

OXFORD



**THE
SOCIAL
AND
POLITICAL
PHILOSOPHY
OF
MARY
WOLLSTONECRAFT**

EDITED BY
SANDRINE BERGÈS
AND ALAN COFFEE

The Social and Political Philosophy
of Mary Wollstonecraft

MIND ASSOCIATION OCCASIONAL SERIES

This series consists of carefully selected volumes of significant original papers on predefined themes, normally growing out of a conference supported by a Mind Association Major Conference Grant. The Association nominates an editor or editors for each collection, and may cooperate with other bodies in promoting conferences or other scholarly activities in connection with the preparation of particular volumes.

Director, Mind Association: M. Fricker

Publications Officer: Julian Dodd

Recently Published in the Series:

The Epistemic Life of Groups

Edited by Michael S. Brady and Miranda Fricker

Reality Making

Edited by Mark Jago

The Metaphysics of Relations

Edited by Anna Marmodoro and David Yates

Thomas Reid on Mind, Knowledge, and Value

Rebecca Copenhaver and Todd Buras

Foundations of Logical Consequence

Edited by Colin R. Caret and Ole T. Hjortland

The Highest Good in Aristotle and Kant

Edited by Joachim Aufderheide and Ralf M. Bader

How We Fight

Ethics in War

Edited by Helen Frowe and Gerald Lang

The Morality of Defensive War

Edited by Cécile Fabre and Seth Lazar

Metaphysics and Science

Edited by Stephen Mumford and Matthew Tugby

Thick Concepts

Edited by Simon Kirchin

The Social and Political Philosophy of Mary Wollstonecraft

EDITED BY

Sandrine Bergès
and Alan Coffee

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of
Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

© the several contributors 2016

The moral rights of the authors have been asserted

First Edition published in 2016

Impression: 1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in
a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the
prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted
by law, by licence or under terms agreed with the appropriate reprographics
rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the
above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the
address above

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016939695

ISBN 978-0-19-876684-1

Printed in Great Britain by
Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

Links to third party websites are provided by Oxford in good faith and
for information only. Oxford disclaims any responsibility for the materials
contained in any third party website referenced in this work.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
<i>Note on the Contributors</i>	ix
<i>Note on the Texts</i>	xiii
Introduction	1
<i>Sandrine Bergès and Alan Coffee</i>	
1. Reflections on Inequality, Respect, and Love in the Political Writings of Mary Wollstonecraft	14
<i>Sylvana Tomaselli</i>	
2. Wollstonecraft on Marriage as Virtue Friendship	34
<i>Nancy Kendrick</i>	
3. The Role of the Passions in Mary Wollstonecraft's Notion of Virtue	50
<i>Martina Reuter</i>	
4. Mary Wollstonecraft: An Early Relational Autonomy Theorist?	67
<i>Catriona Mackenzie</i>	
5. Mary Wollstonecraft, Children's Human Rights, and Animal Ethics	92
<i>Eileen Hunt Botting</i>	
6. Wollstonecraft and the Properties of (Anti-) Slavery	117
<i>Laura Brace</i>	
7. Republican Elements in the Thought of Mary Wollstonecraft	135
<i>Philip Pettit</i>	
8. Mary Wollstonecraft's Conception of Rights	148
<i>Susan James</i>	
9. Representation in Mary Wollstonecraft's Political Philosophy	166
<i>Lena Halldenius</i>	
10. Mary Wollstonecraft, Public Reason, and the Virtuous Republic	183
<i>Alan Coffee</i>	
11. Wet-Nursing and Political Participation: The Republican Approaches to Motherhood of Mary Wollstonecraft and Sophie de Grouchy	201
<i>Sandrine Bergès</i>	

12. Mary Wollstonecraft and Modern Philosophy	218
<i>Barbara Taylor</i>	
<i>Bibliography</i>	227
<i>Author Index</i>	241
<i>Subject Index</i>	243

Acknowledgements

Several of the papers in this volume were first presented at a conference on *The Social and Political Thought of Mary Wollstonecraft* at Birkbeck, University of London in May 2013. This workshop itself was a follow-up to a conference on *Mary Wollstonecraft: Philosophy and Enlightenment* in Lund University in February 2012. We would like to thank those who attended, participated, and took part in discussion at both events. In particular, we are grateful to Quentin Skinner and Karen O'Brien for their support. We would also like to express our admiration and appreciation for those students such as Christine Wolf who travelled across Europe just for the opportunity to take part in an event dedicated to the study of Wollstonecraft's philosophy.

Note on the Contributors

SANDRINE BERGÈS is a philosopher working at Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey. Her research interests are in ancient moral and political philosophy, feminist history of philosophy, and feminist ethics. She has published three books: *Plato, Virtue and the Law* (2009); *Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (2013); and *A Feminist Perspective on Virtue Ethics* (2015).

EILEEN HUNT BOTTING is a political theorist at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. She is currently finishing her book, *Wollstonecraft, Mill, and Women's Human Rights* and has also edited a scholarly edition of Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (2014). Her other books are *Family Feuds: Wollstonecraft, Burke, and Rousseau on the Transformation of the Family* (2006); *Feminist Interpretations of Alexis de Tocqueville* (2009), co-edited with Jill Locke; and the first scholarly edition of Hannah Mather Crocker's *Reminiscences and Traditions of Boston*, co-edited with Sarah L. Houser (2011).

LAURA BRACE is senior lecturer in political theory at the University of Leicester. Her core research interests are in the politics of property, especially in the meanings of self-ownership and self-sovereignty. She is the author of *The Politics of Property* (2004) and of journal articles on Wollstonecraft, Rousseau, Hegel, wet-nursing, and the fashioning of the eighteenth-century self. Her current research focuses on the politics of slavery in the abolitionist debates of the late eighteenth century and explores how, and in what contexts, slavery came to be imagined as the opposite of freedom.

ALAN COFFEE lectures on global ethics and human values at King's College London. His research focuses on social and political freedom, feminist theory, and the history and philosophy of slavery. His recent articles include: 'Mary Wollstonecraft, Freedom and the Enduring Power of Social Domination', *European Journal of Political Theory* (2012); 'Freedom as Independence: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Grand Blessing of Life', *Hypatia* (2013); and 'Two Spheres of Domination: Republican Theory, Social Norms, and the Insufficiency of Negative Freedom', *Contemporary Political Theory* (2014). His current book project is *Freedom: A Slave's Perspective*.

LENA HALLDENIUS is a philosopher specializing in political philosophy and the history of political thought. She is Professor of Human Rights at Lund University,

Sweden, and a Life Member of Clare Hall, Cambridge. Her research focuses on the concepts of freedom and rights, how moral concepts figure in political theory, how we conceptualize them, how values are shaped by institutions, and social, legal, and political change. She has a particular interest in the republican tradition of political thought. Her recent book, *Mary Wollstonecraft and Feminist Republicanism*, explores the relation between politics and morality in the works of Enlightenment philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft. In the history of political philosophy she has published articles on Wollstonecraft, Hobbes, Kant, and Locke.

SUSAN JAMES is Professor of Philosophy at Birkbeck College London. Her research lies at the intersections between early modern philosophy, feminist philosophy, and contemporary political philosophy. Among her publications are: *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Early Modern Philosophy* (1999); *Visible Women. Essays in Legal Theory and Political Philosophy*, co-edited with Stephanie Palmer (2002); *The Political Writings of Margaret Cavendish* (2003); *Spinoza on Philosophy Religion and Politics: The Theologico-Political Treatise* (2012). She is currently writing a collection of essays entitled *Spinoza on Learning to Live Together*.

NANCY KENDRICK is William and Elsie Prentice Professor of Philosophy at Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts in the US. She has published articles on Berkeley and Astell, Malebranche and Arnauld, Descartes, Hume, and Anselm. She is currently working on a book on theories of friendship by women writers in the history of philosophy.

CATRIONA MACKENZIE is Professor of Philosophy, Director of the Research Centre for Agency, Values, and Ethics, and Associate Dean (Research) in the Faculty of Arts at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. She is co-editor of several volumes including: *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self* (2000); *Practical Identity and Narrative Agency* (2008); *Emotions, Imagination and Moral Reasoning* (2012); and *Vulnerability: New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy* (2014). Mackenzie has published widely in moral psychology, ethics, applied ethics, and feminist philosophy in a variety of edited collections and in journals such as *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *Hypatia*, *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, and *Philosophical Explorations*.

PHILIP PETTIT is Laurance S. Rockefeller University Professor of Politics and Human Values at Princeton University, where he has taught political theory and philosophy since 2002. *Common Minds: Themes from the Philosophy of Philip*

Pettit appeared in 2007, edited by Geoffrey Brennan, R. E. Goodin, Frank Jackson, and Michael Smith. He works in moral and political theory and on background issues in the philosophy of mind and metaphysics. His recent monographs include: *Republicanism* (1997); *A Theory of Freedom* (2001); *Made with Words: Hobbes on Mind, Society and Politics* (2008); *On the People's Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy* (2012); and *Just Freedom: A Moral Compass for a Complex World* (2014).

MARTINA REUTER is Docent of Philosophy and Senior Lecturer in Gender Studies at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. She has published articles on feminist interpretations of the history of philosophy, with a focus on the thought of René Descartes and Mary Wollstonecraft, as well as on phenomenology and the theory of metaphors. Together with Sara Heinämaa she is the editor of *Psychology and Philosophy: Inquiries into the Soul from Late Scholasticism to Contemporary Thought* (2009).

BARBARA TAYLOR is Professor of Humanities at Queen Mary, University of London. Her publications include: *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (1983; 1993), which won the 1983 Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize; *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (2003); and *Women, Gender and Enlightenment, 1650–1850* (2005), co-edited with Sarah Knott. She is currently writing a history of solitude in the British Enlightenment. She is an editor of *History Workshop Journal* and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. She has been a visiting professor at the universities of Amsterdam, Indiana, Notre Dame, and the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales* in Paris, and has held research fellowships from the Nuffield Foundation, the British Academy, the Leverhulme Trust, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the Wellcome Trust.

SYLVANA TOMASELLI is the Sir Harry Hinsley Lecturer in History at St John's College, Cambridge. Her interests lie in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century political theory. She has written on a variety of topics, including the conjectural history of woman, the character of nations, toleration, and issues within and around feminism. She edited Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Men, Vindication of the Rights of Woman, and Hints* (1995) and wrote the entry on Mary Wollstonecraft in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2012).

Note on the Texts

There are a number of excellent editions of Wollstonecraft's works. The most complete is the seven-volume set, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, edited by Marilyn Butler and Janet Todd (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1989). While this is the only comprehensive collection in print, by its very nature it is not always accessible to the general interested reader. For this reason, and because our contributors draw on a wide range of Wollstonecraft's writings, we have allowed each to use his or her preferred edition. Readers unable to access *The Works* but who would like to compare references across the papers included here may find the many online editions of Wollstonecraft very helpful, such as at *Project Gutenberg* (<<https://www.gutenberg.org/>>) or the *Online Library of Liberty* (<<http://oll.libertyfund.org/>>).

Introduction

Sandrine Bergès and Alan Coffee

Anyone glancing through the course reading lists at most universities, or browsing the bookshelves in an academic bookshop, might reasonably conclude that philosophy was something that had been written historically only by men. Its standard lists of great names, beginning with Plato and Aristotle, perhaps continuing with Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke, moving on to Kant and Hegel, and into the last century with Russell, Wittgenstein, and others, rarely contain a single woman. Indeed, many students often struggle to name even one woman philosopher before the mid-twentieth century and Simone de Beauvoir or Hannah Arendt. Yet women have been writing philosophy throughout this history. Not only has there been a surprising number of female philosophers but they often achieved considerable influence in their lifetimes. As well as Mary Wollstonecraft, others such as Hipparchia, Hypatia, Heloise d'Argenteuil, Hildegard von Bingen, Christine de Pizan, Gabrielle Suchon, Anne Conway, Margaret Cavendish, Emilie du Châtelet, Mary Astell, Catharine Macaulay, and Sophie de Grouchy, to name only a few, all had substantial and well-deserved reputations in their own time and engaged with contemporary debates at the highest level.¹

The reasons that underpin the omission of women from the history of philosophy are many and complex. The processes by which the discipline of philosophy as we now understand it and of establishing what is often taken to be its canon took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.² These processes were controlled by men and there is no doubt that both sexism and

¹ For an account of women's extensive contribution to philosophy from antiquity to the twentieth century see Mary Ellen Waithe's (1987–94), *A History of Women Philosophers*, 4 vols (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers).

² See Jonathan Ree (2002), "Women Philosophers and the Canon", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 10 (4): 641–52.

ignorance have played a large part in obscuring women's contribution. Since philosophy is a discipline that in some sense focuses on the application of reason, then where the prevailing belief is that women were "created rather to feel than reason", as Wollstonecraft puts it, the idea of a woman philosopher just seemed wholly out of place.³ Whatever the precise causes of their neglect may have been, however, the situation is now changing. Intensive work is now being done to recover and restore the historic contribution that women have made to the pursuit of philosophy.⁴ As the influence of feminist thinking has reshaped so much of academic philosophical enquiry, refocusing its concerns beyond the confines of the post-Kantian project, so this has allowed us to reassess, as well as to rediscover, the considerable but forgotten input that women have had.

