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**Nancy J. Hirschmann: Gender, Class, and Freedom in Modern Political Theory**

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## Gender, Class, and Freedom in Modern Political Theory

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK is to examine the concept of freedom in five key canonical figures: Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, and Mill. The importance of the concept of freedom is, I assume, self-evident to readers of this book: it is clearly a, if not the, key concept of the modern canon. Defining “the canon” of modern political theory in terms of these five figures, rather than Hume, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, or any number of other figures, is justified because of their centrality to at least the West’s understanding of freedom, and particularly to Western political theory arguments about freedom; they are all key figures in modern liberalism, which is arguably the ideology that has been responsible for translating the political theory ideal of freedom into the common collective consciousness of the modern West. For Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, the “natural freedom” of the state of nature posited by each theorist has had profound effects on how we understand, think about, and talk about freedom in the West today.<sup>1</sup> Mill made vital contributions to this understanding in his famous defense of individual liberty of conscience and speech, and his articulation of the notion of a zone of privacy into which the state may not intrude. Kant, perhaps better known as a moral philosopher who posited the “categorical imperative,” also defended liberal freedoms such as freedom of speech in his political writings and is associated by many scholars with social contract theory and the liberal tradition. As the ensuing chapters will demonstrate, I do not always agree with these dominant readings, but these readings make the selection of these five theorists obvious and central for anyone writing on freedom.

In one sense, then, this book is a very traditional work of political theory: it selects some major canonical figures, examines their texts, analyzes their arguments, and develops an account of freedom out of that. But it is not traditional in the three related themes that I use to guide my reading of the texts: Isaiah Berlin’s typology of negative and positive liberty in its historical, rather than analytic, dimensions; the idea of social construction; and the place of gender and class in the concept of freedom. At first glance, the first and third might not seem that untraditional: but instead of justifying those themes here in summary fashion, I will break down my introduction to this book along the lines of those three themes, to present

the reader with a picture of how I see the argument unfolding, and why I believe that this argument poses a challenge to the mainstream to take up a set of issues and questions that it has tended to resist.

#### NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE LIBERTY IN THE WESTERN CANON

By taking up the “historical, rather than analytic dimensions” of Berlin’s typology, I mean to argue that Berlin’s typology is historically inaccurate as an account of the canonical theorists, though it is conceptually important to understanding what those theorists argue. That distinction may be too subtle, even confusing, for some, but it is important. In his famous essay “Two Concepts of Liberty,” Berlin argued that negative liberty embodied the Western liberal notion of doing what I want without interference from others. It defined the free individual as a desire-generating and -expressing being who was able to act on those desires without being prevented by other individuals, groups, or institutions. Not only was desire individual, but it was not a matter for discussion: I want what I want. The issue for freedom evaluators is to determine whether anybody or anything is trying to prevent me from pursuing that desire. Freedom is thus defined as an absence of external barriers to doing what I want. “By being free in this sense I mean not being interfered with by others. The wider the area of non-interference, the wider my freedom.” For negative liberty, “frustrating my wishes” is the delimiting factor of freedom.<sup>2</sup> The classic statement of negative liberty is often associated with Hobbes: “By liberty, is understood, according to the proper signification of the word, the absence of external impediments: which impediments, may oft take away part of man’s power to do what he would.”<sup>3</sup> And indeed, Berlin cites Hobbes and other “classical English political philosophers” such as Mill, Bentham, and Locke as the key proponents of this view.<sup>4</sup>

By contrast, positive liberty referred to the idea that freedom is not consistent with pursuing bad or wrong desires, but only true desires; and it allowed for various ways in which others, and particularly states, could “second-guess” individuals’ desires and decide which desires were consistent with their true ends. It thus allowed for “internal barriers,” which might prevent me from pursuing those true desires, or perhaps from even understanding what they were. This sets positive and negative liberty apart from the very start. A key element of negative liberty was to presuppose ability; that is, if I am unable to do something, such as “jump ten feet into the air,” then I cannot be said to be unfree to do it; nobody or nothing is preventing me.<sup>5</sup> The limitation is internal to me; I am unable, not unfree. By contrast, positive liberty allowed for the provision of en-

abling conditions to help me realize my true desires, such as wheelchair ramps that will allow me to attend classes and obtain a university degree. In this, ironically, the internal/external divide is turned on its head, because negative liberty holds that all abilities must be contained within me, whereas positive liberty allows that abilities can come from external sources. But this adheres to the competing notions of the individual that the two models operate from: the radical individualism of negative liberty holds that abilities and desires—the source of free will—are internal to the self, and come only from the self; external factors are what pose potential barriers to the free self. The social or communitarian self of positive liberty holds that abilities and desires are themselves social, that external factors can help maximize freedom, and that the inner forces of desire and will are grounds of struggle, potentially threatening to liberty. Berlin identifies Kant, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx, and T. H. Green as key figures of positive liberty.<sup>6</sup>

These models may seem to present an extreme dichotomy, which should give us pause. For Berlin himself, in several places in his essay, suggests this is not his intention. For instance, he talks of the positive and negative “senses” of liberty, rather than “models.”<sup>7</sup> He explicitly states that he is not posing them as a dichotomy, and even criticizes those who have made the typology appear dichotomous. He recognizes that each of the two concepts is problematic, and “liable to perversion into the very vice which it was created to resist.”<sup>8</sup> In fact, he goes so far as to say that his only point is to show that they are “not the same thing.”<sup>9</sup>

But at the same time, he notes that the ends of the two “may clash irreconcilably.”<sup>10</sup> The political context in which Berlin articulated these concepts, namely the Cold War, motivated him to champion negative liberty and show positive liberty in the worst light possible; practically speaking, positive liberty was the current danger. “Hence the greater need, it seems to me, to expose the aberrations of positive liberty than those of its negative brother,” and particularly “its historic role (in both capitalist and anti-capitalist societies) as a cloak for despotism in the name of a wider freedom” was a matter of practical contingency.<sup>11</sup> But the result was to dichotomize the two “senses” of freedom into, as the famous essay is titled, “two *concepts* of liberty.”

Berlin’s initial characterization of the two concepts demonstrates this superficial gloss of the two as related while masking an underlying dualism. He claims that the two concepts of liberty are structured by two questions, answers to which “overlap”; namely, “What is the area within which the subject—a person or a group of persons—is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference from other persons?” versus “What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?”<sup>12</sup> But of course the

second question is already skewed toward a narrow construal of positive liberty as authoritarianism and obscures many other important features that the ideal of positive liberty includes, such as enabling conditions or conflicts among my desires. If he had posed a different question as emblematic of positive liberty—such as “How do I know that what I want is really what I want, how can I figure that out, and can others help me?” or perhaps “How can my abilities be enhanced to enable me to do or be other kinds of things?” or “What is the role of relationship and community in understanding and creating my ‘self’ that has the desires it has?”—the ensuing discourse in political philosophy might have unfolded differently. These questions not only are less biased toward a predetermined judgment about the value of positive liberty, but also much more accurately capture the arguments of the theorists, such as Rousseau, Kant, Comte, and Green, whom Berlin classifies as positive liberty’s champions.

