pp. 113–16.
[7] Skinner 1998, p. 38. For an extended argument to the effect that this constitutes a third conception of liberty, see Skinner 2003.

According to neo-Roman theorists, Skinner explained, freedom is not merely restricted by active interference; rather, a person can also be called unfree if they depend on the will of another – even when they are not being actively interfered with. Clearly, this way of thinking about freedom cannot be subsumed under the label 'positive' liberty, since it does not entail the presupposition that a person can be free only when they realize a preordained goal. But at the same time, as Skinner pointed out, the neo-Roman theory of freedom differed fundamentally from Berlin's negative definition of liberty as the absence of interference, since unfreedom in the neo-Roman sense does not require constraint or coercion. You are rendered unfree simply if you find yourself at the mercy of a will that is not your own.[8]

This further conceptual distinction, as Skinner made clear, had important institutional implications. Berlin had supposed that negative liberty could theoretically be enjoyed under any type of government – so long as a person's rulers did not actually interfere with their life, they could be said to be free. Hence, as Berlin memorably formulated it, 'freedom in this [negative] sense is not, at least not logically, connected with democracy or self-government'. Quite the contrary, negative freedom was 'not incompatible' with certain kinds of autocracy, nor, at any rate, with the absence of self-government.[9]

According to the neo-Roman theorists, by contrast, as Skinner points out, you can only achieve individual freedom if you live in what they call a free state, that is, a political arrangement in which citizens govern themselves, subject to their own, collective will, rather than the will of another. This overarching commitment to the importance of a free state resulted in a variety of specific constitutional prescriptions, including, but not limited to, a republican form of government. They all tended to include support for the rule of law, where the laws had been enacted with the consent of citizens, often according to majoritarian principles and through representative assemblies. Many theorists also advocated representative institutions and some kind of mixed constitution.[10]

Skinner's intervention sparked tremendous debate. Some philosophers, notably Matthew Kramer, questioned whether the conceptual distinction between freedom as non-interference and non-dependence was tenable, arguing that dependency was effectively the same as coercion. Others, such as Ian Carter, argued that instead of conceptualizing a new way of thinking about freedom, republicans simply provided

[8] On the contrast with Berlinian negative liberty, see Skinner 1998, p. 116. For the contrast with positive liberty, see Skinner 2003.
[9] Berlin 1958, pp. 48; 14. [10] Skinner 1998, pp. 17–57.

good arguments to the effect that negative freedom is best promoted, on balance, through certain kinds of political institutions rather than others.[11] While these arguments are ongoing, and there are compelling points on all sides, what is clear is that Skinner's account is now firmly embedded in theoretical and historiographical culture. The specific form of liberty he identified appears regularly in textbooks and scholarly commentaries alike, including in those works that are produced by sceptics of Skinner's view, demonstrating the extent to which his intervention has reshaped the debate.[12]

In addition to – and in relation to – transforming the debate about the genealogy of liberty, *Liberty before Liberalism* had a major impact on the debate about the history of republicanism. While Skinner himself has always been ambivalent about the relationship between neo-Romanism and republicanism, sometimes allowing them to work as near-synonyms, sometimes holding them apart, his research has revolutionized both the historical and the philosophical commentary on republicanism.

Scholarly interest in the history of republicanism goes back at least to the work of Hans Baron, Zera Fink, and Caroline Robbins, who looked at republicanism, respectively, in Renaissance Florence, early modern England, and across the Atlantic.[13] Their insights were built on by J. G. A. Pocock in his landmark study, *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975). Here Pocock portrayed republicanism as a coherent Anglo-Italian tradition of thought, centred on the ideas of Machiavelli, that had a profound impact not just on the English Civil War and its aftermath but also on the American Revolution – the latter being revealed as a triumph of republicanism, rather than of liberalism.[14]

In Pocock's account, republicanism emerged as a political tradition with virtue at its core. Republican thinkers believed, Pocock argued, that political rule was legitimate insofar as it was virtuous – which meant that those ruling should be the most virtuous, the most committed to defending the public good rather than their own selfish interests. Connectedly, Pocock also said that republicanism should first and foremost be understood as a tradition identifying the good life with the civic life, making it as much a moral as a political philosophy.[15] The ancient fountain here is Aristotle rather than Rome. And to the extent that freedom was important at all to republicans, Pocock claimed, it was