At the forefront of this revival is Mary Wollstonecraft. As the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she already has a prominent place in many people's minds as an inspirational early feminist. While this has been an enormously influential book, it does not represent the whole of her thought. Wollstonecraft was a prolific writer whose interests covered subjects as diverse as education, politics, history, moral theory, philosophy, and religion. She was an activist, a novelist, and a public intellectual who was fully engaged with the issues of her time. Wollstonecraft's analysis of the nature and causes of women's subjection is understandably seen as her outstanding contribution to the history of ideas. Nevertheless, this analysis is embedded within her own wider conceptual framework, which she brought to bear on the issues she addressed. The premise of our volume is that this wider philosophy is deserving of serious study, no less than her feminist legacy.

Wollstonecraft's influence in her own time is undeniable. She often engaged with her contemporaries—such as Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, and Catharine Macaulay—and she participated in some of the philosophical debates that went on to shape the world—spending time, for example, in Paris during the Terror to document the effects of the revolution. Nevertheless, if it is true that women philosophers have been written out of history, it is strikingly so in her case. Moreover, her fall from grace happened almost immediately after her death when her husband, William Godwin, decided to publicize intimate details about her life

³ Mary Wollstonecraft (1992), *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London: Penguin Books), p. 155.

⁴ Lisa Shapiro, "The Place of Women in Early Modern Philosophy", in *Feminist Reflections on the History of Philosophy*, eds Lilli Alanen and Charlotte Witt (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2004); Jacqueline Broad and Karen Green (2009), *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1400–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). See also Green and Hagenruber's introduction to a special issue of *The Monist* on women's historical contribution to philosophy ("Introduction", *The Monist* 2015, 98: 1–6) as well as the papers they discuss.

including the fact that she had her first child out of wedlock, that she had been in love with a married man, and that she twice attempted suicide. Wollstonecraft was immediately shunned as an immoral writer, and her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was not reprinted after 1796, so that by the mid-nineteenth century, George Elliot tells us that it was “rather scarce”.⁵

It would not be fair to say that Wollstonecraft made no impact after her death but we do have to work harder to find evidence of it.⁶ For example, in spite of her tarnished reputation, Wollstonecraft did have an influence on nineteenth-century political philosophy. Harriet Taylor had almost certainly read her, as had John Stuart Mill, and the arguments of their *Subjection of Women* were profoundly influenced by the *Vindication*.⁷ It is striking, however, that neither refers to her. In “The Enfranchisement of Women”, published in the *Westminster Review* in July 1851, Taylor writes “Great thinkers indeed, at different times, from Plato to Condorcet, besides some of the most eminent names of the present age, have made emphatic protests in favour of the equality of women”.⁸ Her failure to acknowledge Wollstonecraft, whose arguments she follows very closely, is perhaps not surprising. Claiming an alliance with Plato and Condorcet (even with the latter’s associations with the French Revolution) was a better tactic than referring to Wollstonecraft, the fallen woman.

Wollstonecraft remained mostly forgotten by the time of the first wave of feminism. By the latter part of the twentieth century as feminism entered its second wave, although her work was becoming more widely read, its proponents did not see her as a good role model, finding her too bourgeois, and a slave to notions of femininity. She was accused of “feminist misogyny”, of measuring women’s worth in masculine terms and finding them wanting.⁹ Part of this

⁵ George Eliot’s review essay “Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft” was first published in *The Leader* in 1855.

⁶ And we should be aware also of extending this conclusion beyond Europe. Eileen Hunt Botting and Christine Carey argue that Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman* was a significant influence in the thought of American women’s rights advocates in the nineteenth century. See their 2004 article “Wollstonecraft’s Philosophical Impact on Nineteenth-Century American Women’s Rights Advocates”, *American Journal of Political Science* 48 (4): 707–22.

⁷ There is evidence that Mill knew Wollstonecraft’s works, as he and Auguste Comte discuss these (in passing) in correspondence: see Oscar Haac (1995), *The Correspondence of John Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction), p. 188. Helen Taylor reports having read the *Vindication* as a teenager, and that the book was a gift from her mother, which suggests that Harriet Taylor had some idea at least of its contents.

⁸ Andrew Pyle (1995), *The Subjection of Women: Contemporary Responses to John Stuart Mill* (London: Continuum), p. 16.

⁹ Susan Gubar (1994), “Feminist Misogyny: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Paradox of ‘It Takes One to Know One’”, *Feminist Studies* 20 (3): 453–73, p. 454. Thomas H. Ford (2009), “Mary Wollstonecraft and the Motherhood of Feminism”, *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 37 (3 & 4): 189–205.

assessment was born, paradoxically, of her admiration for Rousseau and her insistence that girls should be educated in the way that he had determined boys should be. For Wollstonecraft, treating women as differently abled from men and failing to offer them the same means of self-improvement was the prime cause of gender inequality and its consequent social ills. But this could too easily be read as saying that women ought to be treated like men in order to be considered equally worthy members of society, hence the accusations of misogyny. This charge was perhaps tied up with a more general suspicion by feminists of this period of eighteenth-century, or Enlightenment, thinking which has been seen to assert the pre-eminence of abstract reason over emotion, where reason was understood as the preserve of men and was associated with concepts such as universalism and autonomy that privileged a male-centred view of the world and made the female perspective more difficult to articulate.¹⁰ While Wollstonecraft is most definitely a product of this time, it is now widely accepted both that attitudes to reason and the emotions were far more diverse and nuanced than this simplified sketch allows, and that Wollstonecraft herself engaged confidently with its debates rather than merely being shaped by them.¹¹

Until very recently Wollstonecraft's work was rarely read outside of gender studies and literature courses. This began to change in the 1990s. Virginia Sapiro's excellent study of Wollstonecraft's political theory, *A Vindication of Political Virtue*, was particularly influential in bringing her work to the attention of a more general audience of political scientists. The last two and a half decades have witnessed an intense scholarly attention on Wollstonecraft from many disciplines. Janet Todd's biography in 2000 and Barbara Taylor's examination of *Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* in 2003 were only two amongst several major books that increased awareness of Wollstonecraft's significance as a thinker and as someone who should be engaged with on her own terms.¹² Philosophers, however, have come late to recognize the importance of Wollstonecraft

¹⁰ See, for example, Genevieve Lloyd (1984), *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in the Western World* (London: Routledge); Joan Landes (1988), *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press); Carole Pateman (1989), *The Disorder of Women* (Cambridge: Polity Press); Moira Gatens (1991), *Feminism and Philosophy: Perspectives on Difference and Equality* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

¹¹ These re-evaluations were made possible in no small measure thanks to the pioneering work done by the earlier feminists such as those mentioned.

¹² Also of note is Wendy Gunther-Canada (2001), *Rebel Writer: Mary Wollstonecraft and Enlightenment Politics* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press). More recent treatments include Susan Laird (2014), *Mary Wollstonecraft, Philosophical Mother of Co-Education* (London: Bloomsbury); and Lena Halldenius (2015), *Mary Wollstonecraft and Feminist Republicanism* (London: Pickering and Chatto). There has also been a wealth of journal articles written in the last ten years. Many are listed in the Bibliography, this volume.

within their own field. It is salutary to note, for example, that while there are a number of very good collections of essays on Wollstonecraft, as far as we are aware, ours is the first to position itself specifically as a philosophical collection directed at themes within that discipline.¹³

Just as Wollstonecraft had many interests and engaged in numerous pursuits, from writing fiction to taking part in political debate, so she can be studied from many perspectives. While philosophical examination of her work is not the only way to capture her thought, it remains very much under-researched, and we believe it will prove a very fruitful means of bringing out some of the subtleties, tensions, and innovations we find in Wollstonecraft's writing. In adopting this approach, however, we are not simply "opening up the philosophical canon" as it currently exists and inserting a woman. Rather, just as the work of feminists have altered philosophy as a discipline, thereby enabling women such as Wollstonecraft to be recognized for their philosophical contribution, so Wollstonecraft's recognition will, we hope, further broaden our understanding of the role women have played in the history of philosophy.

The Chapters

Our aim is to bring together a collection of essays that reflects the breadth of current leading philosophical research in Wollstonecraft's work. In just one volume, of course, we cannot hope to present a comprehensive account of her overall philosophy from a single standpoint. Instead, our contributors write from a variety of perspectives that demonstrate something of the diverse interest that there is in her thought. Regrettably, there is a great deal that we have had to leave out. With any historical philosopher, those who study her face the dilemma of deciding to what extent they examine her work contextually, as it engages with her own intellectual environment, compared with treating her ideas as free-standing contributions to a larger conversation that spans the generations and

¹³ We do not mean to make too much of this claim. The superb *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft* in the *Rereading the Canon* series (1996), ed. Mary Falco (University Park, PA: University of Penn State Press), for example, orientates itself in the preface as a political science collection written by people in that field, while the *Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft* (2002), ed. Claudia Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) is in the *Companions to Literature* series. The division between disciplines such as philosophy, political science, and literature is by no means rigid, of course. We are not making any specific claims about the content of these volumes so much as their positioning with relation to others working within those areas. Most of the contributors to this volume would identify as philosophers or are located in philosophy departments.

that may be applied to current issues. Our authors strike the balance between these two aspirations at different points.

The subjects addressed in this collection include the role played by Wollstonecraft's understanding of love and respect in her arguments on inequality (Sylvana Tomaselli), the conceptual relationship between friendship and marriage (Nancy Kendrick), the place of the emotions in the development of civic virtue (Martina Reuter), the relational nature of her conception of independence (Catriona Mackenzie), the application of her views on rights and duties to children and animals (Eileen Hunt Botting), and the influence of the abolitionist movement on her views on women as property (Laura Brace). Five of the contributors focus on one particular aspect of Wollstonecraft's political philosophy, namely her contribution to republican theory and, in particular, her use of its central ideal of freedom conceived of as the absence of domination or dependence. Philip Pettit gives a short introduction to republicanism. This is followed by Susan James's examination of a specifically republican derivation of the concepts of rights in Wollstonecraft's discourse as powers to act. Next, Lena Halldenius shows how we may derive a view of representation from her views on freedom and independence, and Alan Coffee looks at the role of public reason in bringing about and maintaining individual and collective freedom. Sandrine Bergès then tackles Wollstonecraft's attempt to resolve the tensions between her conceptions of the duties of a republican woman as mother and as citizen. The volume concludes with an afterword by Barbara Taylor that provides a perspective on the previous five papers, reminding us that despite its clear contemporary relevance, Wollstonecraft's republicanism is very much a product of her times.

We briefly introduce the volume's papers and themes below under three headings corresponding to Wollstonecraft's influences, her social and political philosophy generally, and finally her republicanism specifically.

Influences

In-depth study of past philosophers often requires that we have some grasp of what their influences were. With male writers this task is often straightforward: we ask where they studied or who their mentors were, we look at records of their home libraries. But with writers such as Wollstonecraft who had no access to formal higher education and no family home in which she could house a large number of books, it is much harder. We must hunt for clues, such as in letters in which she comments on what she is currently reading, in the references she makes in her published works, and in the reviews she wrote for Joseph Johnson's *Analytical Review*. We may also make certain deductions about her education.

We can assume, for instance that she did not read Greek as this was not generally taught to middle-class girls and since she makes no reference to learning it herself. Nevertheless, it is clear that, in one way or another, the classics did influence her.

Although Plato's works were not translated into English until after her death, Wollstonecraft's friend and mentor Richard Price was a noted Platonist and others with whom she engaged in debate were often trained classicists. Sylvana Tomaselli makes a convincing case for reading Wollstonecraft, not as an isolated crusader for equality, but as a writer who was very much part of her contemporary philosophical debates. While focusing on her intellectual relationships with Price and Burke, she makes it apparent that Wollstonecraft was, in fact, familiar with classical debates and arguments, tracing Wollstonecraft's famous attack on servility in relationships to Plato's *Symposium*. Tomaselli also suggests that the strong religious streak in Wollstonecraft's works, and the complex relationship between human love and divine love, are also a product of the pervasive presence of Platonism in her circle. The idea that the abstract form of love is somehow more important than actual instances of love goes some way towards explaining some of her attitudes to marriage, but as Tomaselli argues, it is also significant in her rejection of social models based on servility.

If we can be confident that Wollstonecraft only knew Plato at second hand, there is at least a possibility that she had read some Aristotle. His *Politics* had been translated into French in the late Middle Ages and there was at least one English translation (attributed to the poet John Donne). There is also some evidence that she had read the *Politics*, as she criticizes Burke for misinterpreting part of it.¹⁴ Nancy Kendrick's chapter offers an Aristotelian interpretation of Wollstonecraft's conception of the virtues and argues further that Wollstonecraft's discussion of marriage is best understood in terms of Aristotle's analysis of friendship. Kendrick shows that the capacity to develop Aristotelian virtue friendships has implications that go beyond marriage and into other kinds of relationships, such as the female friendships depicted in Wollstonecraft's novels, which were no doubt modelled on her own close female friendships with Jane Arden and Fanny Blood. Ultimately, Kendrick argues, virtue friendship is the clue to women's development as full moral agents, thereby showing that Wollstonecraft's emphasis on marriage is not simply a worthwhile philosophical

¹⁴ See Tomaselli's edition of *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 19, and Nathalie F. Taylor (2007), *The Rights of Woman as Chimera: The Political Philosophy of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York and London: Routledge), p. 8.

discussion in itself but an angle from which to approach more traditional questions in political philosophy.