In other words, Berlin’s account of positive liberty is inadequate, if not inaccurate and unfair. He posits positive liberty as a caricature, in which all my wants have to be reconciled into some sort of master plan: “a correctly planned life for all,” which will produce “full freedom—the freedom of rational self-direction—for all.” This then requires that one’s plan follow “the one unique pattern which alone fits the claims of reason”; and he condemns what he considers this “slaughter of individuals on the altars of the great historical ideals,” which is done in “the belief . . . that there is a final solution.”<sup>13</sup> But while that may be a fair account of what was happening in the Soviet bloc when he wrote the essay, that is not what positive liberty theory actually requires, if one attends to the arguments offered by Rousseau, Kant, Marx, and the other theorists Berlin cites as proponents of positive liberty. Thus, while chastizing critics who accuse him of setting up a dichotomy, Berlin himself uses dichotomous language throughout the essay to characterize what he considered “opposite poles.”<sup>14</sup> Berlin clearly uses political theory to shadow contemporary issues, aligning negative liberty with liberal democracies and positive liberty with the totalitarian states of the communist Soviet regime.

But the typology that he developed had a profound transhistorical influence on political philosophies of freedom that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, and even those who have rejected it find themselves unable to shake loose of its influence. I maintain that this is because they have grabbed the wrong end of the stick in identifying the weaknesses of Berlin’s argument, ignoring its contributions to philosophical and everyday understandings of the concept. To be specific, the primary attacks on Berlin’s typology by contemporary theorists have generally been made in terms of the analytic content and logic of the typology. Gerald MacCallum’s is the best known, arguing that every incident of freedom contains a tripartite relationship between an agent, a desire (in-

cluding desired actions and conditions), and conditions that restrain: “[F]reedom is thus always *of* something (an agent or agents), *from* something, *to* do, not do, become, or not become something.”<sup>15</sup> According to MacCallum, negative and positive liberty theorists are really each only talking about “one part of what is always present in any case of freedom.”<sup>16</sup> The crux of the debate between the two is not actually freedom *per se* according to him, but rather other kinds of values that they believe are important to political society and social relations.<sup>17</sup> Freedom can be defined along the lines of these various values, but that does not alter the meaning of freedom as a triadic relation between agents, desires, and constraints.

As John Gray suggests, however, MacCallum’s formula is from the start biased in favor of negative liberty; for instance, he includes “preventing conditions” in his triad, but not “enabling” ones.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the role that “rationality” plays in his argument similarly presupposes a negative liberty framework. But I think that the real trouble with MacCallum is that his dismissive claim that “every freedom *from* is also a freedom *to*” demonstrates a superficial grasp of Berlin’s argument and misses the true strength of the typology. Berlin’s categorization of freedom into these two camps reveals a tension between two aspects of freedom, but not the aspects that MacCallum suggests.

Specifically, it is a tension between the outer dimensions of freedom and the inner dimensions. By outer dimension I mean forces, institutions, and people who prevent me from doing what I want, as negative liberty maintains, as well as those who help me achieve the ability to do what I want, as positive liberty includes. By internal dimensions, I mean desire (including aversions as well as appetites), will, subjectivity, and identity, which can be a source of freedom or frustrating to it. These internal aspects of freedom are generally ignored, or at least taken for granted, by negative liberty: I want what I want when I want it, it does not really matter why I want it. Desire is the limiting condition of freedom, but it is not appropriately a matter for freedom evaluation; as Hobbes put it, “one can, in truth, be free to *act*; one cannot, however, be free to *desire*.”<sup>19</sup> Positive liberty, by contrast, is quite concerned with these aspects, for why I want something is an important part of determining whether a desire is “true” or “false.” Hence Charles Taylor argues that we must “discriminate among motivations” and that obstacles to doing what we want “can be internal as well as external.” But positive liberty sometimes errs on the other side, as Berlin suggested, assuming that we can definitively declare what a true desire is, and whether the agent is expressing it. The individual can be “second-guessed,” as Taylor put it. This second-guessing leads critics like Berlin to worry that positive liberty has “totalitarian” implications; the state can require citizens to act against their apparent interests

in favor of their “true” interests, but such “true” interests often reflect the selfish interests of state leaders. The pinnacle of such duplicity is seen to lie in Rousseau’s comment that citizens can be “forced to be free.”<sup>20</sup>

The concepts of negative and positive liberty that Berlin originally developed display some variety from theorist to theorist, but I maintain that this division between external and internal factors is a key difference between them.<sup>21</sup> Even the commonly repeated, if superficial and reductive, claim that negative freedom is “freedom from” whereas positive liberty is “freedom to” captures this notion: the former implies an absence or removal of external obstacles, whereas the latter implies enabling conditions to enhance achievement. But in the process of articulating these various internal and external aspects of freedom, the typology is also conceptually and politically useful in the differing models it suggests of what it means to be a human being, even if Berlin himself did not acknowledge this. Or more accurately, although Berlin sees that the conception of the self, and hence of desire, is important to the typology, the models of the self he posits are straw men. Focusing on positive liberty’s notion of “higher” and “lower” desires, with the former’s ability to control the latter as key to freedom, Berlin maintains that “the divided self” is the starting point for positive liberty, the state being necessary to “unify” these selves by saving themselves from false desires. By contrast, negative liberty operates from a notion of the self as unified from the start, and accepts the conscious self as the final determiner of choice. Freedom may be measured by how many options are available to me, but nobody can force me to choose an option and still claim that I am free.

This, however, is a problematic construction, for it not only relies on a caricature of positive liberty, it also ignores the complex psychology of choice. In the introduction to *Four Essays on Liberty*, Berlin frets that, in the original version of “Two Concepts of Liberty,” the definition of negative liberty as “doing what I want,” or fulfilling desire, is vulnerable to my simply reducing “what I want” in the ascetic vein; that is, I could simply not want what I cannot have, rein in my desires, and thereby enlarge my freedom.<sup>22</sup> Berlin therefore concludes that although freedom is “constituted by the absence of obstacles to the exercise of choice,”<sup>23</sup> choice is an “objective” rather than subjective notion; freedom requires “a range of objectively open possibilities, whether these are desired or not. . . . It is the actual doors that are open that determine the extent of someone’s freedom, and not his own preferences.”<sup>24</sup> The presence of options themselves, objectively defined, is key to freedom; I may not want many, or even any, of the other alternatives available, but I am nevertheless freer than if there was only one option. If choice is paramount in the definition of freedom, then the more choices I have, the

freer I am. Negative liberty is measured by the options that are open to me, whether I want them or not.

This modification of his definition of freedom poses the somewhat absurd paradox that I am freer when I have twenty options, none of which I want, than if I have three, all of which I would like. After all, the whole point of seeking to maximize options is the underlying assumption that humans have desires and want to fulfill them. Without that assumption, freedom would be unnecessary, and there would be no point to defining freedom in terms of available options.<sup>25</sup> So Berlin does a little sleight of hand in the attempt to “clarify” his argument and backs away from the true challenge to negative liberty, which is that I can often be confused, conflicted, and perhaps even unaware of what I really want. But until I identify and express my desires, we cannot begin the process of evaluating my freedom, much less say that freedom is relevant.

The centrality of desire to both positive and negative liberty highlights the obvious claim that how we understand the self is vital to the conceptualization of freedom. Indeed, I believe that one of the most important contributions of Berlin’s typology is its identification of two different models of the self at work in the history of political thought. But rather than the unified self versus the divided self, which Berlin invokes, I mean the individualist self versus the social self. Specifically, negative liberty operates from an assumption that individuals are disconnected and self-contained. Clear lines are drawn between inner and outer, subject and object, self and other. All others pose potential limitations on my pursuit of what I want; in its extreme forms, such as Hobbes’s state of nature, all others are actively hostile, not just potentially so. But in its more modified form, negative liberty’s assertion of the self’s ability to control her life, her destiny, by making her own choices, is a key aspect of what we in the West commonly think it means to be human. Despite the ability of language to communicate our thoughts and feelings, and despite the fundamental human ability to build communities and families, we are irreducibly separate from others, each with our own thoughts and desires. Positive liberty, by contrast, sees the self as innately social and immersed in social relations, such that the individual cannot be understood outside of those relations. In its extreme forms, self and other become merged, the collective overtakes the individual. But in its more moderate versions positive liberty’s assertion of the need to understand that the individual of negative liberty becomes who she is in and through social relations is an equally key aspect of what it means to be human.