[11] See Kramer 2008; Carter 2003; 2008.
[12] See, for instance, Carter, Kramer, and Steiner 2007.
[13] Fink 1945; Baron 1955; Robbins 1956. [14] Pocock 2016. [15] Ibid., pp. 49–80.

positive freedom – the freedom to realize the essence of human nature by participating morally in politics.[16]

For Pocock, republicanism was an elitist way of thinking; it was also essentially backward-looking. Republicans' commitment to virtuous rulership, Pocock argued, committed them to the idea that only landowners should rule because landownership generated a superior moral psychology to that spawned by commercial property. Commercial property does not leave men (they tended to be figured as men) with sufficient leisure to make them capable of governing. Moreover, commerce promotes self-interestedness, thus undermining virtue. Only landed property could function as the basis for virtue and civic mindedness, and only men thus propertied might therefore be admitted to government. Hence, republican thinkers struggled with the advance of modern, commercial societies; the republican way of life seemed doomed to failure with the displacement of agricultural societies.[17]

Skinner's work, including *Liberty before Liberalism*, constituted a critique of this view of republicanism.[18] On his account, the ideas transmitted by Machiavelli to the English revolutionary writers of the seventeenth century were centred on freedom rather than virtue. Machiavelli and his seventeenth-century heirs did not argue that only the best or most virtuous should rule, but that people should rule themselves, unless they wanted to be slaves.[19] While Skinner is deeply alive to the interrelationship between liberty and virtue, virtue tends to figure in his representation of the neo-Roman theory as secondary or derivative. That is, virtue was both helpful as a means to defend the primary goal of freedom for all, and the happy circular consequence of the realization of that goal. But Skinner's virtuous republican citizen was not someone whose moral superiority gave him (again, adopting the gendered locution of the early modern sources) the right to rule over other citizens; instead, he was a 'vigilant critic of governmental encroachment' of his and others' liberties.[20]

By identifying neo-Roman freedom at the centre of early modern republicanism (even if he does not always call it that), Skinner did not simply displace virtue from its throne, but he opened up a progressive,

[16] Ibid., pp. 42–43; Pocock 2016, pp. 556–61. [17] Pocock 1985, pp. 103–24.
[18] On the differences between Skinner's and Pocock's interpretation of republicanism, see also Castaglione 2005.
[19] Skinner 1998, pp. 22–23: 'More than their sometimes ambiguous republicanism, more even than their undoubted commitment to a politics of virtue, their analysis of civil liberty marks them out as the protagonists of a particular ideology, even as the members of a single school of thought.'
[20] Skinner and Van Gelderen 2002, p. 5.

anti-elitist political philosophy. As he suggested in *Liberty before Liberalism*, 'if we truly value individual freedom, this commits us to establishing political equality as a substantive goal'.[21] In his recent work, Skinner has adumbrated the egalitarian and democratic implications of neo-Romanism. In the introduction to *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, co-written with Martin van Gelderen, Skinner explained that according to republican thinkers 'to live in a free state is to live under a constitution in which the body politic is never moved to act except by the will of the citizen body as a whole'.[22] And in the conclusion to this volume, Skinner states: 'no democracy, no liberty'.[23]

Of course, the emancipatory scope of early modern republicanism had serious limits, and Skinner is alert to these. The theorists he brought to the page in *Liberty before Liberalism* were concerned, as he put it, 'almost exclusively with the relationship between the freedom of subjects and the powers of the state'. They had 'little to say about the dimensions of freedom and oppression inherent in such institutions as the family or the labour market'.[24] Neither women, nor people in poverty, nor – in the most obscene blind spot of all – chattel slaves, were generally thought worthy, or capable, of freedom. Neo-Roman theorists railed against their own slavery while endorsing slave-ownership. An enquiry into this hypocrisy requires a whole other volume – how to parse the failure, or refusal, to see the contradiction? How to fathom the positive recommendation of the double standard? After all, the liberty of the ancients was precisely founded on the institution of slavery. As Rousseau said of the Greeks, the People could be 'constantly assembled in the public square' because 'slaves did its work'.[25]

Having said that, as Skinner pointed out, the theory of freedom pioneered by privileged white men became a serviceable mine for theorists who wanted to articulate precisely the kinds of oppression that its earlier proponents could not see as such. John Stuart Mill, for example, used it to demonstrate the wrongful subjection of women, and, as Skinner says, it permeates Karl Marx's 'discussions of wage-slavery, alienation and dictatorship'.[26] Melvin Rogers shows how African American political thinkers such as Frederick Douglass and Frances Ellen Harper drew extensively on republicanism to elucidate racist oppression.[27]