Unlike Plato, who could only be read in Greek and perhaps Latin, and Aristotle, for whom only scarce and old translations could be found, the Stoics enjoyed a fair amount of popularity amongst the non-classically trained readers of the late eighteenth century. This was due in great part to Elizabeth Carter's bestselling translation into English of the works of first-century Stoic, Epictetus. Though we have no direct evidence that Wollstonecraft had read this translation, it is not unlikely as one of the authors she regarded as a model, Catharine Macaulay, wrote approvingly of the Stoics, especially concerning their educational models. Martina Reuter examines Wollstonecraft's position on the relationship between reason and virtue. She works through eighteenth-century discussions of Stoicism, in particular Jonathan Swift's literary depiction of Stoic philosophy in *Gulliver's Travels*, arguing that Wollstonecraft's own analysis of the relationship between reason and the emotions (or passions), in which both are necessary and sufficient for the development of virtue, shows a subtler take on Stoicism.

Social and Political Philosophy

Until relatively recently, Wollstonecraft was most often read within a liberal framework of either one of its representatives or as rebelling against some of the strictures it imposes.¹⁵ So, where an earlier generation of feminists was especially critical of liberalism for its perceived individualism, this concern was often read into Wollstonecraft's work.¹⁶ At the same time, Wollstonecraft's evident emphasis on both individual liberty and strong values of egalitarian community built on mutual trust and commitment seemed difficult to reconcile. This has led commentators such as Penny Weiss to conclude that Wollstonecraft was struggling to "redefine liberalism itself".¹⁷ Catriona Mackenzie's contribution

¹⁵ Penny Weiss (2009), *Canon Fodder: Historical Women Political Thinkers* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press), pp. 84–90.

¹⁶ For critical feminist accounts of liberalism that include Wollstonecraft amongst its targets, see Alison Jaggar (1983), *Feminist Policies and Human Nature* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield); and Ruth Abbey (2009), "Back to the future: Marriage as Friendship in the Thought of Mary Wollstonecraft", *Hypatia* 14 (3): 78–95; see also Abbey (2011), *The Return of Feminist Liberalism* (London: Routledge). The relationship between the different varieties of feminism and liberalism is, of course, a complex one. In recent years there has been a fruitful dialogue between these approaches: for a helpful collection, see Amy Baehr (2004), *Varieties of Feminist Liberalism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield).

¹⁷ Penny Weiss, *Canon Fodder*, p. 90.

takes on this challenge. Drawing on the ideal of freedom as independence, she shows how Wollstonecraft prefigures current debates in the field of relational autonomy. Mackenzie maps Wollstonecraft's analysis on to her own distinction in which two aspects to freedom are required, these being what she calls self-determination (the civic opportunity to determine the direction of one's own life) and self-government (the independence of mind to exercise competent and authentic critical self-reflection). Entwined with these, Mackenzie identifies a critical third element of self-authorization, through which individuals are able to regard themselves as agents capable of self-determination and self-government. As Wollstonecraft shows, self-authorization cannot be had without the authorization of others through having sufficient social standing. To bring this about would require more than a mere set of political rights, for example. What would be needed is a comprehensive reworking of the systems of norms and practices that have entrenched their position of inequality.

Eileen Hunt Botting takes on less widely discussed aspects of Wollstonecraft's thought (children and animals) and presents them in a contemporary context, arguing that we should look at Wollstonecraft's discussion of children's and animals' rights in relationship not only to her contemporaries Immanuel Kant and Jeremy Bentham, but also to Onora O'Neill's classification of duties. Her resulting analysis of Wollstonecraft's discussion of rights and duties, and in particular the indivisibility of sets of rights, casts light on recent debates in international human rights laws. This chapter is a prime example of how discussing the themes presented in her works can have applications that reach beyond what Wollstonecraft originally intended.

If Wollstonecraft is partly ahead of her time in raising the rights issue of children and animals, references to slavery place her squarely within the republican debates of the eighteenth century. Political subjection, such as to an absolute monarch, was routinely described in the very same terms as the formal state of legal bondage, a position that had been adopted by advocates of women's rights since at least Mary Astell (1666–1731).¹⁸ This rhetoric is prominent in Wollstonecraft's work and pervades her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and the claim that women are always slaves in virtue of their inevitable social subordination to men's arbitrary power provides one of its central organizing principles. Laura Brace explores this image, placing it in the context of the abolitionist debates of Wollstonecraft's own time concerning the legitimacy of owning

¹⁸ Astell famously asked why "if all men are born free, how is it that all women are born slaves?" (quoted in Patricia Springborg (ed.) (1996), "Reflections upon Marriage", in *Astell: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 18).

property in a person. While slavery was viewed as a usurping of a person's natural right to freedom, freedom in turn was understood to make moral demands which neither women nor chattel slaves were capable of fulfilling. Brace shows how Wollstonecraft dissolves the tension between these strands through a radical view of property as having the potential to corrupt the moral and rational capacities not just of the victims of domination but of the whole of bourgeois society.

Republicanism

A significant development in the study of Wollstonecraft in recent years has been the growing appreciation of the impact her republican commitments had on her thinking. Although still often described as undergoing a revival, interest in republicanism as a field of political inquiry has become well established over the last two decades or more. Nevertheless, in the context of Wollstonecraft studies, it remains something of a newcomer. What the last five chapters in this volume show is that the philosophical implications of reading Wollstonecraft through a republican lens turn out to be far-reaching.

There is no shortage of women who can be described as republicans, especially in the eighteenth century. Women as intellectually and politically diverse as Mary Astell, Catharine Macaulay, Olympe de Gouges, and Sophie de Grouchy have, in different ways, drawn on that tradition's resources.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the pool of sources from which today's neo-republican theorists draw has been resolutely male. From Livy to Machiavelli, and Harrington to Price, men exclusively have provided the authoritative voices that help define the core republican concepts. An obvious consequence of this has been to deprive republican theory of an alternative internal perspective to challenge and broaden its principles and focus. This not only leaves republican thinking impoverished but by excluding their voices and perspectives, exposes marginalized and minority group members to the very domination that it seeks to reduce. Especially vulnerable, of course, have

¹⁹ As a committed royalist and High Church Tory, Astell would, of course, be horrified to be classed alongside republicans. She does, however, make extensive appeal to the principle of freedom as independence from arbitrary power, or domination, and in that sense she can be said to draw on a republican resource: see Patricia Springborg (2005), *Mary Astell: Theorist of Freedom from Domination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). On the other writers listed, see Karen Green (2012) "Liberty and Virtue in Catherine Macaulay's Enlightenment Philosophy", *Intellectual History Review* 22 (3): 411–26; Sandrine Bergès (2015), "Sophie de Grouchy on the Cost of Domination in the *Letters on Sympathy* and *Two Anonymous Articles in Le Républicain*", *The Monist* 98: 102–12; Karen Green discusses Olympe de Gouges in Green (2015), "Anticipating and experiencing the Revolution in France", in *Political Ideas of Enlightenment Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), ch. 9, esp. pp. 374–84.

been women who for so long were excluded systematically from the benefits of citizenship, deprived of any effective voice, and placed in a state of dependence on men. Given this patriarchal history and its traditionally masculine imagery and language in which citizenship has been seen in terms of hardy, self-reliant individuals capable of defending their country and unencumbered by the ties or cares of domestic life, it is not surprising that many feminists have been noticeably reticent about the republican project.²⁰

Wollstonecraft herself was forthright in her criticism of these patriarchal and masculinist characteristics. If these were essential aspects of republican theory, then indeed it would be difficult to count her amongst its number. But they are not. What is at stake when the term “republican” is applied in this volume is not a set of practices or cultural values, but rather a structure of political argument based around a distinctive notion of what it means to be free. In today’s language, most republicans understand freedom as “non-domination” following Philip Pettit, although most of the contributors here refer to “independence”, following Wollstonecraft’s own use. Non-domination, or independence, represents a condition of full membership of a community in which one enjoys an equal protection against threats of domination understood as the arbitrary exercise of power. Domination, or dependence, is considered slavery. Since freedom is a fundamental moral and political concept, once its meaning has been established the effects will ripple through the way that a range of other concepts and values are understood such as equality, virtue, the nature of rights, meaning of citizenship, and the relationship between individual and society.

The last five contributors to this volume all discuss aspects of historical republicanism. Philip Pettit outlines the philosophical idea of non-domination as it is used in present-day discourse, detailing some of the issues at stake, and showing how that idea differs from the more widely understood notion of freedom as an absence of intentional interference. Pettit’s contribution thus helps to show how the discussions of Wollstonecraft as a republican thinker fit within more recent debates. Susan James then takes up the question of what Wollstonecraft understands by rights within a republican context. Although best known for her book entitled *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, rights themselves appear noticeably absent from its actual concerns. James shows this

²⁰ See, for example, Anne Phillips (2000), “Feminism and Republicanism: Is this a Plausible Alliance?” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8 (2): 279–93 and Carole Pateman (2007), “Why Republicanism?” *Basic Income Studies* 2 (2): 1–6. In recent years, there has been the beginning of a rapprochement between feminism and republicanism. In addition to several of the contributors to this volume, see Cécile Laborde (2008), *Critical Republicanism: The Hijab Controversy and Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

appearance to be misleading by reconnecting Wollstonecraft with an older strand of republican tradition that views rights as effective powers to act. While this thought is prominent in the Dutch republicanism of Spinoza, for example, it has rarely, if ever, been discussed in Wollstonecraft whose heritage is typically seen as the English natural law republicans, such as Algernon Sidney and John Locke. James acknowledges the influence of both and works through the tensions that emerge as a result.

However they are defined, rights are always exercised within the context of a system of law. Republicans consider the law to be properly formulated, and therefore legitimate, only where it is required always to operate for the common good. Implicit in this concept is an idea of representation in which each of our interests can be said to be reflected and embodied in the structures and institutions of society as a whole. Wollstonecraft nowhere sets out a systematic view of what she understands ‘representation’ to entail and so Lena Halldenius pieces together Wollstonecraft’s various uses. This reveals a critical position that is trenchantly opposed to defining a unified representative interest of a population based on the perspectives of its elite. Taking “political society as it is”, rather than in a state of idealized harmony, Wollstonecraft argues for an inclusive and egalitarian approach in which it is with the common people rather than the elite that we start. There is no assumed unity of interests but rather each group, including women and the working classes, add their perspective directly in the deliberations of government.

There remains the question of how the interests, values, and ideas of all citizens can be heard and fairly considered. Alan Coffee shows that at least part of Wollstonecraft’s answer lies in the spirit in which public debate is conducted. We can only be sure of being represented adequately in a virtuous society, which at the minimum requires a collective capacity and commitment to act rationally according to the best reasons. Where individuals are not represented politically or in the laws and institutions of the society, they are dependent. According to Wollstonecraft, dependence is a corrosive state that corrupts the virtue of both dominator and dominated alike. Once it gains a foothold, this corruption has a tendency to spread, weakening everyone’s freedom alike. Equal political representation for all, then, is not only a moral imperative but is also a practical one, being one of the necessary conditions of a free state.

In her contribution, Sandrine Bergès draws links between Wollstonecraft’s thought and that of a French contemporary whom Wollstonecraft almost certainly did not read (although the two may have met), the republican thinker Sophie de Grouchy. Bergès argues that together, these writers help reconcile republican ideals of motherhood with political participation for women. Her

contribution focuses on one aspect of female participation that historically has often been associated with women: caring for infants and children. Bergès shows that, while Wollstonecraft denies that women should be mothers in order to achieve citizenship (because citizenship is based on civic virtue and virtue is gender-neutral), she explicitly affirms that mothers who do not nurse do not deserve the title of citizen. Even on our best reading, it is not clear that these strands can be reconciled. Bergès looks for a solution in de Grouchy's writings on sympathy, and particularly in the claim that all that is needed to give infants the moral impetus they need to become virtuous citizens is physical closeness with one individual, but not necessarily a mother.

In highlighting Wollstonecraft's republican background, it is not the intention of any of the contributors to label Wollstonecraft, or to attempt to place artificial limits on her philosophy. In her chapter, for example, Susan James shows Wollstonecraft to be drawing on both classical republican ideas and a natural law tradition characteristic of liberal thought in developing her own arguments about rights. While Barbara Taylor is appreciative of the benefits of reading Wollstonecraft in republican terms, she offers a reminder against the temptation to freeze any writer into any particular canon. Representing Wollstonecraft as a "modern philosopher" with diverse and shifting interests inspired by numerous sources, Taylor highlights two other influences that should not be neglected: her womanhood and her strong religious commitment. Religion and republicanism are not easily separated in the eighteenth century, of course. Many of Wollstonecraft's own dissenting sect, such as Richard Price, can rightly be regarded as Protestants and republicans in equal measure even if philosophers today have often tended to downplay the theological dimension. This much said, it is the unique appreciation of the female experience that Wollstonecraft brought to the male-dominated debates she entered for which she is most celebrated. In aligning her with the masculinist tradition of republicanism, great care must be taken not to overshadow her feminist concerns, or the feminist tradition that was to follow. As Taylor reminds us, "feminism is not like other sorts of politics; it's the personal made political, it's politics with a sexual difference", something she asks us to keep in mind "when we read Mary Wollstonecraft, and hear the echoes of her ideas in twenty-first century Britain".