These two sides of humanity, the individual and the social, are juxtaposed by the typology, and that is unfortunate; Berlin inadvertently falls into the trap he identifies, of reducing humanity to a caricature. If we do not see the two models as mutually exclusive, but rather as interactive,

the typology affords an understanding of humanity that is much more complex than Berlin himself realized. It is this complex understanding of humanity that is necessary to understand the meaning of freedom.

Thus the problems with Berlin's typology have little to do with his conceptualization of freedom. Rather, they have to do with the issue of categorization. In particular, the typology as Berlin presents it is inadequate as a *descriptive* account of canonical liberty theory. This is a fact that nobody has systematically demonstrated. That is, canonical theorists do not divide up along positive and negative liberty lines. Berlin is correct, however, in identifying the various *aspects* of freedom as guided by internal and external factors. It is my contention that most canonical theorists actually display elements of *both* positive and negative liberty. Efforts, therefore, to squeeze theorists into one or the other model—for instance, that Hobbes or Mill is the quintessential negative libertarian, Rousseau the standard-bearer for positive liberty—distort not only the canonical theories, but the concept of freedom itself, including what is useful and instructive about the typology.

Indeed, Berlin himself is the theorist who comes closest to admitting that the typology does not neatly fit the modern canon; he recognizes that Locke and Mill display elements that cohere with positive liberty, Rousseau and Kant elements that adhere to negative liberty. But he then proceeds to ignore his own cautionary notes. This set the stage for misunderstanding the typology and for its misapplication to canonical theory. But using the typology as a loose frame for analyzing the canonical theories considered here helps us see that even if MacCallum misread what Berlin's typology was about, his bottom line was correct: all theories have elements of both models in them. Thus, unlike most contemporary critics, who maintain that the typology is conceptually flawed, my argument instead challenges the opposition constructed between the two models, as well as the effort to characterize canonical figures along the oppositional lines of the dichotomy Berlin posed. While historically inaccurate as a description *of* the canon, I maintain, the typology nevertheless has conceptual importance for understanding the notion of freedom that emerges *from* the canon. This conceptual importance relates to the fundamentally political insights Berlin provides into how theories of freedom deploy different conceptions of humanity. Because Berlin himself did not do more than make passing references to the canon—though his essay did include all five theorists covered in the present book as prominent figures in the history of liberty theory—it might be thought that my claim is unfair, that I am setting up a proverbial straw man. But my point in the chapters that follow will be not to demonstrate that each of them is not simply one or the other kind of theorist, but rather to focus on the way in which positive

and negative liberty elements work together in their theories to construct a particular understanding of the concept of freedom.

An important challenge to my claim is offered by Phillip Pettit. Pettit argues that Berlin's typology misses some key points about the history of freedom theory in the modern canon, and that his definition of negative liberty as "freedom from interference," and of positive liberty as "self-mastery," misconstrues how many canonical theorists conceptualized freedom. Berlin's attribution of negative liberty to Hobbes, Locke, and Mill ("the pantheon of modern liberalism") and positive liberty to Kant and Rousseau (whom Pettit labels "continental romantics") distorts the fact that the idea of liberty as noninterference was actually promoted by the American antirevolutionaries, who wanted to defend the interests of the crown. By contrast, revolutionaries such as James Madison and Thomas Paine promoted a republican ideal of "freedom as nondomination." By extension, their ideological forefathers, such as John Locke, similarly conceptualized freedom in such terms. The negative/positive typology, thus, is not an accurate reflection of the modern canon.<sup>26</sup>

Pettit offers the republican ideal of freedom as nondomination to contemporary thinkers as an alternative, "third" approach to freedom. This third way lies in "the philosophical space left unoccupied by the distinction between negative and positive liberty." Pettit defines domination as "a particular power of interference on an arbitrary basis." The key issue of domination, Pettit argues, is "being subject to arbitrary sway: being subject to the potentially capricious will or the potentially idiosyncratic judgment of another." Nondomination thus entails "escape from the arbitrary." Freedom as nondomination, according to Pettit, combines the negative liberty notion of "absence" with the positive liberty notion of "mastery," to define nondomination as "the absence of mastery by others." But this is more than "the rule of your own private will," which he associates with negative liberty, because he posits the state as a positive institution for the establishment of nondomination and the protection of citizens from mastery by others.<sup>27</sup>

Pettit's conception of freedom as nondomination accurately captures key historical strains in liberty theory, particularly concerning the theorists considered in this book. It bears especially strong adherence to Locke's "freedom from arbitrary authority," as well as Mill's conception of freedom from government interference. It also captures certain analytic elements, because domination increases the chances of an individual's actions and choices being restrained or "interfered with." And clearly, my own conceptualization of freedom that I articulated in *The Subject of Liberty* shares important elements with Pettit's notion of freedom as nondomination, particularly the way in which it seeks to expand the concept of "barrier" beyond the deliberate, purposeful action of

identifiable agents.<sup>28</sup> But although Pettit's conception is interesting, important, and useful, it does not make Berlin's conceptualization obsolete or irrelevant to canonical theory. For we must acknowledge the firm grip that Berlin's typology has on contemporary freedom theory, which has not taken up Pettit's reformulation. Pettit's argument is that negative liberty, as noninterference, introduced by Hobbes, was then forgotten until the American Revolution, when the Tories took it up to argue that colonists would be no more free under their own republic than under the British crown. Then, thanks to Jeremy Bentham, who opposed the American and French revolutions, it entered into popular discourse.<sup>29</sup> But why would it enter popular discourse if it did not already say something true about how people saw their experiences? Pettit does not explain. What gives Pettit's argument such vigor is how against the grain it runs: yet the fact that it does run against the grain, that the dominant orientation in political theory is to stay with Berlin's typology, suggests a tenacity of negative and positive liberty that at the very least implies its coherence with lived experiences of freedom and unfreedom. It is not just the orneriness of intellectuals loath to change their ideas, or the intransigence of political theory to new ways of thinking, that explains the persistence.

Furthermore, Pettit's definition of domination as subjection to arbitrary power is too limited. In defining domination as the power to interfere, he argues correctly that even if such interference does not occur, domination can still persist: it is the *power* to interfere, not the interference itself, that establishes domination. For example, the fact that a woman is not beaten every day does not mean that she is not dominated by her husband on the days that she is not beaten. However, the distinction he makes between domination and interference cannot be pushed too far; for domination could not be domination if there was not at least some interference. If the power to interfere were never enacted, the domination would lose its power: if her husband never beat her, her fear of him would eventually lessen, boundaries would be pushed, and domination would cease to be a factor in the relationship (assuming, of course, that other sorts of interference, such as repeated threats or other surrogates for violence, are not enacted instead).<sup>30</sup> Similarly, one might argue that many, perhaps even most, women are not sexually assaulted, they are not sexually harassed, they do not experience obvious discrimination: they are not "interfered with" in that way.<sup>31</sup> And yet the fact that a significant number of other women are "interfered with" is sufficient to exert dominating force over the remaining women. If *no* men ever assaulted *any* women, if *no* men ever harassed *any* women, if *no* men ever discriminated against *any* women, then the power of domination would thereby weaken. Pettit's

contrast between interference and domination is thus too strong, because he construes interference too narrowly and individualistically.