[21] Skinner 1998, p. 79. [22] Skinner and Van Gelderen 2002, p. 4.
[23] Skinner, this volume, p. 264. This relationship between neo-Roman freedom and equality has been brought out by commentators. Halldenius 2015, p. 23, for example, describes republican liberty as 'a concept … that does not distinguish sharply between liberty and equality, according to which there can be no liberty without equality'.
[24] Skinner 1998, p. 17. [25] Rousseau 1997, p. 115.
[26] Skinner 1998, p. x. Leipold explores this in Chapter 10. [27] Rogers forthcoming.

Skinner's rethinking of republicanism as an essentially democratic and egalitarian political tradition had further implications for its relationship to liberalism. According to Pocock, republicanism's displacement by liberalism had been inevitable, the result of an increasing mismatch between the aristocratic outlook fostered by republicanism and the conditions of the modern world.[28] In Skinner's account, by contrast, the victory of liberalism over republicanism could not be attributed primarily to the latter's anachronism. Instead, Skinner speculated that republicanism had ultimately been 'eclipsed' by liberalism because the neo-Roman theory of freedom on which it was predicated had come to seem too utopian or troublesome. According to republicanism, valuing individual liberty commits us to establishing political equality. As marginalized groups increasingly came to invoke this theory of freedom to demand their political and social inclusion, many others came to see this commitment as 'massively inconvenient'. This sparked the formulation of a new and less demanding theory of freedom by utilitarian liberals such as William Paley and Jeremy Bentham, which ultimately triumphed in the nineteenth century.[29]

Skinner's novel account of republicanism caused considerable debate. Some historians of political thought, such as Iain Hampsher-Monk, wondered about the relation of neo-Romanism to 'the wider language of republicanism … charted by Pocock'.[30] Blair Worden questioned whether the tradition Skinner described really did have Roman roots.[31] Other scholars, such as Nadia Urbinati and John McCormick, took issue with Skinner's characterization of republicanism as an essentially democratic and egalitarian tradition.[32] Skinner's assessment of the relationship between republicanism and liberalism was called into question by political theorists such as Bryan Garsten, Ira Katznelson, and Andreas Kalyvas. Nineteenth-century liberalism, they argued, should be understood as an updated and modernized version of republicanism, as opposed to being seen as its diametrically opposed other.[33]

At the same time, many scholars were persuaded by Skinner's reorientation of republicanism as a tradition centred on the neo-Roman concept of liberty, and have found it vibrantly and unambiguously alive in an array of contexts in early modern Europe and beyond. It has, for example, been shown that the discourses of early modern Dutch republicans and Polish humanists were permeated with references to neo-Roman liberty, and the same is true of the Atlantic revolutionaries of

[28] Pocock 2016, p. 462. [29] Skinner 1998, pp. 77–79.
[30] Hampsher-Monk 1998, p. 1187. [31] Worden 1998, pp. 13–15. See also Rahe 2000.
[32] McCormick 2003; Urbinati 2012. [33] Kalyvas and Katznelson 2008; Garsten 2012.

the late eighteenth century.[34] Moreover, commentators have shown that late-eighteenth-century feminist thinkers like Mary Wollstonecraft, as well as nineteenth-century labour republicans, can best be characterized in the terms set forth by Skinner.[35]

Skinner's uncovering of neo-Romanism has not only prompted valuable excavation beyond his original site, revealing seams of resistance as well as oppression, but it has also coincided with a flourishing of neo-republican political philosophy. A major figure here is Philip Pettit, who has been developing his own ground-breaking account of republicanism for over thirty years. Together with John Braithwaite, Pettit published *Not Just Deserts: A Republican Theory of Criminal Justice* in 1990, in which they equated freedom with dominium.[36] Pettit went on to formulate freedom as anti-power, and then non-domination. In *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (1997), he explained that 'being unfree does not consist in being restrained' but rather in living 'at the mercy' and 'in the shadow' of another, 'in uncertainty about the other's reactions and in need of keeping a weather eye open for the other's moods'.[37] Cécile Laborde has drawn on the republican tradition to conceptualize global justice.[38] Anne Philips has used it as a springboard for normative thinking about gender relations.[39]

Whether scholars have been invigorated by, or antagonistic towards Skinner's intervention, it has had a seismic effect on historical and philosophical debates about freedom and republicanism. These debates are ongoing, but Skinner has had a decisive hand in their topography.