1

Reflections on Inequality, Respect, and Love in the Political Writings of Mary Wollstonecraft

Sylvana Tomaselli

Mary Wollstonecraft is commonly assumed to have been principally concerned with making an appeal for the equality between the sexes, and arguing for the education of women in particular. While contemporary scholars have endeavoured to reveal some of the intricacy of her thought,¹ she continues to be seen as seemingly unaware of, or unconcerned about, the complexities of human social and personal relations, and, as with many other canonical as well as lesser-known authors, the debate within Wollstonecraft scholarship has largely consisted in assessing the nature and extent of her radicalism.² This is especially true of considerations on Wollstonecraft the feminist as opposed to Wollstonecraft the novelist, or of biographical or autobiographical analyses.³ It is the product of thinking of her as an advocate taking on a new case, one that made a plea for the rights of woman as if from scratch in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), and as if that text had been her point of entry into the intellectual world she came to inhabit in her dramatically short life.

It was evidently not so. Quite apart from her pedagogical and fictional writings, and her translations, which included Jacques Necker's *Of the Importance of Religious Opinions* (1788), her administrative and critical work for Joseph Johnson's *Analytical*

¹ See the works of Barbara Taylor, Janet Todd, and Harriet Guest, amongst others.

² For an authoritative account of Wollstonecraft as a radical and egalitarian, see Barbara Taylor (2003), *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 3–4.

³ Janet Todd's (2000) biography, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a Revolutionary Life* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson) traces the intricacies of Wollstonecraft's emotional life most delicately.

Review had made her a seasoned disputant before she turned to writing her second *Vindication*. She was to prove a formidable one in her first, and comparatively neglected *A Vindication of the Rights of Men, In a Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke; Occasioned by his Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). By the time she penned her more famous work, Wollstonecraft had been engaged in a number of debates, and amongst the many topics these covered, the most salient were character-building and education, to be sure, but also love, esteem, and respect.⁴ These disputes were not entirely on her own terms. Nor were they principally concerned with the love between men and women as when she reviewed Richard Price's *A Discourse on the Love of our Country, delivered on Nov. 4, 1789* (1789).⁵ The same is true of her discussions of esteem and respect. All these deliberations pertained to a variety of relationships between unequal or substantively different entities, human beings and God, for instance, or within inner selves. Her views on inequality were intertwined with her thoughts on love, esteem, and respect. Both sets of reflections need to be studied together within the complex debates in which they took form.

What follows does not pretend to be more than a partial exploration of these themes in some of Wollstonecraft's writings. Beginning with a survey of her pronouncements on inequality (Section 1.1), it traces the course of Wollstonecraft's thoughts on love and respect, shaped as they were by Edmund Burke's observations on these subjects (Section 1.2). The Wollstonecraft that emerges from this perspective is a more insightful thinker and, one might add, a more perplexing and perplexed one than she might at first appear, one whose philosophical meditations provide a strong basis from which to consider some of the difficulties attending our expectations of one another as lovers, parents, and citizens (Section 1.3). The relevance of her writings rests not in identifying the nature of the condition of women, though she clearly did this most cogently, nor in calling for a revolution in manners, though she did that no less vigorously, but in

⁴ Wollstonecraft used 'esteem' and 'respect' interchangeably, but while both terms had positive connotations for her, it might be said that 'respect' had a somewhat higher moral weight in her discourse. If on a spectrum, 'esteem' could be placed somewhere in the middle between 'reputation' and 'respect'. This is partly because esteem is a feeling that can only be felt for others or by others about oneself thus not entirely immune to appearances, while respect is an attitude one might have towards oneself, and indeed towards God. What is more, while she contrasted love with esteem, she thought of respect as potentially sublime. See Wollstonecraft (1995), *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Sylvania Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 188. All references are to this edition.

⁵ Article XI, in *Analytical Review*, vol. 5, 1789, in Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler (eds) (1989), *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, 7 vols (London: William Pickering), vol. 7, pp. 185–7. All Wollstonecraft's works are from this edition, except for the two *Vindications*.

her efforts to think through human emotions and the tensions inherent in our desire to be desired, valued, esteemed, and respected.

Wollstonecraft was brought to reflect on human nature through her involvement in and writings on education. It is principally thanks to her clash with Burke over his attack on Price that she gave her thoughts on the subject greater philosophical depth. It was he who more significantly than anyone else brought her to ponder over the master/pupil relation, the relation between rich and poor, men and women, and, from this love and respect. It was Burke's explanation for the love men bear women that led Wollstonecraft to treat the subject analytically, and in doing so brought Plato and most probably his *Symposium* into her first political work of note, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*.⁶ Wollstonecraft was a Platonist, one could argue, given the eminent place she reserved to reason and the way she conceptualized its nature, but perhaps no less interesting is the fact that Plato or a form of Platonism seems to have played a role in shaping her conception of love in her reaction to Burke's as it emerged in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into our Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). As Wollstonecraft saw it, the primary implication of Burke's severance of the beautiful and love from the sublime and respect in that highly influential work throughout Europe would be that 'Plato and Milton were grossly mistaken in asserting that human love led to heavenly, and was only an exaltation of the same affections; for the love of the Deity, which is mixed with the most profound reverence, must be love of perfection, and not compassion for weakness'.⁷

1.1 Inequality

Despite the forcefulness of her claim that '[a]mong unequals there can be no society',⁸ her arguments for the rights of men and those of woman did not rest on the equality of men, much less on the equality between men and women, nor would it be fair to say that she was animated by a dream of a society characterized

⁶ While she makes scant explicit references to Plato, Wollstonecraft's life and work are as one long internal symposium: she wrestled with the questions explored in that dialogue throughout her existence as an author and a human being. Whether she read Plato in translation in her late teens at the said Platonist, Thomas Taylor's instigation, or simply discussed aspects of his philosophy with him or, in later years, within the Dissenting group to which she became attached, as well as imbibed Platonism through her reading more generally is difficult to know with any degree of confidence. See Janet Todd (2000), *Mary Wollstonecraft: a Revolutionary Life* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson), pp. 27, 70, and 185; Barbara Taylor (2003), *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 73, 109–10, and 196.

⁷ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 48.

⁸ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 39. See the quotation in full at note 28.

by the absence of social, economic, or political inequality between men, between women, and between the sexes.⁹ She was not. She does on rare occasions refer to ‘the natural equality of man’ or imply it, but such is not the foundation of her arguments.¹⁰ She does in other instances speak of the natural inequality between people and, more importantly still, of the role of government in relation to it:

Nature having made men unequal, by giving stronger bodily and mental powers to one than to another, the end of government ought to be, to destroy this inequality by protecting the weak. Instead of which, it has always leaned the opposite side, wearing itself out by disregarding the first principle of it’s [sic] organization.¹¹

While she contended that it was the business of governments to obliterate inequalities, she did not in fact seem to believe the eradication of the consequences of innate differences possible; indeed, she did not consistently appear to desire it:

That there is a superiority of natural genius among men does not admit of dispute; and that in countries the most free there will always be distinctions proceeding from superiority of judgment, and the power of acquiring more delicacy of taste, which may be the effect of the peculiar organization, or whatever cause produces it, is an incontestable truth. But it is a palpable error [sic] to suppose, that men of every class are not equally susceptible of common improvement: if therefore it be the contrivance of any government, to preclude from a chance of improvement the greater part of the citizens of the state, it can be considered in no other light than as monstrous tyranny, a barbarous oppression, equally injurious to the two parties, though in different ways. For all the advantages of civilization cannot be felt, unless it pervades the whole mass, humanizing every description of men—and then it is the first blessing, the true perfection of man.¹²

Thus for Wollstonecraft the question was perhaps not so much that governments eliminate difference, but that all citizens be given a chance to flourish and excel. This said, the society Wollstonecraft advocated would have been significantly less

⁹ A version of this section was presented at the ninth NYU Conference on Modern Philosophy on Inequality, November 2012. Another, at the University of Palermo in March 2013 and published as “Fra diseguali non ci si può associare”. Riflessioni sulla disegualianza nelle opere politiche di Mary Wollstonecraft’, *Giornale di Metafisica*, Nuova serie–Anno xxxv, 1 (Jan–April 2013), pp. 146–64, published March 2014.

¹⁰ For an insightful reading of Wollstonecraft’s liberal critique of social distinctions and inequality, see Virginia Sapiro (1992), *A Vindication of Political Virtue: The Political Theory of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press), esp. pp. 77–166. Barbara Taylor (1983), *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Virago Press); and Taylor (2003), *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) also underlines Wollstonecraft’s attacks on inequality, but locates her in the radical egalitarian tradition of the 1790s and beyond.

¹¹ *An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution; and the Effect it has Produced in Europe*, in *The Works*, vol. 6, p. 17.

¹² *An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*, p. 220.

unequal socially, economically, and politically than the societies she knew from experience and not insubstantially from those she knew of from histories or travellers' reports. She made a 'plea for disseminating the property artfully said to be appropriated for religious purposes, but, in reality, to support idle tyrants, amongst the society whose ancestors were cheated or forced into illegal grants'.¹³ More generally, she envisaged some redistribution of lands, and thought this could be achieved without too great encroachments on the right to private property. This she did on 'the natural principles of justice'.¹⁴ When defending the appropriation of property by the French revolutionaries, she admitted that it might have been snatched from some 'innocent hands', but reminded readers of how brutally such property might have been acquired by their ancestors.¹⁵ However, it would be misleading to suggest that her own arguably utopian vision was notable for its egalitarianism.

As the passage last cited makes clear, the true progress meant that all reaped the benefits of civilization's advancement. This necessitated a total transformation of society, that is, its moral metamorphosis. In the world as it was, Wollstonecraft admitted that there was 'something disgusting in the distresses of poverty, at which the imagination revolts, and starts back to exercise itself in more attractive Arcadia of fiction'; therein she saw the urge to create vast and sumptuous gardens around the great houses of the wealthy, adding however:

[e]very thing on the estate is cherished but man; yet, to contribute to the happiness of man, is the most sublime of all enjoyments. But if, instead of sweeping pleasure-grounds, obelisks, temples, and elegant cottages, as *objects* for the eye, the heart was allowed to beat true to nature, decent farms would be scattered over the estate, and plenty smile around. Instead of the poor being subject to the griping hand of an avaricious steward, they would be watched over with fatherly solicitude, by the man whose duty and pleasure it was to guard their happiness, and shield from rapacity the beings who, by the sweat of their brow, exalted him above his fellows.¹⁶

Such landscapes could be transformed, she argued, conjuring up a tableau of a clean, industrious, and no less aesthetically pleasing rural idyll. A fairer use of the land would be as visually appealing to the landlord as his landscaped gardens, and he would be a happier man for it. Whether for the sake of winning them over or out of a sense of realism, Wollstonecraft seemed inclined to rest her case for greater distributive justice on its benefits to the rich, not appeals to equality. Even

¹³ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 52.

¹⁴ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 52.

¹⁵ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 50.

¹⁶ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 59.

when more radical in tone, the perspective reveals itself, in the end, to be as much that of the privileged as of the subjugated:

Why cannot large estates be divided into small farms? These dwellings would indeed grace our land. Why are huge forests still allowed to stretch out with idle pomp and all the indolence of Eastern grandeur? [...] Why might not the industrious peasant be allowed to steal a farm from the heath? This sight I have seen;—the cow that supported the children grazed near the hut, and the cheerful poultry were fed by the chubby babes, who breathed the bracing air, far from the diseases and the vices of the cities. Domination blasts out all these prospects; virtue can only flourish amongst equals, and the man who submits to a fellow-creature, because it promotes his worldly well-being, and he who relieves only because it is his duty to lay up a treasure in heaven, are much on a par, for both are radically degraded by the habits of their life.¹⁷

Though the poor were not left out of the pages of the *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, Wollstonecraft was mostly considering their superiors. Her engagement with Burke may have necessitated this, but it is an interesting choice of perspective nonetheless. Indeed, more often than not Wollstonecraft preached to the rich:

In this great city, that proudly rears its head, and boasts of its population and commerce, how much misery lurks in pestilential corners, whilst idle mendicants assail, on every side, the man who hates to encourage impostors, or repress, with angry frown, the plaints of the poor! [...] Are these remediless evils? [...] If society was regulated on a more enlarged plan; if man was contented to be the friend of man, and did not seek to bury the sympathies of humanity in the servile appellation of master; if, turning his eyes from ideal regions of taste and elegance, he laboured to give the earth he inhabited all the beauty it is capable of receiving, and was ever on the watch to shed abroad all the happiness which human can enjoy;—he who, respecting the rights of men, wishes to convince or persuade society that this is true happiness and dignity, is not the cruel *oppressor* of the poor, nor a short-sighted philosopher—He fears God and loves his fellow-creatures.—Behold the whole duty of man!—the citizen who acts differently is a sophisticated being.¹⁸

Likewise, she yearned for British senators to show what men they truly were by abolishing the slave trade. This she did by appealing to their humanity as well as their Christianity and evoking liberty as a birthright. Reading her works and her first *Vindication* in particular, the injustice of the world seemed to afford the grandest moral opportunity for the rich and powerful to exercise their virtue on a global scale.