At the same time, domination can be, indeed often is, not arbitrary at all, but systematic and predictable. It is, moreover, often grounded in a variety of principles, such as tradition, religious doctrine, and biology, such as when women's sexuality becomes the justification for male superiority. Obviously, I do not endorse such a view of sexuality, and examples like this are precisely what tempts one to agree with Pettit's labeling of such a reason "arbitrary" on the basis that, as he argues, nonarbitrariness requires a certain level of democratic access and "the permanent possibility of effectively contesting" a tradition, practice, rule, or law.<sup>32</sup> But while strongly supporting the role of democracy, equality, and participation in power structures in establishing an adequate theory of freedom, I am not sure that I would call the lack of these things "arbitrary," rather than simply not liberal, or not feminist, or not egalitarian.<sup>33</sup> Domination is most difficult to resist when it is not arbitrary but systematic, part of an elaborate system of rules and principles, interpreted in such a way as to exclude from consideration alternative readings and interpretations. A liberal or a republican might call such exclusion "arbitrary," but a fundamentalist, for instance, would say that it is not, that it adheres to a closed system of rules, much as liberalism could be claimed to do.

At any rate, although participation itself is fundamental to freedom, it cannot ensure nondomination; as Mill argued, if patriarchal society has done its job properly, women will have learned that an essential aspect of femininity is to adopt a mode of passivity and deferral. So what then? What about women who do not press charges against abusers, either because they have no means of support, having left employment when they had children, or because they have internalized a cultural belief that they are responsible for the relationship? This is why couching a theory of freedom in terms of nondomination requires a simultaneous consideration of social construction, as I will argue shortly.

Pettit could answer this objection by focusing on "all of us who identify with western style democracy," who "naturally assign to the notion of freedom" great "importance," thereby eliminating the fundamentalist from the discussion.<sup>34</sup> But of course, if this assignment is "natural," why is it limited to people in Western democracies? I doubt that Pettit believes that evolutionary migration ensured that those whose natures favored democracy migrated to North America and western Europe, while those of other natures occupied Africa and Asia. By contrast, the social constructivist argument can readily explain why it is that those in Western democracies define freedom in a particular way and assign it a particular importance in their understanding of how the world should work, just as it can explain other ideological orientations of other societies and cul-

tures. For the point of social construction is to turn people into the kinds of individuals who do not *see* their domination, who internalize the set of norms and values that normalize their lack of power. In modern Western political thought, including the republican theories on which Pettit relies, that particularly meant women, laborers, the poor, and less obviously (because less frequently acknowledged) non-Europeans.

So while I agree with Pettit that “the positive-negative distinction has served us ill in political thought,” I disagree with how it has disserved political theory.<sup>35</sup> Although his argument is grounded in the history of the concept, his critique is conceptual: there are not just two concepts of freedom, he argues, but three. And like other attempts to create some “third concept of liberty,” Pettit depends on a simplified account of the “two concepts” that it supposedly supplants. Negative liberty is more than noninterference, and positive liberty is more than self-mastery, as I have argued above. And in fact, Pettit’s account of nondomination borrows considerable elements from each model, if we understand those models to be more complex and richer than their critics generally allow. Consider, for instance, Pettit’s claim that “the republican view that the laws create people’s freedom” is evidence that the theorists in question adhere to “freedom as nondomination.” I do not dispute that Locke’s view of law as “the direction of an intelligent agent to his proper Interest” has republican elements. But it is also an example of the ways in which positive liberty is evidenced in his theory.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, Pettit juxtaposes Locke’s view to Hobbes, for whom he believes “law is always itself an invasion of people’s liberty, however benign in the long term.”<sup>37</sup> Yet I will show that Hobbes, too, took an ambiguous position on law, displaying positive liberty elements: in words that foreshadow Locke, Hobbes notes that “the use of Lawes . . . is not to bind the People from all Voluntary actions; but to direct and keep them in such a motion, as not to hurt themselves by their own impetuous desires, rashness, or indiscretion as Hedges are set, not to stop Travellers, but to keep them in the way.”<sup>38</sup> But Hobbes, in Pettit’s view, is by no means a republican. So the categories of republican and not-republican start to become a bit arbitrary and skewed, much as happens when theorists try to put the canonical figures into Berlin’s typology as either negative or positive liberty theorists.

Hence, I argue that it is more useful to recognize that both negative and positive liberty are important to all of these theories—indeed that it is virtually impossible not to incorporate at least some aspects of each model. In this, though my argument in this book involves a critique of Berlin’s typology, it also involves a defense of it. I accept that the two models present contrasting views of freedom; what I reject is the idea that any given theory of freedom is one or the other. Rather, the models iden-

tify important features that are found in most theories of freedom, features that pertain to different aspects of human life and different visions of what a human being is.

#### THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF FREEDOM

An important aspect of the conceptual importance of Berlin's negative and positive liberty typology relates to a second theme I explore in this book, and to which I have already alluded, namely the *historical deployment of social constructivism in canonical theory*. Social constructivism is the idea that who we are is not natural but rather the product and function of social relations: who we are, how we see and understand ourselves, how we see and define our interests, preferences, and desires, are all shaped by various constellations of social and institutional practices, customs, organizations, and institutions that make up our social "reality." By showing us, through his articulation of positive liberty, that internal factors are important to freedom, Berlin opened the way (again without realizing it) to understand that many canonical freedom theorists intimately involved themselves in studying issues of the will, desire, identity, and subjectivity. These issues lend themselves to a social constructivism argument, because the question of why I want what I want is a question that allows for the interaction and integration of the individual and the social, an understanding of how what is supposedly internal is externally generated, influenced, produced, and interpreted. Positive liberty gives the idea of social construction a purchase in freedom theory then, but social constructivism is what enables me to argue that the dichotomy between internal and external that typically characterizes the typology is itself false.

As I argued in *The Subject of Liberty*, desire—the foundation and starting point of freedom, as I have already suggested—is socially constructed. Women, for instance, are expected to have children, to care for men and children, and to participate in an entire range of activities that are seen as appropriate to the gender identity of femininity. But moreover, an essential dimension of femininity is not merely to engage in such behaviors, but to *want* to do so. As a result, many women are individuals who have been raised from childhood to think of themselves in particular ways that are more conducive to certain choices rather than others: for instance, if girls are acculturated to motherhood and wifehood in heterosexual marriage, the desire to be child-free, to engage in a profession traditionally reserved for men, or to have a sexual and romantic relationship with a woman becomes difficult (though obviously not impossible) to identify to

oneself, even more to express and act on. A significant aspect of the feminist movement has been to undercut the “oppressive socialization” that women are subjected to in male-dominant society, to “liberate” their desires from patriarchal stricture.<sup>39</sup>

However, social construction goes beyond such processes of what would most likely be called “socialization.” For these ways of channeling individuals to particular roles, activities, and preferences take place in a plane of consciousness that merges the psychological with the physical, the symbolic with the material, language with feeling. In fact, there are three different ways of talking about social construction, which I believe interact as three “layers” of a complex social process.<sup>40</sup> The first layer constitutes ideology, a system of knowledge claims or beliefs about a category of people, such as women, that supposedly represents “truth” but often in fact elides it. For instance, the idea that women are naturally nurturant and biologically destined to be mothers, that this designation accompanies a lack of rational skills and an overdevelopment of emotion, is a recognizable theme in the history of political thought. Its truth has been challenged and rejected by many, and one might be hard-pressed to find many people in the early twenty-first century who adhere to the view that women are incapable of rationality.<sup>41</sup> But the power of ideology to distort the truth and to represent reality through a particular conceptual ordering of social relations creates an understanding of categories of people, social relations, institutions, and practices that pervades broad segments of the population.