I.3 Thinking Forward with Skinner

As its silver jubilee draws near, the scholarship gathered here attests to the undimmed energy and provocation of *Liberty before Liberalism*. This volume is split into three parts. Part I looks at three canonical early modern thinkers

[34] For the centrality of neo-Roman liberty in early modern republican thought, see the various contributions to Skinner and Van Gelderen 2002. For Dutch republicanism in particular, see Wyger 2007. For Polish republicanism, see Grześkowiak-Krwawicz 2012. For the Atlantic revolutionaries, see De Dijn 2020.

[35] For Wollstonecraft, see Halldenius 2015; Bergès and Coffee 2016. For nineteenth-century labour republicans, see Muldoon 2019.

[36] Braithwaite and Pettit 1990.

[37] Pettit 1997, pp. 4-5. Pettit and Skinner each warmly acknowledge a deep debt to the other.

[38] Laborde 2010. [39] Philips 2000. See also Allen and Somanathan 2020.

on whom Skinner did not focus and reflects on their writing in the context of neo-Romanism: Michel de Montaigne, Hugo Grotius, and John Locke. Part II tests the limits of republicanism in relation to hierarchies beyond the hierarchy with which Skinner has been principally concerned, that is, the hierarchy between the (propertied, white, male) citizen and the state. Contributors extend Skinner's analysis to reflect on early modern approaches to race, gender, and the demos as a whole. Part III considers the relation of neo-Romanism to four other traditions, namely liberalism, counter-Revolution, socialism, and human rights.

Felicity Green (Chapter 1) starts us off with Montaigne's Stoic reconceptualization of the neo-Roman theory of freedom. Like the seventeenth-century thinkers examined by Skinner, Green shows that Montaigne also talked about freedom in terms of non-dependence on the will of another. Unlike the seventeenth-century republicans, however, Montaigne did not conclude from this that a free person had to live in a free state; rather, following Stoic tradition, he was more concerned with achieving self-mastery as a necessary precondition for living a free life. Green builds on this analysis not only to demonstrate that some early modern thinkers believed that freedom was realizable outside of the realm of politics, but also to rethink and – in her view – sharpen neo-Romanism itself. The neo-Roman theory of freedom, she argues, should not merely be seen as a more robust version of the liberal conception of freedom as the absence of constraint. Rather, as Montaigne's *Essays* remind us, it offers a radically different account of what it is to be a free person in the first place. Being a free person, on this account, is a function not so much of a person's latitude to act, as of their standing as an agent.

Martin van Gelderen (Chapter 2) then turns to examine Grotius and the light he sheds on the relation between metaphysical debates about the freedom of the will and political debates about freedom. This is a relation that is not often considered by historians of political thought. Indeed, it is sometimes deemed irrelevant. And yet, as van Gelderen shows, it is deeply pertinent, especially in the context of neo-Roman liberty. If a person is only free when they are subject to their own will, it matters whether their own will is intrinsically free – or not. If a person – or indeed the person of the state – is to be self-governing, then they need to be *able* to govern themselves, rather than to be bound to a predestined course. By carefully situating Grotius's thought in the practical and intellectual context of the Dutch republic, van Gelderen shows how Grotius's defence of neo-Roman freedom was intertwined with a commitment to human autonomy and self-determination.

To conclude this tour of individual thinkers, Hannah Dawson (Chapter 3) explores Locke's ambivalent embrace of the neo-Roman theory of freedom. In the scholarly tug of war over Locke's identity, he is being increasingly wrested from liberalism, and might much better be

seen as a neo-Roman. He thinks, that is to say, of freedom not only as non-interference but also as non-dependence. This picture is further complicated, however, because Locke also seems to argue that non-dependence might be neither sufficient nor even necessary for liberty. Instead, he repeatedly insists that true liberty – as an individual and as a citizen – can only exist under natural law; being subject to your own will does not set you free if that will is morally corrupt. That would be licence, not liberty; it would be illegitimate. Locke therefore equivocates between freedom as non-interference, freedom as non-dependence, as well as a moralized view of freedom. As Dawson concludes, this might point to a broader tension in early modern republicanism, and in normative political theory more generally, as it struggles to work out which value should be fundamental: the will of the people or their good.