And so it is that, if pressing the question of inequality on Wollstonecraft reveals a relatively muted commitment to egalitarianism, it does take us to the very heart of what mattered to her as well as the real character of her arguments.

¹⁷ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, pp. 60–1. My emphasis.

¹⁸ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 61.

She looked at relationships and to both sides of the inequality divide. Inequality is a relational notion. One is unequal in respect of something, but not necessarily to someone else, or so I think Wollstonecraft saw it.

As the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* she began with the expectations society had of women, and women had of themselves and demonstrated that these expectations could not conceivably be met given the way women were fashioned. Like most eighteenth-century thinkers Wollstonecraft did not conceive of women as passive victims of the social and historical process. Unlike many of her near contemporaries, however, such as Diderot and Rousseau, she did not think of the history of woman as a narrative of her emancipation from her abject subjection to man in the state of nature.¹⁹ This is largely because she did not appear to believe that the condition of women had improved, but also because she did not tend to conceive of it in terms of a subjection to the male sex. To the degree that women were subject to forces beyond their control, these forces were sustained by their connivance and duplicity.

Competition amongst women, including between mothers and daughters, played no small part in maintaining the political, social, moral, and psychological frameworks in which they lived. Women fought amongst themselves to secure the gaze of the other, to realize themselves as objects of desire. Commercial society and the luxury that came with it provided new and ever more refined means to achieve this. The condition of women, and men for that matter, was proportionate to the means of their commodification and that, in the *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, was inherently linked to property accumulation through marriage, and in her later writings, through the intensification of the culture of conspicuous consumption in commercial society.

How women contributed to this phenomenon she explained in a variety of ways, but her account rested primarily on the vanity of women (a trait by no means their peculiarity), their desire to be exulted above the rest of their sex, their vacuous surrender to the momentary pleasures of coquettishness and the delusions of eternal youth. She exhorted women to emancipate themselves and deployed all of her considerable rhetorical skills to convince men with power, such as the French revolutionaries, that their true interest resided in society's manumission of both halves of humanity, not only politically and legally, but psychologically. The concept of inequality *did* provide the keystone of her

¹⁹ See 'The Enlightenment Debate on Women', *History Workshop Journal* 20 (Autumn 1985): 101–24, reprinted e.g. in Jane Moore (ed.) (2012), *Mary Wollstonecraft*, International Library of Essays in the History of Social and Political Thought (Farnham: Ashgate); Dena Goodman and Kathleen Wellman (eds) (2004), *The Enlightenment* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin).

analysis. However it did so principally in the form in which it occurs in the phrase 'being unequal to the task', women, as they were, were unequal to the task set to them by God, biology, and society. They were not equal to being or seeking to be good Christians, wives, mothers, and neighbours. Men did not, as such, come into this particular equation. Women would have been deemed unequal to the task of being Christians, mothers, sisters, and neighbours in a manless world. In the world as it was, Wollstonecraft found men no less wanting than women.

Man was not the measure for Wollstonecraft. Great women were not either. Though she praised her contemporary, the historian Catherine Macaulay, as well as the Empress Catherine the Great, she noted:

[t]hese, and many more, may be reckoned exceptions; and, are not all heroes, as well as heroines, exceptions to general rules? I wish to see women neither heroine nor brutes, but reasonable creatures.²⁰

She did not claim women were equal or unequal to men. She wanted to avoid that well-trodden pamphleteering terrain.

Her case rested on another foundation. The measure of women was that set by contemporary religious, moral, and social ideals of women.²¹ Women were unequal to the task of being women. That was the wrong. Making it possible for women to be what they ought to strive to be was to make the world right; and who could deny that they should be good Christians, wives, mothers, and neighbours? What was required was removing the paradoxes plaguing society. To understand how Wollstonecraft came to this position, one needs to call up another notion, that of unevenness. The world was an uneven place for Wollstonecraft. It was uneven in the sense that not all of its parts had reached the same level of advancement and that it was marred by contradictions. It had improved in some respects; learning, for instance, but not others, namely, morality:

The civilization which has taken place in Europe has been very partial, and, like every custom that an arbitrary point of honour has established, refines the manners at the expense of morals, by making sentiments and opinions current in conversation that have no root in the heart, or weight in the cooler resolves of the mind.—And what has stopped its progress?—hereditary property—hereditary honours.²²

European civilization lacked internal consistency: its avowed Christian values were disregarded not just by failing individuals, but institutionally, not least,

²⁰ *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 155.

²¹ It is important to stress that this did not commit her to endorsing every one or most of these ideals. Her argument was simple: religious, moral, and social duties could not be imposed on those who were denied the basic means of fulfilling them.

²² *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, pp. 8–9.

through the slave trade. Incoherence was the wrong. To bring evenness was to set the world right.

An even world would be one in which respect prevailed. Respect was not for Wollstonecraft, as it appears to be taken in some discourses today, something one owed to others or was entitled to expect of others *qua* human being. It had to be merited and carefully cultivated. Her foremost aim was to make women, and also men, respectable. Amongst other evils, inequality bred disrespect, and disrespect inequality.

As the preceding quotation makes plain, Wollstonecraft laid the blame for the lack of the progress of morals on rank and hereditary property, by which she meant especially property bequeathed through male primogeniture. Yet, inequality seemed to harm most its undisputed beneficiaries. Social distinctions had a baneful psychological effect on those of rank and property. ‘Yes, Sir’, she wrote to Burke, ‘the strong gained riches, the few have sacrificed the many to their vices; and, to be able to pamper their appetites, and supinely exist without exercising mind or body, they have ceased to be men.’²³ True, the ‘class of people, who, working to support the body, have not time to cultivate their minds; but likewise those who, born in the lap of affluence, have never had their invention sharpened by necessity are, nine out of ten, the creatures of habit and impulse’.²⁴ Were she not afraid to unhinge him completely by hinting at the metaphysical, she continued:

I should observe, Sir, that self-preservation is, literally speaking, the first law of nature; and that the care necessary to support and guard the body is the first step to unfold the mind, and inspire a manly spirit of independence. The mewling babe in swaddling-clothes, who is treated like a superior being, may perchance become a gentleman; but nature must have given him uncommon faculties if, when pleasure hangs on every bough, he has sufficient fortitude either to exercise his mind or body in order to acquire personal merit. The passions are necessary auxiliaries of reason: a present impulse pushes us forward, and when we discover that the game did not deserve the chase [*sic*], we find that we have gone over much ground, and not only gained many new ideas, but a habit of thinking. The exercise of our faculties is the great end, though not the goal we had in view when we started with such eagerness.²⁵

Her contempt for those born to property appeared unqualified.²⁶ Mind and body had to be exercised throughout life; such was the requirement for human

²³ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 8.

²⁴ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 15.

²⁵ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 15.

²⁶ In later years, she was to find merchants even more odious than men of rank. See, for instance, *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, XXIV, in *The Works*, vol. 6, pp. 343–4.

flourishing. Those who could not do either, let alone both, were the object of some pity. Those who could in principle pursue both, but didn't, were to be loathed.

Inherited property and, as she saw more of the commercial world during her travels through Scandinavia in 1795, acquired wealth, were clear evils for Wollstonecraft, not because they violated a principled egalitarianism on her part, but because it rendered the fulfilment of human nature an impossibility. She valued labour, the exercise of the mind and that of the body, and relatively simple lives as they made self-realization more likely. Wealth barred the rich from gaining this self-awareness. Wealth and social inequality also warped individual character as, Wollstonecraft did not hesitate to write, was evident in Burke himself.²⁷ His respect for rank had 'swallowed up the common feelings of humanity'.²⁸

Her diatribe against Burke has a number of facets, one of which is a critique of his defence of an established Church. Burke thought the Church, be it the Anglican Church in England or the Catholic Church in France or elsewhere, an indispensable part of the fabric of nations. Though he thought its centrality to education generally meant that it was esteemed by its people, its greatest importance lay in inculcating morals to the rich and powerful. Only a propertied and wholly independent Church could remind the great of their moral duties.

1.2 Respect

Wollstonecraft's line of attack on Burke's *Reflections* quickly fell to *ad hominem* argumentation. She pointed to his lack of respect for Price, who was a pious, virtuous, and cherished leader of an honest community in her view. Intermeshed with that kind of harangue, she argued that the role Burke was ascribing to the priesthood bore no relation to social reality. The bulk of the people might 'respect the national establishment', but the elite did not. She illustrated this by drawing on what she saw as the reality of the Grand Tour:

Besides, the custom of sending clergymen to travel with their noble pupils, as humble companions, instead of exalting, tends inevitably to degrade the clerical character: it is notorious that they meanly submit to the most servile dependence, and gloss over the most capricious follies, to use a soft phrase, of the boys to whom they look up for preferment. An airy mitre dances before them [...] and make their spirits bend till it is prudent to claim the rights of men and the honest freedom of speech of an Englishman. How, indeed, could they venture to reprove for his vices their patron: the clergy only give

²⁷ She was to write the same of her lover, Gilbert Imlay: commercial activity had depraved him.

²⁸ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 16.

the true feudal emphasis to this word. It has been observed, that when a man makes his spirit bend to any power but reason, his character is soon degraded, and his mind shackled by the very prejudices to which he submits with reluctance. The observations of experience have been carried further; and the servility to superiors, and tyranny to inferiors, said to characterize our clergy, have rationally been supposed to arise naturally from their associating with the nobility. *Among unequals there can be no society; giving a manly meaning to the term; from such intimacies friendship can never grow; if the basis of friendship is mutual respect, and not a commercial treaty.* [...] Observing all this—for these things are not transacted in the dark—our young men of fashion, by a common, though erroneous, association of ideas, have conceived a contempt for religion, as they sucked in with their milk a contempt for the clergy.²⁹

That this made Burke's point for the need of a wholly independent clergy, though not his claim for the esteem in which the clergy was held, is not our present concern. What is, is the interest Wollstonecraft demonstrated in the nature of the psychological impact of unequal power relations between individuals.

Being under the power of another man (or youth in this particular case) unmanned man (or the clerical teacher and travelling companion in this case). The inequality of the power of the one (the youth) over the other (the older cleric) denatured the latter. In a world in which clergymen did not have to fear the influence of the nobility on their career prospects, they would have travelled, one might assume from Wollstonecraft's analysis, as equals. But is this actually true?

The *Symposium*, especially Pausania's and Alcibiades' eulogies of Love, speaks to the kind of servility discussed here—though the relation between the older supplicant and the youthful beholder is in part inverted, in that Plato through Socrates' voice is concerned with the condition under which a youth, the beloved, might be deemed ignoble in seeking material advantage from the older man, the lover. That text also explores the case in which the youthful beloved finds himself to be the lover, not the loved, of his older friend. While Wollstonecraft mentions Plato (as well as Milton) in her *Vindication of the Rights of Men* only in relation to these two authors' view that human love leads to divine love and two loves are thus on a continuum, the *Symposium*'s mark on the first *Vindication*, and indeed on her conception of relationships in other of her texts, runs deeper than this might suggest. The relationships discussed in Plato's dialogue involve inequalities of experience, wisdom, and beauty. They also involve shifting power relations: the youth once desired is discarded for another, or the youth's assumption that his beauty gives him a hold on the older man proves unfounded. The common ground, that which makes them equal or gives them a claim to equality, is their

²⁹ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 39. My emphasis.

love of wisdom, the desire to pursue human excellence, and to understand fully wherein it resides.³⁰

In this pursuit, individuals are unequal, but they run in the same marathon. Returning to Wollstonecraft's specific example, the clergyman on the Grand Tour would be more learned and wiser than his young pupil, and, most importantly, possessed of a moral authority, if only by dint of his position, which the young man ought to respect. They would participate in the same project, in this instance, literally the same journey, the one sharing his wisdom, the other receiving it, but both valuing it and both gaining from the Tour. Though unequal in significant respects, they would not be unequal in terms of the most essential factor for Wollstonecraft as well as Plato, and also of course, Aristotle, the pursuit of virtue. They would thus not be incapable of friendship. Whatever the differences between them, they would be equal in their quest for human excellence. A shared love of knowledge would make for the possibility of friendship. But what of love?

In berating Burke for his critique of Price, Wollstonecraft did not only attack him as the author of the *Reflections*, but also as that of *Enquiry*, in which Burke discussed love, admiration, and respect. Indeed, it is thanks to his pronouncements on what men love in women that Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Men* comes to have the shape it does and comes to discuss love, marriage, and women under such a title; it probably also played no small part in leading her to publish *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. In particular, what egged her on was his writing that while men admire strong virtues, it is weakness that they love, and given that women seek above all to be loved, women 'learn to lisp, to totter in their walk, to counterfeit weakness and even sickness'.³¹

This view of women and of the relation between lover and beloved, she thought, has very serious consequences. It would mean that '[n]ature has made an eternal distinction between the qualities that dignify a rational being and this animal perfection' and that '[woman's] duty and happiness in this life must clash with preparation for a more exalted state'.³² A view such as Burke's implied further a radical difference between profane and divine love, which Wollstonecraft denied,

³⁰ It might be worth reminding ourselves here that Burke's *Reflections* was initially prompted by the letter of a twenty-two year old Frenchman, Charles-Jean-François Depont, asking the older statesman whether he would congratulate the French on their newly acquired liberty. Wollstonecraft alludes to Burke's response to the young man: 'If you had given the same advice to a young history painter of abilities, I should have admired your judgement and re-echoed your sentiments'. *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, pp. 41–2.