This layer of social construction is the one most people associate with the term. Catherine MacKinnon deploys this mode most obviously, arguing that men actively do things to women to turn them into sexual beings who wish to be abused.<sup>42</sup> The “construction” is as close to literal as one can get: women are made as men want them made. But this rather crude notion of social construction reduces the complexity of the process. For ideology not only distorts “reality”; it also produces concrete, material effects on the social phenomena it (mis)describes, in a process I call “materialization,” the second layer of social construction. The idea of materialization is that ideology provides a rationale for structuring social relations, practices, and institutions in ways that ensure that the ideology is sustained. For instance, if one takes the ideological belief that women are irrational as a reason to deny women education, one will fulfill one’s own expectations by increasing the likelihood that most women will fail to develop the skills of rational thinking. If one takes the ideological belief that women should be wives and mothers to justify the exclusion of women from professions and employment, most women will end up focusing their energies on finding a husband and having children.

The third layer of social construction is “discourse,” which involves the way in which language develops to explain, describe, and account for this material reality and its underlying ideology. This is the aspect of social constructivism most closely allied with poststructuralism, and it centrally involves the idea that language produces reality, rather than merely describes it. Language is not simply a mirror of nature, reflecting an independent reality, but it produces the things that we see, because “what we see” must be translated in our brains in order for us to understand it. We cannot make sense of material reality without language, and in the act of making sense of it, we change it and make it real. This layer of social construction tends to be associated with poststructuralists, with Judith Butler usually seen as its main proponent.<sup>43</sup> Of course, to say that language is central to meaning does not entail that we can simply make things up, that language has no anchor to physicality, as critics of poststructuralism are wont to complain. But it does mean that “empirical reality” is not independent of language, perception, and interpretation: humans can have no direct apprehension of the physical world except through the interpretive structures of language. Empirical existence cannot make sense outside of discourse, but discourse must also be guided by existence, including the history of specific relevant discourses. Physical reality is not an illusion any more than it is self-evident; we have to explain it, interpret it, even instantaneously, but always through language, ideas, concepts.

These three layers of social construction—ideology, materialization, and discourse—operate in an interactive dynamic rather than a linear relationship. Ideology produces materialization, which shapes discourse, but discourse also makes it possible to formulate ideology and makes it possible for materialization to occur. The three are in a triangular relationship, each one relating directly to the other two, as well as indirectly through it to the other. Thus, for instance, the liberal ideology of social contract theory that men are “naturally” free and equal created a way of seeing and understanding human beings that shaped political institutions, normative practices, and social relations. It affected the meaning of gender and class, as conflicts over women’s individuality and rights emerged in a context of an increasingly submerged and subtle form of patriarchy, and as relations between landowner and laborer transformed into one between capitalist and worker. Similarly, one’s interpretation of a particular social phenomenon like “domestic violence” does not produce, from whole cloth, that experience; how people talk about it is shaped by the empirical reality. But that empirical reality has in turn already, through a long history of thinking about it and acting on those thoughts, been shaped by discourse and ideology. It would be naïve, if not simplistic, to say that when we see a particular man hit a particular woman, that act has not been shaped by a long history of discourses and ideological framings of masculinity and

femininity: legal rights of marriage, police power, state authority, attitudes about the household division of labor, social roles within heterosexual relationships, men's homosocial power formations, property, and individualism all construct the gendered character of power. Moreover, individual practice—the “micro” level of social construction—occurs within a “meso” level of institutional, cultural, legal, and social practice, and a “macro” level of conceptual categories, such as the meaning of gender, race, and class. These levels of micro, meso, and macro cut across the three layers of ideology, materialization, and discourse.<sup>44</sup>

The interaction of these various layers, levels, and dimensions of social construction indicates the degree of “totality” that social constructivism maintains. It is thereby distinct from theories of “oppressive socialization,” which operate on an implicit assumption that there is a “natural” person underlying the layers of socialization we experience; if the socialization could be removed, that theory goes, the natural self would emerge and everything would be fine. Social constructivism denies this underlying person, claiming that social construction is something that operates at the level of language and knowledge as well as practice, and imbues every aspect of our existence, so that we become the beings we are with the desires we have. As Kathy Ferguson puts it, “it is not simply that [we are] being socialized; rather, a subject on whom socialization can do its work is being produced.”<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, these forces provide us with our powers as much as our limitations—a possibility that oppressive socialization theory excludes—because its constitution of “reality” is what makes it possible to desire, choose, and act. In other words, social construction is not merely a limitation on who we are, as if it were some false distortion of the “true” self. It is the only way that one can become a self. And although a different construction of women in the seventeenth, eighteenth, or nineteenth century might have been preferable from a feminist perspective, the fact remains that history unfolded through the particular construction that it did, which produced desires, identities, roles, options, and self-understandings. So social construction has “positive” as well as “negative” implications for meaning, identity, and choice.

Obviously, gender is not the only aspect of identity and desire that is socially constructed; class, race, and sexuality are the most obvious and commonly discussed in contemporary theory, though the present book will not consider the latter two in any detail. And women are not the only individuals constructed by gender. For instance, work on domestic violence shows that social discourses of romantic love feed ideals of masculinity that could lead some men to behave in abusive ways. Such ideals lead men to make choices that are contrary to their interests, self-defeating, or otherwise “inauthentic” in the positive liberty sense. Such choices range from capitulation to the conventional ideological role of

family breadwinner who is excluded from involvement in his children's lives to controlling and abusive behavior toward his children and partner. But conforming to patriarchal ideology also leads to external barriers, such as when men are violent toward other men, or when such violence leads to incarceration. This construction perpetuates the inner/outer, self/other dichotomy that is located at the heart of negative liberty's individualistic conception of the self: for the conception of who I am as a man leads me to "choose" violent behavior, instead of seeing that this choice has been constructed for me. For instance, the fact that the devotees of most professional sports teams and violent video games are male can hardly be attributed to testosterone, but rather to the learning of masculinity in American culture. What we do not see is the way that such choices and desires have been constructed for us through the learning of gender.<sup>46</sup>

Most contemporary freedom theorists do not take the social construction of desire into account. Though phenomena such as "brainwashing," "hypnosis," or "manipulation" are sometimes acknowledged, the more complex and common process by which beliefs can be caused by a combination of external forces working interactively with other internal aspects of the subject is generally ignored. Particularly in negative liberty theories, the general assumption is that the self is whole and complete, that the inner will is fully intact, that I can be "influenced" only by things that appeal to my passions and interests, and that only things completely external to me—such as a hypnotist—can interfere with my desire, will, and liberty. Beliefs, mistaken or not, that I take into myself are never seen as barriers to my will, but rather part of it, internal to me. Positive liberty, by contrast, with its notion of true and false desires, in principle allows for a social constructivist dynamic. But by claiming that there is one true will, determined by objective principles of virtue or truth, it often similarly denies the complex process of social construction by which individual identity is constituted by and within particular social contexts. "Second-guessing" is the most hated aspect of positive liberty, because of its totalitarian "mind control" associations. But social constructivism reveals that second-guessing is to some extent unavoidable, always and already part of every understanding of freedom because always already part of the nature of desire. We can never be completely sure that what we want is what we really want, because human psychology ensures that we can never be sure of *why* we want something.

In the present book, I demonstrate that as an intellectual, social, and political process and phenomenon, social constructivism is an important aspect of canonical political theory. Because contemporary theorists often write as if social constructivism was invented by Foucault, this apparently basic and unremarkable argument has a potentially radical force. It also has a powerful potential to unsettle standard readings of canonical works,

which are seen as fundamentally dependent on theories of human “nature” that guide their prescriptions for government and politics. Social constructivism suggests not only that these theorists created their understanding of human nature and their visions for political society out of their own contemporary frameworks, but calls into question whether human “nature” is really as important to political theory as the accepted wisdom would have it.