Part II moves beyond the paradigmatic relation of citizen and state to other hierarchies, and how these are figured within neo-Romanism. Through the lens of John Milton, Rachel Foxley (Chapter 4) explores the ways in which neo-Romanism itself might harbour a defence of hierarchy and inequality. According to Foxley's reading of Milton, slavery did not simply follow from subjection to the will of another, but from subjection to the will of an inferior. Hence, as Foxley argues, one plausible interpretation of Milton and other early modern authors is that they objected not to being imposed upon by the will of another as such, but rather to being imposed upon by someone who ought to be beneath them. It is this that would make the will arbitrary. Conversely, to be subjected to someone wiser or more virtuous than oneself is not arbitrary and hence does not render one unfree. This approach allowed Milton to argue at some points in his writings for a severe restriction of the citizen body. By the same token, for Milton, the subjection of women to men was not a species of slavery, but quite the opposite, on account of the imagined inferiority of the female sex.

However, neo-Romans also objected to inequality. Some of these objections were directed against other neo-Romans, as Annelien de Dijn demonstrates in Chapter 5 on republican theorists who vehemently repudiated what they saw as the elitism of their own tradition. De Dijn's examination of the work of Pieter and Johan de la Court, Baruch de Spinoza, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau shows that these 'democratic' republicans (as she labels them) rejected the model of the mixed constitution embraced by some of the English republicans who hold centre stage in Skinner's *Liberty before Liberalism*. The De la Courts, Spinoza, and Rousseau did so on the grounds that a mixed constitution, with its separate representation for a wise elite, would give undue influence over communal decision-making to this elite. Instead, they were firmly committed to majoritarianism as the only decision-making procedure capable of truly locating power in the hands of the people as a whole.

Sandrine Bergès (Chapter 6) shows how neo-Romanism was a rich resource for early modern women thinkers and how women thinkers enriched neo-Romanism by connecting the private to the public spheres and motherhood to citizenship. Bergès also brings in the work of Olaudah Equiano, who demonstrated just how real and important the distinction is between independence and non-interference. Equiano had enjoyed a free life in the liberal sense, and he had experienced kindness and camaraderie, but he was still a slave and dependent for it all on the whim of his English master – who did one day and at a stroke sell him back across the Atlantic. Bergès unpacks the ways in which Mary Wollstonecraft, Olympe de Gouges, and Marie-Jeanne Roland testify to the irreducible value of independence, as well as their reflections on dependency as a necessary and nurturing part of inevitably relational human life and on the family as core to the health, virtue, and liberty of the republic.

Republican attitudes to chattel slavery are further examined by René Koekkoek (Chapter 7). As he shows, in the late-eighteenth-century Atlantic world, republicanism was used both to denounce and to justify the institution. On the one hand, anti-slavery authors argued that just as political slavery was illegitimate, so was chattel slavery. On the other hand, defenders of chattel slavery argued that slaves were property; they were not therefore citizens who required liberty. Ultimately, many republicans drew on their own tradition to deny liberty to enslaved persons, while at the same time continuing to propound an ideology of liberty that served their own revolutionary objectives. Koekkoek concludes that there was no inherent 'logic of liberty' that would lead from republicanism to abolitionism; rather, republicanism had an emancipatory effect only when it was wedded to universalistic notions of the natural equality of humankind.

To begin Part III, on the relation of neo-Romanism to other traditions, Eric Nelson (Chapter 8) considers its relation to liberalism. Nelson argues that there is, in addition to the anglophone liberal tradition that Skinner identifies as having superseded neo-Romanism, another proto-liberal tradition that has its roots in the Pelagian tradition, is picked up by Kant, and inherited by Rawls. According to this alternative liberal view, one's freedom is lost, as Rawls put it, if one lives 'at the mercy of others'. It appears, therefore, that Rawls is subscribing to a neo-Roman view of freedom. Far from replacing neo-Romanism therefore, Nelson suggests, Rawlsian liberalism includes and embraces it.