³¹ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 47, where Wollstonecraft challenges Burke on the passage in question.

³² *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 48.

as mentioned earlier. Additionally, it followed from this ‘that respect and love are antagonist principles; and that, if we really wish to render men more virtuous, we must endeavour to banish all enervating modifications of beauty from civil society’.³³ If this were so, society would have to return to ‘Spartan regulations’, ‘mortification and self-denial’.

One might say that the society Wollstonecraft implicitly constructed in various texts was one characterized by a considerable degree of self-denial, though not quite mortification, and thus she consciously or not adopted the very view that she held up satirically in this first *Vindication* in the belief it would be repugnant to all: that love, respect, and virtue were incompatible, that virtue consisted exclusively of the manly virtues of courage, fortitude, justice, wisdom, and truth, and that these commanded respect, as opposed to the softer female virtues of pity, sympathy, charity, and so forth, and associated with love. In that *Vindication* however, possibly because she was primarily thinking of the relationships between men, possibly because she wrote it in a few short weeks and had had little time to reflect on power in relations between lover and beloved, she did not appear to detect the tensions between respect and love she seemed to discern in her later works, the second *Vindication*, her *Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (1796), and letters to Gilbert Imlay which recounted her own experiences of unrequited love. In the first *Vindication* the circle of love and affection could be squared with respect. It could rest, as we have already suggested, on the common pursuit by lover and beloved, teacher and pupil, of the development of the mind, knowledge, and virtue. What it necessitated was the absence of social and material inequality between people, since inequality ‘impede[d] the growth of virtue, vitiating the mind that submits or domineers’.³⁴

But the kind of preferment involved in systems of patronage discussed in the early *Vindication*, and indeed preferment more generally, is not easily eradicated. It manifests itself within classes, institutions, and all manner of relationships, indeed even a classless society would not be free of it, and it may well be deemed a necessity in all these and comparable cases. Preferment is at the heart of love.

In the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* Wollstonecraft argued for an education for girls that would enable them to perform their duties. She wanted them to have the means to develop their minds, to acquire knowledge, and pursue the excellence that is the end of human beings, their virtue. She claimed those rights for the female sex on the basis of the duties expected of them. If duties without rights were meaningless, rights without duties were no more

³³ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 48.

³⁴ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, pp. 48–9.

meaningful. As part of it, she was eager to encourage women to read, to keep themselves informed about public affairs, to do all that would make them the intelligent companions to all and, above all, to themselves. However similar or different the daily occupations of men and women might prove, the inequality of engagement with the affairs of their community would be removed, just as the inequality of the responsibilities of parenthood would be on her view of a morally purified society. In the world as it was, women might not die on the battlefield, but they did in childbirth, and in very great numbers. If men protected the citizen body, women brought citizens into the world, breast-fed and nurtured them, or so she advocated mothers to do. The contribution of men and women to the family and society might differ, but not its substance, effect, or merit.³⁵ There was, or at least could be, moral equality and, from it, political equality, and friendship. But was this at the cost of ignoring preferment, love, and sexual desire?

In a Wollstonecraftian future, girls and boys would be educated together. Men and women would work under the same roof as much as possible. Wollstonecraft thought single-sex institutions and single-sex groups of any kind the cradle of lasciviousness. Citizens were, in effect, to be raised as siblings. Nor is this all: Wollstonecraft, we are often reminded, more than once expressed the view that neglected wives made better mothers. Great romances occurred, she stressed, but once a century. Hers might not have been Spartan regulations, but they came close to these.

In her first *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft deplored the fact that the obsession with the acquisition of property and the desire of perpetuating a family name entailed forced, unnatural, and loveless marriages.³⁶ She teased Burke for ‘inform [ing] us that respect chills love’.³⁷ The cause for such chilling was argued from a different base in the later *Vindication*, but the result was the same. Woman needed to be granted the rights to that which was necessary for her to flourish as a human being, one who could develop her mind as well as her body; she would thus have the means to pursue her excellence. She would henceforth be respectable and respected. An appeal to equality did not come into it. The need to abolish inequalities did: women had to cease to be made and make themselves unequal to the task of being God’s creatures and good citizens, and above all rational women, women of developed intellects and healthy bodies.

³⁵ See Tomaselli (2001), ‘The Most Public Sphere of All: The Family’, in *Women and the Public Sphere: Writing and Representation, 1700–1830*, Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Cliona O. Gallchoir, and Penny Warburton (eds) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

³⁶ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, pp. 21–2.

³⁷ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 6.

What were lost were preferment and the inequalities that it entailed prior and following its enactment. Wollstonecraft tried to neutralize as much as possible the power relations that come with human attachments of any kind. Those within sexual relationships, marriages, and families are more ineffable than others. They might be less tangible than those arising out of economic or political relations, but they are not lessened for that. Even near-Spartan regulations or highly rational and educated women might not succeed in eradicating the inequalities and, dare one say it, indignities that arise in the entanglements between lover and beloved. Indeed, Wollstonecraft was to suffer these herself, when the father of her first daughter grew indifferent to her, and left for another woman.

1.3 Love

Wollstonecraft had a great deal to say on the issue of interpersonal inequality and cognate subjects, including on the master/pupil relation. While Plato or a form of Platonism moulded her views of love, this should not be taken as implying that Wollstonecraft thought true love was, could, or should be 'Platonic' in the sense of being devoid of physicality in the narrowest or widest sense of the term. She herself warned against this kind of feeling in the section on 'Love' in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: with Reflections on Female Conduct, in The more important Duties of Life* (1787): 'Nothing can more tend to destroy peace of mind, than platonic attachments. They are begun in false refinements, and frequently end in sorrow, if not guilt'.³⁸ In her later *Vindication* she was to deride women who 'should they turn to something more important than merely fitting drapery upon a smooth block, their minds are only occupied by some soft platonic attachment [...]'.³⁹

When two years earlier Wollstonecraft had joined the ranks of those attacking Burke for his *Reflections*, she had, we saw, turned to his *Enquiry* for added ammunition. Ladies who had read that work might have been 'convinced by [his] arguments, [and] may have laboured to be pretty, by counterfeiting weakness'. 'You may have convinced them', she continued:

that *littleness* and *weakness* are the very essence of beauty; and that the Supreme Being, in giving women beauty in the most supereminent degree, seemed to command them, by the powerful voice of Nature, not to cultivate the moral virtues that might chance to excite *respect*, and interfere with the pleasing sensations they were created to inspire. Thus confining truth, fortitude, and humanity, within the rigid pale of manly morals, they might justly argue, that to be loved, woman's high end and great distinction! They should

³⁸ *The Works*, vol. 4, pp. 29–30.

³⁹ *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 235.

learn to lisp, to totter in their walk, and nick-name God's creatures. Never, they might repeat after you, was any man, much less a woman, rendered amiable by the force of those exalted qualities, fortitude, justice, wisdom and truth; and thus forewarned of the sacrifice they must make to those austere, unnatural virtues, they would be authorized to turn all their attention to their persons, systematically neglecting morals to secure beauty.⁴⁰

Burke had separated respect from love, and love from admiration. She isolated his comments and made it seem as if the distinction cut through the sexual divide, but this was not so. Burke applied it liberally to men:

Achilles, in spite of the many qualities of beauty which Homer has bestowed on his outward form, and the many great virtues with which he has adorned his mind, can never make us love him. It may be observed, that Homer has given the Trojans, whose fate he has designed to excite our compassion, infinitely more of the amiable social virtues than he has distributed among his Greeks. With regard to the Trojans, the passion he chuses to raise is pity; pity is a passion founded on love; and these *lesser*, and if I may say, domestic virtues, are certainly the most amiable. But he has made the Greeks far their superiors in the politic and military virtues. The councils of Priam are weak; the arms of Hector comparatively feeble; his courage far below that of Achilles. Yet we love Priam more than Agamemnon, and Hector more than his conqueror Achilles. Admiration is the passion which Homer would excite in favour of the Greeks, and he has done it by bestowing on them the virtues which have but little to do with love.⁴¹

As already noted, Wollstonecraft believed that Burke's severance of the beautiful and love from the sublime and respect would have momentous theological repercussions, but it would also have social ones. Moral reform would first require that 'all modifications of beauty' be banished from civil society, and that mores be strictly controlled. 'We must', to give her comments in full:

[r]eturn to the Spartan regulations, and settle the virtues of men on the stern foundation of mortification and self-denial; for any attempt to civilize the heart, to make it humane by implanting reasonable principles, is a mere philosophic dream. If refinement inevitably lessens respect for virtue, by rendering beauty the grand tempter, more seductive; if these relaxing feelings are incompatible with the nervous exertions of morality, the sun of Europe is not set; it begins to dawn, when cold metaphysicians try to make the head give laws to the heart.⁴²

Imposing such laws was precisely what Wollstonecraft sought and sought not to do. She proved unable to sustain a consistent position on the philosophical subjects her controversy with Burke had opened up for her. Her difficulty resided

⁴⁰ *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 47. My emphasis.

⁴¹ Edmund Burke (1967), *A Philosophical Enquiry into our Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, J. T. Boulton (ed.) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul), pp. 158–9.

⁴² *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 235.

in seeking to reconcile what might well prove inherently irreconcilable: love and respect, beauty and the sublime, human and divine love.

Whether human led to divine love on her own account is a thorny matter. This is not because she came to recognize the force of physical passion during her womanhood, but because she may never have thought its coarseness escapable, as we saw briefly earlier. To make love the love of perfection in human beings and the deity was either to exclude sexual desire from it, which she seemed to have thought unrealistic even in her first writings, or forces one to agree with Barbara Taylor that '[for] Wollstonecraft *eros* was the core of religious experience'.⁴³ That is not easy as we know little of Wollstonecraft's religious experience, and what she writes on matters of faith does not warrant much certainty about it. But Taylor's is an interesting reading of Wollstonecraft, and hers, following Sarah Hutton's, is the most detailed reflection on our author's Platonism.

Wollstonecraft's *Extract of the Cave of Fancy: A Tale* first published posthumously, but probably written in 1787 according to Godwin, ends as follows:

Worthy as the mortal was I adored, I should not long have loved him with the ardour I did, had fate united us, and broken the delusion the imagination so artfully wove. His virtues, as they now do, would have extorted my esteem; but he who formed the human soul, only can fill it, and the chief happiness of an immortal being must arise from the same sources as its existence. Earthly love leads to heavenly, and prepares us for a more exalted state; if it does not change its nature, and destroy itself, by trampling on virtue, that constitutes its essence, and allied us to the Deity.⁴⁴

This is from an early and incomplete work of fiction, but it gives a sense of the tensions that Wollstonecraft was exposing: human love as an ephemeral delusion in an uneasy relation to virtue and esteem, which must not be allowed to usurp the rightful place of divine love in the soul. While she undoubtedly professes that earthly love leads to divine, it is rather difficult from reading her to envisage how it possibly can. This is so even without adding the complications that sex, the body, its properties, imperfections, and mortality inevitably throw in to this discussion.

Nor was it simply a matter of complications: if the body, the delusions of eternal beauty, the allures of appearances, and schema of attraction were part of the problem in squaring love and esteem, human and divine, these seemed no less necessary to the solving the enigma of the relationship between the feelings

⁴³ Barbara Taylor (2003), *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 108, and Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (eds) (1994), *Platonism and the English Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). See also Sylvana Tomaselli, "Have ye not heard that we cannot serve two masters?" The Platonism of Mary Wollstonecraft', in Douglas Hedley and David Leech (eds), *Revisioning Cambridge Platonism* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2017).

⁴⁴ *The Works*, vol. 1, p. 206.

discussed here. In the midst of a section decrying the fact that women fall for rakes (one she did not read often enough herself given her falling for Imlay), Wollstonecraft recognized that:

[i]n order to admire or esteem any thing for a continuance, we must, at least, have our curiosity excited by knowing, in some degree, what we admire; for we are unable to estimate the value of qualities and virtues above our comprehension. Such a respect, when it is felt, may be very sublime; and the confused consciousness of humility may render the dependent creature an interesting object, in some points of view; human love must have grosser ingredients; and the person very naturally will come in for its share—and, an ample share it mostly has!⁴⁵

Love, she acknowledged, was ‘an arbitrary passion’, which did not deign to reason. It was also, she added, ‘easily distinguished from esteem, the foundation of friendship, because it is often excited by evanescent beauties, though, to give an energy to the sentiment, something more solid must deepen their impression and set the imagination to work, to make the most fair—the first good.’⁴⁶

For all her criticism of Burke, and the implications she drew from his contrasting love to respect or admiration, Wollstonecraft could never herself entirely escape the dichotomy. To suggest, as she was to, that women ‘take a more comprehensive view of things, [and be] contented to love but once in their lives; and after marriage calmly let passion subside into friendship’ offered some earthly solution to the problem, but not a conceptual one. What is more, the kind of woman she wanted women to be was esteemed rather than loved, a Greek, not a Trojan, an Agamemnon more than Priam, an Achilles more than Hector to return to Burke’s reading of Homer.