In the holy trinity of social contract theory, for instance—Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau—the conception of human nature ostensibly plays a foundational role. Postulating a “state of nature” into which individuals were once born, these theorists developed arguments about what men’s fundamental nature was like: if one stripped away all laws, government, social institutions, customs, organized religions, and philosophical and moral systems, one would be able to see what man was in his essence. The result was somewhat different for each in the details, of course, as delineated in the chapters that follow. But all three theorists shared significant elements in their state of nature theories: all men were naturally free and equal; such freedom and equality inevitably resulted in competition for goods, respect, and recognition; the conflict to which such competition unavoidably gave way resulted in the institution of government. Such governments logically had to come into being through contract, because the voluntary choice of men was the only way in which institutionalized association, structures of authority, laws, and systems of punishment could be created that respected the fundamental and natural freedom and equality of all men, coming full circle. Indeed, an important (though not the only) rationale for government was to preserve and enhance the freedom and equality that nature, though creating such qualities in men, could not sustain.

The dominance of such naturalist readings of social contract theories and particularly of their understandings of freedom make them difficult to challenge, but I believe that these theorists actually employ social constructivism. They do not merely posit pre-given individuals who must navigate a world of external restraints and blockages to the expression of their “passions and interests,” but rather concern themselves with the social construction of desire and will. This is particularly evident for the concept of freedom, as a persistent theme in all of these social contract theories is a tension between free choice and the right choice. That is, in seeking to create a justification and foundation for government that respects natural freedom, the theories all base political legitimacy on individual choice: if I am naturally (and negatively) free, then choice, or consent, is the only way that I can have a limitation on my freedom that is simultaneously an expression of that very same freedom. As Hobbes puts

it, there can be “no obligation on any man which ariseth not from some act of his own; for all men equally are by nature free.”<sup>47</sup>

Thus free choice—freedom in the negative liberty sense—is central. But because these theorists are equally concerned with what such free individuals might choose, they also seek to construct men through social institutions and practices that will make them want to choose what the theorists think they should choose: freedom in the positive liberty sense of making the “right” choice that reflects my “true” will. Because such institutions and practices are decidedly social, and hence presuppose civil government, the naturalism of the state of nature is obviously challenged, if not contradicted outright. In the chapters that follow, I trace the ways in which the respective theorists actually produce the subjects that they claim to be describing. I show that social construction occurs in modern political theories of freedom in several related ways.

The first, most obviously, is the literal construction of the text. That is, political theory involves an ideological and discursive creation of a particular way of seeing and understanding the world. The way in which “man” or “humanity” is conceptualized, the definition of freedom, the relationship of law to freedom, and the role and purpose of the state are all literally constructed through the writing of these political theory texts that are read by, and in turn influence, audiences of particular genders, classes, nationalities, and time periods. The textual conceptualizations that deployed a new discourse and vocabulary about the human condition, the meaning of humanity, and society in turn contributed to the creation of a new ideology of liberal capitalism, as freedom was defined in such a way so as to exclude women and laborers *de facto*, if not *de jure*. Such exclusion, apparently at odds with the premises of “human nature” on which they were founded, contained internal inconsistencies, if not downright misrepresentations of women and the poor.

How these entities are defined by each theorist entails an interpretation of empirically observable phenomena, but such interpretation is filtered through a set of political beliefs, attitudes, and desires: that is, descriptions of how people *do* behave is in part a function of the theorist’s view of how people *should* behave. Hence, all men are declared to be naturally free because the theorist wants them to be free; the descriptive character of the statement obscures its deeply normative sentiment. Freedom is thereby defined along the lines of the particular way the theorist wants men to be and fed into the different forms of government they prefer. Ideology thus plays a key role in the social construction of political theories of freedom.

But the theories also prescribe institutions, laws, policies, and practices that will coerce and socialize individuals and create their identities, their moral sensibilities, and their epistemological frameworks. And in this,

political theory “materializes” itself into concrete effects. These texts were read by men of power, who were influenced or persuaded by these theories to translate their ideas into policy or law. Some theorists, like Locke, were directly tied to such men (the Earl of Shaftesbury), and indeed their theories reflected the ideas of their politically active patrons. Others, like Mill, were themselves officeholders and politically active. Some texts, such as Rousseau’s *Emile*, were “best-sellers” and influenced daily practice at the popular level. Thus, in various ways, political theories have concrete material effects on the construction of individuals and society. Education for “virtue” or “character,” such as we find in Rousseau’s or Locke’s theories, is the most obvious, though often overlooked by political theorists. The forms of government that a theorist favors are less obvious but no less crucial: the ways in which laws are made and the relationship that various citizens are said to have with their rulers reflect the theorist’s idea of what it means to be a person, of course, but also produce that definition and make it real: if a government is established on the basis of popular elections, for instance, that electoral process will impact on the people participating in it, as Mill suggested. Public policy similarly constructs people in immediately material ways: poor-law policies, laws regarding men’s authority in the family, women’s social, political, and legal relationship to property, and moral codes of sexual behavior all materialize ideology into concrete reality, shaping and changing individuals’ lives, understandings of who they are and their place in the world, and what “reality” is.

More subtle constructions emerge through the definition of social institutions such as the family; these institutions, and the ways in which they are conceptualized through language, produce roles and identities for men and women that in turn define the citizen. How the private sphere is envisioned affects how it is organized: family structure, women’s role in the family, their relation to their husbands through law and social policy, all have concrete effects on what a woman is and the kind of life she leads. Rousseau is the most obvious here, for he structures a vision of the family that completely segregates women from politics, cities, and indeed the public sphere altogether, to produce women who are modest, chaste, and subservient to men. Other theorists may be less obvious, but are no less effective in their constructions of gender, as I will show in the chapters that follow. Discourse, ideology, and materiality thus interact through the texts themselves, through the ideas put forth in the theories that circulate through the political and social realms, and through the social institutions and practices that emerge out of or are reinterpreted by the theories. A new ideology created new institutions, practices, and relationships, such as the bourgeois family and mercantilist economy, that made the ideology true: as women, who at the beginning of the seventeenth century often participated along with husbands in the public economy, were pushed out

of the economic sphere and into the home, the meaning of the family, the private and public, of women themselves, shifted and developed to reflect the ideology's ideals.<sup>48</sup> Educational treatises and policies turned to the production and reinforcement of the ideological and moral ideals that underwrote these social relationships, in many ways furthering the divide between the genders and classes, in other ways making that divide more vulnerable to collapse. This in turn created different ways of thinking about women and laborers that led to constructions of new policies (like poor-law reform or laws regarding women's property rights) that further solidified the ideological and linguistic meanings. Social construction thus occurs at many levels in the modern canonical theories of freedom.

As I will argue in the chapters that follow, particularly significant for freedom in this complex interaction of ideology, materiality, and discourse are the ways in which the theories discussed here, ostensibly dedicated to free choice, construct citizens and other subjects to make very particular choices, a tension I identify between the individual's "own choice" and the "right choice."<sup>49</sup> The architecture of their theories of government and morality all require that the individuals who constitute these governments and political societies display particular features and express particular desires that the theorist needs them to have and express. This uniformity of character that the theories expect of citizens, as well as of noncitizens such as women and the poor, indicates a conceptualization of freedom and choice that contains a particular content, as in positive liberty, and yet adheres steadfastly to specific notions of process, as in negative liberty. But it also means that the possibility of transgression, of difference, though ostensibly encouraged, as in Mill's theory, or rejected, as in Rousseau's, is in reality effectively contained.