Matthijs Lok (Chapter 9) explores the uses of the concept of freedom in the counter-revolutionary tradition of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Drawing on the writings of the former Jesuit François-Xavier de Feller and the émigré Charles Alexandre de Calonne, Lok argues that the concept of freedom held a key place in

counter-revolutionary discourse. Calonne's conception of liberty in particular came close to the neo-Roman conception. In his view, personal liberty, and in particular, property rights, could not exist except in the context of political freedom, and this, for Calonne, was best preserved by the rule of law. As Lok shows, raising further interesting questions about the malleability of neo-Romanism, the originally revolutionary, republican concept of liberty was turned on its head by its adversaries and, rather than serve a democratic agenda, was wielded to defend the Old Regime.

Bruno Leipold (Chapter 10) examines the reception of neo-Romanism by nineteenth-century socialists, in particular Karl Marx. Leipold finds striking parallels between Marx's critique of capitalism and the neo-Roman republican tradition. Marx's condemnation of wage-labour as wage-slavery, as well as his criticism of the market for subjecting people to arbitrary forces beyond their control, both drew on neo-Roman ideas about what it means to be free. In addition to pointing out the permeability between republicanism and socialism, Leipold argues that nineteenth-century socialists changed, and indeed improved on, the ideas of their republican forebears. Notably, they insisted that it was not enough to be free in the political realm if one remained enslaved in the social sphere. While for early modern republicans, a person could only be free in a free state, for Marx, it was only possible to be free in a free society. Marx thus developed a novel account of structural domination, expanding the standard account of domination by shifting attention away from the arbitrary power of individuals, to the way in which power is exercised through social structures.

That brings us to the final chapter of Part III, where Lena Halldenius (Chapter 11) thinks with neo-Romanism to examine the human rights tradition. In her view, contemporary human rights philosophers would do well to pay more attention to the view of liberty uncovered by Skinner. She is critical in particular of some human rights philosophy for its reluctance to let human rights refer to anything other than a set of readily realizable and minimal or basic provisions. By conceptualizing human rights in this manner, she argues, attention is drawn away from the structural and political causes of human rights infringements. Halldenius argues instead for a system of human rights that is not merely a restriction on state sovereignty, but rather an exercise of it. This entails, as in the neo-Roman tradition, a firm commitment to a particular way of organizing politics and society.

Then comes Skinner's reply (Conclusion). Revisiting *Liberty before Liberalism*, and the ideas and debates it has generated in the wild, as well as in the foregoing chapters, he reflects on how his original project now stands. He emerges from this engagement with his critics with an even

more crystalline and powerful account of the neo-Roman view of freedom. In response to the central objection that it might be incorporated within the liberal view, Skinner argues that this 'would be the worst possible misunderstanding'.[40] What is distinctive, and uniquely precious, about the neo-Roman theory is that it evinces the way in which you can be unfree not only in the absence of interference but even in the absence of the *threat* of interference. You can, that is to say, be unfree when, to all intents and purposes, you are absolutely safe. For the neo-Roman, you are unfree if you are subject to the mere will of someone else, even if that person is kind and permits you unlimited freedom of action. What the neo-Roman view gets at, that the liberal view does not, is the value of being a free *person*, above and beyond the value of being free of particular acts of interference.

Skinner defends his original preference for naming this view 'neo-Roman' rather than republican, not least because many of its early modern proponents were monarchists. However, he here adds to his initial analysis of the genealogy of the theory by demonstrating the importance of English common and civil law for the diffusion of the neo-Roman view, most significantly through the thirteenth-century *De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae*, subsequently attributed to Henry de Bracton. In opening up these anglophone juristic sources, Skinner introduces us to a third category of persons: persons who are not free, nor slaves, but nevertheless to some degree incapable of acting *sui iuris*. Wives and servants find themselves in this category, subject to the power of masters, lords, and husbands. Skinner himself, therefore, reaches out beyond the strictly political domain with which he was concerned in *Liberty before Liberalism* and into the personal and the social, shedding new light not only on the fullness of the neo-Roman tradition itself, but on its pertinence today.

Skinner navigates carefully between history and philosophy. He warns of the perils of judging theorists from the past insofar as that conflicts with 'our duty as historians to try to reconstruct their social and intellectual world so far as possible in its own terms'.[41] As he points out, however, this stricture does not stop us from drawing normatively on the theory itself. He concludes his chapter – and this book – by doing just that, suggesting not only that we need democracy if we want to be free, but also that we need to pay close attention to structural oppression, to invisible systems of power that do not in any ostensible way interfere with our choices, but which tie us in chains nonetheless.

[40] Skinner, this volume, p. 244. [41] Skinner, this volume, p. 258.