It is important to note that Wollstonecraft was not alone in battling with these tensions. Across the Channel, Immanuel Kant, whom Wollstonecraft did read, also wrestled with the nature of the understanding, the imagination, love, respect, and friendship, and the question of inequality within relationships as is evident from his *Conclusion to the Elements of Ethics*:

Friendship (considered in its perfection) is the union of two persons through equal mutual love and respect.—It is easy to see that this is an ideal of each participating and sharing sympathetically in the other’s well-being through the morally good will that unites them, and even though it does not produce the complete happiness of life, the adoption of this ideal in their disposition toward each other makes them deserving of happiness; hence human beings have a duty of friendship.—But it is readily seen that friendship is only an idea (though a practically necessary one) and unattainable in practice, although striving

⁴⁵ *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 203.

⁴⁶ *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 203.

for friendship (as a maximum of good disposition toward each other) is a duty set by reason, and no ordinary duty but an honourable one. For in his relations with his neighbour how can a human being ascertain whether one of the elements requisite to this duty (e.g., benevolence toward each other) is *equal* in the disposition of each of the friends? [...] And how can he be sure that if the *love* of one is stronger, he may not, just because of this, forfeit something of the other's *respect*, so that it will be difficult for both to bring love and respect subjectively into that equal balance required for friendship? For love can be regarded as attraction and respect as repulsion, and if the principle of love bids friends to draw closer, the principle of respect requires them to stay at a proper distance from each other.⁴⁷

This long citation encapsulates much of what Wollstonecraft tried and ultimately failed to square. It was a wrong she could not right.

Finally, it needs to be said that however limited her knowledge of Plato and Platonism might have been she could not but turn to it, not only because of the pervasive influence it had in her milieu,⁴⁸ but also because her philosopher of choice, John Locke, had nothing to offer on the subject. For all his commentary on Christianity, it is difficult to think of anyone who had less to say about love than Locke. As my student, Philip Davies put it: 'our love of God is [for Locke] obedience'. Not quite the note Wollstonecraft wanted to strike given her overall ambition.

God could be the subject of respect as he could be respected, indeed venerated, unconditionally given his attributes. Whether, still following Wollstonecraft's logic, he could be loved, depended on stripping love of all that makes that attraction differentiable from respect. The ontological inequality between God and humans was irrelevant in relation to either feeling. Human beings, by contrast, could not be respected unconditionally. They were worthy of respect only to the degree that they strove towards human excellence.⁴⁹ That required a very different society from that which Wollstonecraft knew, a society with far less of the material and social inequalities she so eloquently described. Such a world would, however, not see respect and love combined, not at any rate, respect and unconditional love or resplendent of all that distinguishes it from respect. The consequences for divine as well as earthly love of Burke's distinction are inescapable.

Far from distancing her, reading Wollstonecraft as moral and political philosopher engaged in the debates of her day enables us to learn from her, and

⁴⁷ Kant (1996), *The Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary Gregor, with introduction by Roger J. Sullivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 215.

⁴⁸ See note 5.

⁴⁹ Here she might be better understood within Aristotelian rather than solely a Platonist approach to ethics.

thereby to understand better the nature of the theoretical as well as practical problems we face in our definitions and experience of some of the most fundamental aspects of our culture. This requires taking her pronouncements on women and men as part of her wider intellectual engagement, rather than to see the latter as a function of her 'feminism'. This chapter has revisited some very familiar passages and some of her well-known views. It has also sought to highlight aspects of her thought that are less so. In particular, it has given greater weight than is normally given to her first *Vindication*, followed her account of the psychological impact of unequal relations, and began testing the coherence of her views on respect and love in the light of her critique of Burke, as well as bringing her into a conversation with Kant. Wollstonecraft's place in the canon can only be assured if she has something to offer on major philosophical problems. To assert this, she must first be taken seriously philosophically.

2

Wollstonecraft on Marriage as Virtue Friendship

Nancy Kendrick

Mary Wollstonecraft's claims in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* that marriage ought to 'subside into friendship'¹ and that the 'security of marriage [is to be found in] the calm tenderness of friendship'² have led some commentators to conclude that amorous love has no place in her conception of marriage,³ while others have found in her view a repressive attitude toward sexuality.⁴ Still other critics have claimed that in grounding marriage in classical ideals of virtue friendship, Wollstonecraft has naïvely modeled marriage on 'perfect' friendship between men.⁵ It is true that she sometimes suggests that amorous love is at odds with friendship,⁶ and it is also true that she conceives of marriage as based in the merit and esteem typical of virtue friendships, but the relation of her view to classical conceptions of friendship—in particular to Aristotle's view—is more complex and interesting than critics have recognized. I provide an analysis of Wollstonecraft's claim that marriage is friendship by considering the distinction Aristotle draws between virtue friendships and friendships of utility, especially as

¹ Mary Wollstonecraft (1995), *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (henceforth *VRM*) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (henceforth *VRW*), ed. Sylvana Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 205. All references are to this edition.

² Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 99.

³ Ruth Abbey (1999), 'Back to the Future: Marriage as Friendship in the Thought of Mary Wollstonecraft', *Hypatia* 14 (3): 78–95.

⁴ Mary Poovey (1984), *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press). Poovey argues that Wollstonecraft's view of sexuality was influenced by repressive codes of conduct typical of the eighteenth-century English middle class.

⁵ Tomaselli, Wollstonecraft's *VRM* and *VRW*, pp. xxvi–xxvii.

⁶ She writes, for example, '[i]n great degree, love and friendship cannot subsist in the same bosom'. Love includes 'vain fears' and 'jealousies', and these are at odds with 'the sincere respect of friendship'. Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 151.

these elucidate his conception of the marriage friendship. I argue that Wollstonecraft presents marriage as a virtue friendship in order to show that it is not a friendship of utility, and that her aim in doing so is to remove marriage from the realm of the transactional and place it in the realm of the moral.

Several recent commentators have taken note of the Aristotelianism present in both Wollstonecraft's moral theory and her political philosophy. Sandrine Bergès, for example, has argued persuasively that Wollstonecraft is a virtue ethicist and that her conception of the virtues mirrors Aristotle's in several ways: the virtues are habits of action, they are a mean between two vices of excess and deficiency, and they are ways of instantiating human excellence.⁷ Focusing on Wollstonecraft's political philosophy, Natalie Fuehrer Taylor has argued that Aristotle's political theory provides Wollstonecraft with an alternative to the state of nature theories advanced by Locke and Rousseau.⁸ I follow Bergès in taking Wollstonecraft to be working within an Aristotelian moral framework: I show that she conceives of the virtues as human excellences, as ways to *perfect* oneself, not as ways to *complete* oneself, and I argue that she rejects marriage as a friendship of utility on the grounds that such friendships are exchanges whose aim is to satisfy a need or a lack, to *complete*, rather than to *perfect* the friends. Wollstonecraft argues for woman's equality in marriage not by insisting that a wife should receive benefits from a husband equal to those she gives, but by rejecting altogether the idea that marriage is a friendship of utility.

The question whether Wollstonecraft was acquainted with the writings of the ancient philosophers has been addressed by several commentators and the results are inconclusive. Taylor suggests that she was familiar with Aristotle's *Politics* and Plato's *Symposium*,⁹ while Bergès thinks it unlikely that she read Aristotle's works.¹⁰ Whether Wollstonecraft was familiar with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* or not, the basic elements of the view of friendship presented there (and

⁷ Sandrine Bergès (2013), *The Routledge Guidebook to Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London and New York: Routledge), ch. 4. For a discussion of the limits to this approach, see Martina Reuter (2014), "Like a Fanciful Kind of *Half Being*": Mary Wollstonecraft's Criticism of Jean-Jacques Rousseau', *Hypatia* 29 (4): 925–41. Reuter emphasizes the Platonist elements in Wollstonecraft's concept of virtue.

⁸ Natalie Fuehrer Taylor (2007), *The Rights of Woman as Chimera: The Political Philosophy of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York and London: Routledge).

⁹ Taylor, *The Rights of Woman as Chimera*, p. 8.

¹⁰ Bergès, *Routledge Guidebook to Wollstonecraft's Vindication*, pp. 66–7. Thomas Taylor, author of the satirical *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes* (1792) published a translation of Aristotle's works in 1812. This was long after Wollstonecraft's death, of course, but according to Lyndall Gordon, Taylor was the landlord of the Wollstonecraft family when Mary was eighteen years old; Lyndall Gordon (2005), *Vindication: A Life of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York: Harper Collins), p. 154. It is possible that Wollstonecraft became acquainted with Aristotle's works through Taylor.

in the works of other classical authors, including Cicero, whom she certainly read) were accepted and repeated by the philosophers whose work she knew, admired, and criticized. These include Adam Smith, David Hume, Edmund Burke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In their writings, she found the following Aristotelian claims about friendship: first, that virtue friendship is a male-only affair, second, that *the* friendship between men and women is marriage—a friendship of utility whose purpose is procreation and family life—and, finally, that marriage is not a virtue friendship. Wollstonecraft addresses all of these claims in her analysis of marriage in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Thus, I suggest that reading her arguments against an Aristotelian backdrop provides a framework for understanding her insistence that marriage is a virtue friendship, not a friendship of utility. I begin, therefore, with a fairly detailed discussion of the Aristotelian theory of friendship.

2.1 Aristotelian Friendship

Aristotle regards friendship as ‘an absolute necessity’ for human life, claiming that ‘no one would choose to live without friends, even if he had all the other goods’.¹¹ A good life is not a life of isolation; it is a life created in association with others. Friendships are connections based on utility, pleasure, or virtue, and all three types are grounded in reciprocated and acknowledged good will.

In friendships of utility each friend seeks in the other what he lacks and needs. Aristotle often expresses these needs in terms of complementary characteristics, explaining that these friendships arise ‘between a poor person and a rich, or an ignorant person and a learned one, since each . . . is eager for whatever it is he happens to lack, and so gives something in return’.¹² In this kind of association and in friendships of pleasure, the friends are fond of each other ‘not in so far as the person they love is who he is, but in so far as he is useful or pleasant’.¹³ In virtue friendships, on the other hand, not only is there reciprocated good will, but also a certain kind of partiality. Each friend loves the other for *who he is*, and this is a matter of his moral character. Both the good and the wicked, Aristotle says, ‘can be friends . . . for pleasure or utility [but] only good people can be friends for the sake of the other person himself’.¹⁴ Even non-human animals can engage in

¹¹ Aristotle (2000), *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1155a4–5, p. 143. References are to this translation and henceforth referred to as *NE*.

¹² Aristotle, *NE*, 1159b13–15, p. 154.

¹³ Aristotle, *NE*, 1156a15–16, p. 146.

¹⁴ Aristotle, *NE*, 1157a16–19, p. 148.

associations grounded in utility and pleasure,¹⁵ but virtue friendships alone are the means through which human moral character is cultivated.

Of course, virtue friendships include benefits exchanged and pleasures shared between the friends. But the aim of the friendship is not the profit or pleasure one receives from it. It is an association created and cultivated for the sake of the characters of the friends themselves. This is why Aristotle considers it ‘friendship in the primary and real sense’,¹⁶ while friendships of utility and pleasure are often described as ‘lesser’ or ‘imperfect’. Friendships of utility are further distinguished from virtue friendships in that the bond in the former arises from each friend’s deficiency in some respect, which the other can satisfy, whereas the bond in the latter does not arise from a lack. In virtue friendships, the friends are not striving to repair themselves; they are not ‘try[ing] to complete themselves through union with each other, as if they were two halves of one whole’.¹⁷ Instead each friend is an ontological *whole*, and the bond is the means through which each friend *perfects* himself as a human being, not the means through which he *completes* himself in relation to someone else. This distinction between perfecting and completing oneself is essential to Wollstonecraft’s conception of the marriage bond, as we shall see in Section 2.3.

Friendship bonds are often contrasted with family connections in contemporary discourse, but the concept expressed by the Greek word *philia* includes relations of erotic love, connections with professional, religious, or political associates, as well as family ties.¹⁸ Aristotle pays particular attention to the marriage bond in his discussion of friendship, and this has led some commentators to conclude that he is not completely uninterested in women’s capacity for friendship¹⁹ and that he may be defended against the charge that he excludes

¹⁵ In the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle writes: ‘[Primary] friendship occurs only among humans, for they alone are conscious of choice, but the other forms occur also in the lower animals.’ Aristotle, *The Eudemian Ethics* (2011), trans. Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1236b5–6, p. 116. All references are to this translation and referred to as *EE*.

¹⁶ Aristotle, *NE*, 1157a31, p. 148.

¹⁷ Ronna Burger (2008), *Aristotle’s Dialogue with Socrates: On the Nicomachean Ethics* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press), p. 166.