#### THE GENDER POLITICS OF FREEDOM

This containment is demonstrated in various aspects of the theories, but one of the ways in which it is most apparent is in the treatment of women. Accordingly, my third theme is the *significance of gender* to understanding freedom as a historical, philosophical, and political concept. By analyzing the relationship of women in these canonical theories to the theory and practices of freedom—ranging from women's ability to make choices to women's education to their legal status as citizens and property holders to their relation to labor and markets—I am able to demonstrate that many of the incoherences and inconsistencies in canonical theories of freedom are at least linked to, and often most readily illustrated by, the theorists' respective views on women, namely, their human, civic, social, and familial status.

Gender particularly relates to Berlin's typology when one reads the canonical figures, for my analysis of gender's place in these theories supports my critique of the dichotomy between negative and positive liberty. Consideration of gender reveals that many of these theories not only deploy both positive and negative models, thus challenging the dualism often attributed to them, but demonstrate a dualistic theory of freedom in another sense: a negative liberty of rights in the public sphere, exclusively for men, positive liberty in the private sphere, where obedience and subordination of the will are cultivated and learned by everybody, though often in gender-specific ways. The deployment of both positive and negative models of freedom is, as will be shown, much more complicated than this, of course; it is not a simple public/private, male/female, negative/positive dichotomy, because women are often denied both kinds of freedom. Women are obviously restricted from pursuing desires, but they are also subjected to the constraints of positive liberty, because they are seen as creatures with inferior wills. Furthermore, though men are the primary agents of negative liberty, positive liberty is relevant to men when considering how men are educated to want the right things in order to prepare them for citizenship. But because both models are deployed in this two-tiered fashion inflected by gender, as well as class, canonical theorists appear to present them, and later theorists can interpret them, as opposed. When considering gender, we can see how interdependent they actually are.

This third theme might not seem as controversial as the other two, for increasing numbers of political scientists see the relevance of gender to the history of political thought as fairly old hat, dating back to Susan Moller Okin's *Women in Western Political Thought* through Carole Pateman's *The Sexual Contract* to the "Rereading the Canon" series.<sup>50</sup> But to many mainstream political theorists, political scientists, and philosophers, gender is still at best an afterthought, a sideline to historical analysis of the "major" themes and issues of the canonical texts. It is not that such theorists are actively hostile to feminism (though some still are), but that they do not see feminism as having anything to do with "real" political theory. It has long been one of the central aims of my academic writing to change such attitudes by demonstrating that feminism is a method, a way of conceptualizing social relations that reveals aspects of social and political life that are otherwise not seen, such as power dynamics in the family, or the ways in which the denial of equal rights to women is a more profound denial of women's full humanity.<sup>51</sup> In the present book, I am less directly concerned with methodological issues than I am with a basic argument about substance: gender matters to *all* political theory. By incorporating gender into the analysis of freedom offered by this book, I demonstrate that gender is an important aspect of the mainstream of political

theory, not an aside; and that if the mainstream is to be truly “mainstream,” and not narrowly focused on the experiences and interests of a small group of white men, then it must attend to gender, as well as race and class.

My social construction theme leads us to see that part of what is constructed by these theories of freedom is a particular form of masculine identity that is required of all proper “subjects” of liberty. Men are the quintessential “individuals” of modern negative liberty theory because they are able to be disconnected from others in the public sphere as heads of families—specifically, because they are intimately connected to others in the private sphere, particularly women and children who are dependent on them and under their control. This connectedness supports the gendered character of positive liberty as well, for the communities on which the general will or common good depends, depend in turn on women’s subordination to men, who are once again freedom’s appropriate “subjects” even as women are its “objects.” Women’s unfreedom is thus in some ways the precondition for men’s freedom. Indeed, women’s unfreedom is in some ways a precondition for political theory’s ability to define and conceptualize freedom, both as the absence of external impediments (because women are restrained more than men by law and social practice) and as the realization of virtue or true desire (because women’s behavior is a frequent focus). I say “in some ways” because increasing women’s freedom is also of varying concern to some theorists, as fluctuating recognition of women’s status as individuals and citizens is made. Additionally, gender is not the only factor affecting the modern conception of freedom; but it is a crucial part of the equation that is generally left out. Gender relates not only to the material conditions of freedom, but to the ways in which discourse and ideology operate to construct modern understandings of freedom as a concept and as a lived experience.

Certainly, the gender of the theorists most likely affected, even shaped, their theories, much like other aspects of their locations in the social matrix of culture, race, class, education, historical epoch, and nation. And their understandings of freedom may likely have been motivated to some extent by gender-related concerns. In my argument, however, I am less concerned whether gender is “foundational” in the “causal” or even “animating” sense than I am with the various ways in which gender intersects with freedom to give it the particular shape that it has. For instance, as I previously discussed, gender is a marker for different kinds of freedom, which adhere in various ways to the ideals of negative and positive freedom. But although seeing this tiered conception of freedom is made possible by attending to gender, as well as to class, that is quite different from arguing that gender or class caused this division. Whether attitudes and conceptualizations of gender led theorists to theorize freedom in the way

they did, or whether they simply sought to fit women into their theories because gender posed particular challenges to their conceptualizations that they needed to get around, is not something that can be definitively answered. In every chapter—one dedicated to each of the five theorists—I show how their treatment of women is related to their respective constructions of the concept and practice of freedom, and show that gender is important to the concept itself. But although gender is foundational to freedom in important ways, it is not “the” foundation; it is only part of the foundation. Many of the features that nonfeminist theorists traditionally identify are also important, such as emerging capitalism or industrialization, war and succession, religious conflict, changing cultural patterns, and other social phenomena.

That is, I am not using the concept of freedom to plumb a particular question about gender. Rather, the purpose of my analysis is to understand the concept of freedom, and my analysis of women and gender serves that thematic aim. There are many aspects to the concept of freedom that I analyze that do not obviously connect to gender. Each chapter begins with a detailed account of the fundamentals of freedom for each theorist, with gender and class brought in later to elucidate certain aspects of the theory, or because they highlight particular problems with it. Gender, then, is not central in the way that it typically is in works that call themselves “feminist,” and in that sense, one might say that this book is the least feminist work I have thus far published. But that would only be the case if one took feminism as an all-or-nothing ideology, rather than an intellectual framework for analysis. Although I do not wish to underplay the importance of gender, it is part of the point of this book to argue that gender must be considered *along with* these other things, by feminists and nonfeminists alike. I hope it demonstrates that gender need not be the core element of analysis in order to still be relevant, important, and worthy of attention. More precisely, the notion of “gender” itself needs to be broadened to include other aspects of experience like race and class, family structure, and economic system; “the core” should never be reduced to a simplistic category.

Hence, in several of the chapters I show ways in which class biases similarly influence the theorists’ conceptions of liberty. Moreover, I argue that gender and class need to be considered in tandem in many cases, particularly Locke and Mill. The idea of “intersectionality” has been a prominent concept in contemporary feminist theory, namely the idea that the different vectors of identity and power marked by gender, race, class, and sexuality need to be considered simultaneously in order to generate intellectually plausible and politically effective theories. When theorizing about “women,” it is argued, feminists cannot afford to ignore the fact that black and white women experience similar phenomena differently—

such as domestic violence—because of their race, or sexuality, or class.<sup>52</sup> Few feminists, however, despite repeatedly calling for intersectionality, actually achieve it in their own work, particularly when dealing with the history of canonical political thought. Certainly, in most mainstream political theory that considers canonical work, it is extremely uncommon to find any of these various categories considered at all, much less in tandem with each other, and feminist analysis is a significant improvement in our understanding of the canon. But even those feminist theories tend to treat “women” as an undifferentiated category; although we invoke the importance of race, class, and sexuality in contemporary analysis, as soon as we reach back before the late twentieth century, it seems that once again “all the women are white,”<sup>53</sup> not to mention middle-class.

The ostensible reason for this could be that the majority of women in canonical political thought *are* white and middle-class: the wives and daughters of the men who were the primary subjects of political theory. It is rare to find a single comment made about women of color in the works of many Enlightenment theorists. Admittedly, they did not live in the “multicultural” milieu in which many westerners live today; but that hardly should have made them less aware of racial difference, with the advent of African slavery, as well as the encounters with Native Americans and Caribbeans that were taking place in the New World. Kant made some brief references to Native American women in his *Anthropology*; Mill an oblique reference to African American female slaves in *The Subjection of Women*. Rousseau similarly made passing recognition of “savages” in *The Origin of Inequality*.<sup>54</sup> References in Locke’s work to Africans of either gender are extremely scarce, thus causing a number of scholars to abandon the attempt to develop a definitive argument about his views on slavery.<sup>55</sup> Even the work that historians—and very few of them, at that—have offered attests more to the milieu in which theorists like Locke wrote, rather than any definitive claims about the theorists’ lives and experiences themselves.<sup>56</sup> Just as it may be the case that women’s failure to show up on a theorist’s radar screen is not owing to women’s absence from history, but rather to the theorist’s inattention, contempt, and dismissiveness toward women, so it is likely that a theorist’s inattention to race is the mark of his racism, for he does not even see race as worthy of his notice. It is thus understandable that feminist political theorists have not addressed the possible intersections of race and gender in the canonical work: there is simply too little material to work with.

However, class issues were considered at somewhat greater length by theorists such as Mill, Marx, and Kant, and less overtly, though no less significantly, by Locke and Rousseau, and to a more obscure extent by Hobbes, as a number of commentators have shown. Foremost among these was C. B. Macpherson, whose idea of “possessive individualism”

held that in state of nature theory people were focused on acquisition. The supposedly natural individuals at the heart of Hobbes's and Locke's theory were, Macpherson argued, the bourgeois individuals of emerging capitalism: white, propertied, middle- to upper-class.<sup>57</sup> By locating these theories at the dawn of capitalism, possessive individualism theorized an ontology for a new historical era and world order. People were constructed—in the sense that the theories conceptualized and defined humans—as “individuals” in the most extreme sense of the term: as innately separate from other people, even hostile and antagonistic to them. In the interest of challenging hierarchical, agnatic obeisance, these theorists denied any and all natural bonds of community; relationships could be established only by formal agreement, the result of individual choice. Hence, government could be legitimately founded only by a “social contract,” or an explicit agreement between governments and the people they were to govern. This myth of contractual obligations, Macpherson argued, obscured the relationships of inequality on which they were based; what made it possible for bourgeois “individuals” to be such was the hidden existence of propertyless laborers.

The theory of possessive individualism gave feminists a useful entry point for considering gender, because of course the white propertied possessive individuals of which Macpherson spoke were decidedly male. And moreover, those bonds that were most arguably natural, namely the family, were removed from the public sphere by definition, and women were assigned exclusively to that realm of the family. In this sense, Macpherson provided a sort of template for feminist analysis: by arguing that underneath the language of “free and equal” individuals in a state of nature lay very unequal beings who were not at all universal or natural but rather situated in particular social and economic relationships in a particular historical era, Macpherson showed us that the state of nature arguments provided a mask to hide a class bias. Feminists subsequently argued that this language also masked a gender bias. But the ways in which these two stories of gender and class intersect has not been addressed by political theorists.

Thus, to argue that freedom is gendered does not mean that gender is the only thing that interpreters need to look at. Class, the context set by historical events, other texts written by the author that are not obviously related to his or her concept of freedom are all important as well, and are considered in my argument. Furthermore, to say that freedom as a concept is based on masculine experience, that it is structured to defend masculine interests, does not mean that the concept of freedom does not, much less cannot, apply to women. To say that would presuppose a dichotomy between the male and female gender that feminists have long challenged: difference is not necessarily dichotomy, even if some aspects

of gendered experience seem more at odds than others. Women can and do act freely in a variety of ways, if under constrained conditions. Neither does the argument that freedom is gendered mean that freedom is straightforward, that women or men are either completely free or unfree. Insofar as freedom is based on a set of interests that only men—not all men, but few if any women—could access at the time when the theories were written, such as selecting one’s representatives through a limited electoral process, women are thereby excluded. But when conditions change and women can access those interests—for instance, by gaining suffrage—disadvantages to women will not necessarily disappear; hence women’s suffrage has not produced gender equity in public office or in many public policies, such as welfare, abortion, sexual harassment, pay equity, Social Security for homemakers, or child care for working mothers. The same holds true for excluded groups of men.



It should be clear by now that social constructivism, gender, and Berlin’s typology interact in the argument in a variety of ways. The Enlightenment theorists, by placing human agency and individualism at the core of politics, problematized state authority, which is invested in controlling people. Starting from the premise of individual agency, doing what I want—what I choose—is central to the theories of Hobbes, Locke, and Mill. And although Rousseau and Kant link freedom with morality and apparently independent criteria of virtue, rationality, and goodness, both clearly hold that individuals must choose the good, rational, or virtuous in order to be truly free; they cannot have such goodness thrust upon them without violating freedom. Indeed, one could argue that such choice was more important for these theorists than it was for Hobbes, Locke, and Mill, who similarly held that people had to make the right choices, but were apparently so uneasy about that possibility that they rather disingenuously hid the reality of choicelessness behind the rhetoric of consent or, in Mill’s case, democracy.

Certainly it would be a mistake simply to label such theories authoritarian, for the primacy of individual choice was nevertheless a core theoretical concept, even if these theorists could not figure out how to realize it consistently in their plans for the state. Instead, I am arguing, they reconciled the tension between individual agency and state authority by providing choice for certain segments of the population and controlling others, particularly white women, nonlanded laborers, the poor, and implicitly men and women of color. Such control, if it is to be consistent with the ideology of choice, must be masked, and this occurs most effec-

tively if the state controls individuals to such an extent that they are not aware of being controlled; that is, if they are constructed to accept the disciplinary power of the state as a key expression of their desires. The state, thus, is successful only because, or insofar as, social practices and social formations like the family can construct identities, subjectivities, and desires in ways that feed state interests. This is why freedom must be considered in its “internal” as well as “external” dimensions, for it requires us to understand how we have come to be the citizens we are in the twenty-first century. Understanding that process of becoming, including its origins in the modern era, is central to understanding the concept of freedom.

Each of the theorists considered in the following five chapters obviously handles this set of issues differently. I do not propose a single formula that fits all of these theorists, and I have not selected these five because they cohere to a particular pattern. Clearly, certain similarities will emerge as I explore the three themes I have articulated, and certain patterns of argument may recur. Indeed, what may be most sobering is the degree to which the same issues repeat themselves. Although that may be reassuring to some political theorists, who can take it as evidence that modern Western political theory has achieved truth, it will be more depressing to feminists and other progressives, who can see it as evidence of the persistence of class and sex bias. This bias is particularly disturbing in the early twenty-first century, when “freedom” has become a term of ideological doublespeak, bandied about by irresponsible and duplicitous political leaders. This makes it especially important to gain a fuller and more accurate understanding of some of the major historical figures responsible for founding contemporary assumptions and beliefs about the concept. Freedom may not be the *most* important ideal to humanity, or even the most fundamental, but it is nevertheless central to understanding who we are. It is my hope that this book may contribute to that project in some small way.