¹⁸ Burger writes: ‘As the discussion develops, *philia* comes to cover a range of relationships—familial, economic, social, political, erotic—that extends far beyond those we would ordinarily speak of as “friendship”’. *Aristotle’s Dialogue with Socrates*, p. 166. John Cooper explains that the concept expressed by *philia* ‘covers not just the (more or less) intimate relationships between persons not bound together by near family ties... but all sorts of family relationships (especially those of parents to children, children to parents, siblings to one another, and the marriage relationship itself)’, John M. Cooper (1980), ‘Aristotle on Friendship’, in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), pp. 301–40, pp. 301–2.

¹⁹ Howard J. Curzer (2012), *Aristotle and the Virtues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 250, fn 5.

women from virtue friendship.²⁰ But these claims require further analysis. First, it is important to recognize that Aristotle's interest is in *wives*, not in women. His focus does not extend beyond a wife's connection to a husband. He does not consider female–female friendships or female–male friendships whose aim is not procreation and family life. Second, within the limited scope in which women's capacity for friendship is considered—that is, marriage—one needs to investigate the kind of friendship Aristotle takes this bond to be. Is it a friendship of utility, pleasure, or virtue? Here is what he says:

The friendship of man and woman also seems natural. . . . [H]uman beings live together not only for reproductive purposes but also to supply what they need for life. For from the start their characteristic activities are divided, those of the man being different from those of the woman. They supply one another's needs, therefore, by putting their own talents into the common pool. These reasons explain why this friendship . . . include[s] both utility and pleasure.²¹

Marriage is a friendship of utility and pleasure, then. Can it also be a virtue friendship? In fact, Aristotle says it can: 'it may also be a friendship for virtue, if they are good, since each has his or her own virtue, and can find enjoyment in this'.²² But despite this optimistic claim, there are several stumbling blocks to conceiving of marriage as a virtue friendship. The main one concerns the moral inequality Aristotle claims exists between men and women, and consequently, between husbands and wives. This is a theme echoed in the works of Burke and Rousseau, and it has particular relevance for Wollstonecraft's analysis of marriage, as we shall discover shortly. But first we must consider why Aristotelian marriage turns out not to be a virtue friendship.

²⁰ Most commentators on Aristotle note that he excludes women from virtue friendship, but there is surprisingly little agreement about just how this happens. Suzanne Stern-Gillet, for example, claims that 'it is well known that Aristotle explicitly argued that women were incapable of the best kind of friendship', though she dismisses the matter as philosophically irrelevant, claiming that 'in this particular matter we must be content with the confidence that, had he lived today, Aristotle would most probably have revised his views on the nature of women': Suzanne Stern-Gillet (1995), *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press), p. 9. Others hold that the reasons for women's exclusion are implicit in other parts of Aristotle's philosophy, for example, in his treatment of women as biologically or intellectually inferior to men. For this view see Prudence Allen (1985), *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution 750 BC–AD 1250* (Montreal: Eden Press), ch. 2; and in an entirely different vein, though arriving at the same conclusion as Allen, see William W. Fortenbaugh (1977), 'Aristotle on Slaves and Women', in *Articles on Aristotle*, vol. 2, eds Jonathan Barnes, Malcolm Schofield, and Richard Sorabji (New York: St. Martin's Press), pp. 135–9.

²¹ Aristotle, *NE*, 1162a17–24, pp. 159–60.

²² Aristotle, *NE*, 1162a25, p. 160. In the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle says only that '[t]he friendship of man and wife is one of utility, a partnership'; he does not say that it may also be a virtue friendship: Aristotle, *EE*, 1242a31, p. 131.

2.2 Why Aristotelian Marriage is not a Virtue Friendship

In addition to dividing friendship into associations of utility, pleasure, and virtue, Aristotle provides another conceptual category: friendships of equality and of inequality. These involve ‘superiority’, he says, ‘of father to son... of older to young[er]... of man to woman, and of any ruler to his subject’.²³ The question is whether the sort of inequality that exists between men and women, as Aristotle sees it, disqualifies marriage from being a virtue friendship.

A fair number of commentators think that it does. For example, Dirk Baltzly and Nick Eliopoulos note that Aristotle’s claim in the *Ethics* that the marriage friendship may be for virtue is simply at odds with claims he makes elsewhere. Virtue presupposes practical wisdom, yet in the *Politics*, Aristotle claims that in women the capacity for rational decision-making is not as authoritative as it is in men. Baltzly and Eliopoulos conclude that ‘since it is distinctive of the person who possesses practical wisdom to deliberate well, this appears to preclude women possessing it and so possessing full virtue. And this would seem to preclude them from virtue friendships’.²⁴

Other commentators suggest that the moral inequality between wives and husbands does not keep marriage from being a virtue friendship, but that the virtue friendship is *imperfect*. For example, Richard Kraut writes:

When two individuals recognize that the other person is someone of good character, and they spend time with each other, engaged in activities that exercise their virtues, then they form one kind of friendship. If they are equally virtuous, their friendship is perfect. If, however, there is a large gap in their moral development (as between a parent and a small child, or between a husband and a wife), then although their relationship may be based on the other person’s good character, it will be imperfect precisely because of their inequality.²⁵

Kraut is suggesting that marriage is an imperfect friendship not because it is a ‘lesser’ friendship of utility or pleasure, but because the friends, though they are

²³ Aristotle, *NE*, 1158b12–14, pp. 151–2.

²⁴ Dirk Baltzly and Nick Eliopoulos (2009), ‘The Classical Ideals of Friendship’, in *Friendship: A History*, ed. Barbara Caine (London: Equinox), 1–64, p. 24. Many commentators follow this line of argument by noting the incompatibility between Aristotle’s explicit claims in the *Ethics* and in other works, including *On the Generation of Animals*, 737a27–28 and the *Politics*, 1260a13–14. See, for example, Leah Bradshaw, ‘Political Rule, Prudence and the Woman Question in Aristotle’, *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 24 (3): 557–73; and Marcia Homiak (1996), ‘Feminism and Aristotle’s Rational Ideal’, in *Feminism and Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Julie K. Ward (New York and London: Routledge), pp. 118–37.

²⁵ Richard Kraut (2014), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ‘Aristotle’s *Ethics*’, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/>>, accessed 25 May 2015.

virtuous, are unequally so. His analysis suggests that the virtues are gender specific, so that even though Aristotle thinks that men *as such* are morally superior to women, women may nonetheless excel or perfect themselves with respect to their own kind.²⁶ Natalie Fuehrer Taylor advances a similar reading of Aristotle, and, as we shall see in Section 2.3, of Wollstonecraft; one advantage of this reading is that it acknowledges that women (as wives) do partake of the virtues. But this acknowledgement comes at the cost of making the virtues *complementary*, and this underscores the fact that marriage in Aristotle's philosophy is a friendship of utility, not a virtue friendship.

To make this point clear, we must consider the difference between complementarity and reciprocity. All Aristotelian friendships are defined in terms of *reciprocated* good will. Without reciprocity there would not be a *bond*. But in friendships of utility the reciprocity is tied to *complementarity*, that is, to the fact that each friend lacks something that he gets from the other in the friendship. In virtue friendships, on the other hand, though there is reciprocated good will, it is not tied to complementarity. Rather, each friend loves the other for the friend's *own sake*, and the reciprocity is simply a matter of each friend having this love for the other. In loving a friend *for his own sake*, Aristotle is pointing to two characteristics of virtue friendship absent from friendships of utility. One, as I noted above, is that virtue friendships are partial: the friends love each other for a particular set of qualities, namely, their moral character. The other, which distinguishes reciprocity from complementarity, Aristotle explains by comparing virtue friendship to a mother's love for her child.²⁷ A mother wishes the child well selflessly—that is, for the child's sake, not for her own, and this is the case even if the child does not know of the mother's love. This selfless well-wishing—what we might call unconditional love—is essential to virtue friendship and distinguishes it from friendships of utility. In friendships of utility, the good will is conditional on each friend supplying what the other lacks.

This difference between reciprocity and complementarity explains why conceiving of the virtues as complementary makes marriage a friendship of utility, not a virtue friendship. Aristotle conceives of the virtues along gender lines, not in the way eighteenth-century theorists do—that is, in terms of distinct male and female virtues—but by holding that particular virtues are manifested differently in men and women. For example, with respect to the virtue courage, he claims

²⁶ John Cooper makes this argument. See 'Aristotle on Friendship', p. 307.

²⁷ Aristotle writes: 'For a friend is taken to be. . . one who wishes the friend to be and to live for the friend's own sake—this is how mothers feel for their children' (*NE*, 1166a3–5, p. 169).

that '[t]he courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying'.²⁸ In other words, the form of courage a wife has *complements* the form of courage a husband has. But complementary virtues, like other complementary characteristics or goods, mark associations as friendships of utility, not as virtue friendships. Each friend has what the other lacks. Grounding a friendship in complementary *virtues* rather than in some other complementary characteristic does not make it a virtue friendship; it retains the structure of a friendship of utility. In a male–male virtue friendship in which both friends have the virtue courage, Aristotle's analysis is not that one friend commands and the other obeys. In this case the virtues are not conceived in complementary terms. It is only when the virtues are gendered that they become complementary. Kraut's attempt, then, to make marriage a virtue friendship—even an imperfect virtue friendship—by making the virtues gender complementary fails.

Thus, the moral inequality that Aristotle thinks exists between men and women cannot be overcome. The inequality between husband and wife is more like the inequality between humans and gods than between two unequally virtuous male friends. In the latter, the inequality can be overcome by the inferior friend's moral improvement. But the inequality in the marriage friendship is essential, rather than incidental to it.²⁹ No matter how 'good' a wife is, her virtues are relative only to those of her kind, and her moral improvement is relative not to her husband but to other wives. Aristotelian marriage, then, is not a virtue friendship. It is a friendship of utility, and therefore, it is not an association in which the friends fully participate in the moral realm by perfecting their characters.

2.3 Wollstonecraft on Marriage and Virtue Friendship

These matters concerning complementary male–female virtues and human perfectibility are fundamental to understanding Wollstonecraft's conception of marriage.³⁰ She, like Aristotle, understands friendship to be intimately tied to the development of the moral virtues, and she is concerned about the conditions

²⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 13.

²⁹ Burger notes: 'Aristotle locates the inequality of partners as an essential feature in two spheres of life in particular—political relationships between ruler and ruled, on the one hand, and domestic relationships between members of the family, on the other'. *Aristotle's Dialogue With Socrates*, p. 170.

³⁰ Both Jane Duran and Virginia Sapiro note the perfectibility aspect of Wollstonecraft's view, but they connect it more to a Christian worldview than to an Aristotelian one. See Jane Duran (2006), *Eight Women Philosophers: Theory, Politics, and Feminism* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press), ch. 4; and Virginia Sapiro (1992), *A Vindication of Political Virtue: The Political Theory of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).

under which women acquire these virtues. To esteem others and be esteemed by them requires both sound judgment and virtuous character, and she argues that the ‘partial laws and customs of society’³¹ keep women from developing either. Though *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* may certainly be read as a criticism of social norms that keep women from developing the virtues, it also provides a justification for conceiving of marriage not as an Aristotelian friendship of utility but as an Aristotelian virtue friendship.

Most of Wollstonecraft’s commentators acknowledge that she models marriage on classical conceptions of virtue friendship by noting that she often connects marriage with claims about esteem and respect. She writes, for example, that in marriage, ‘[a]dmiration . . . gives place to friendship, properly so called, because it is cemented by esteem’,³² that ‘friendship [in marriage] is a serious affection . . . because it is founded on principle, and cemented by time’,³³ and that ‘[a]ffection in the marriage state can only be founded on respect’.³⁴ Yet, commentators conclude from these claims that Wollstonecraft refuses a place to sexual passion in marriage, or that she expresses a self-denying attitude toward female sexuality.³⁵ In other words, the issue is conceived in certain dichotomized terms: if marriage is a virtue friendship, then it excludes sexual passion. But, the discussion above of Aristotelian friendship provides another avenue for understanding Wollstonecraft’s position: marriage is a virtue friendship; it is not a friendship of utility.

To begin, we must note that Wollstonecraft’s conception of the virtues is straightforwardly Aristotelian in many ways. She conceives of the virtues as human excellences, as habits of action that must be learned, practiced, and developed over time. But a point on which she parts company with Aristotle is that the virtues are gendered. It is well known, of course, that she rejects ‘feminine’ virtues, first, because some of these alleged virtues—such as cunningness and duplicity—are not virtues at all, and second, because even praiseworthy traits, if not grounded in reason, cannot truly be considered virtues. But she rejects female virtues also because they are wrongly conceived as *relational* qualities grounded in utility rather than as *essential* qualities exemplifying human excellence. This

³¹ Mary Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Wrongs of Woman: or Maria*, in *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, vol. 1, eds Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler (New York: New York University Press), p. 83.

³² Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 191.

³³ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 151.

³⁴ Wollstonecraft, *VRM*, p. 22.

³⁵ See Barbara Taylor (2003), *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Taylor is also critical of ‘modern scholars [who have censured] Wollstonecraft’s attitude toward sexuality . . . for its self-denying asceticism’, p. 112.

position provides the key for understanding Wollstonecraft's insistence that marriage is to be conceived as a virtue friendship.

Though she does admit that in certain ways women stand in relation to others, that they are 'connected with man as daughters, wives, and mothers',³⁶ and that their moral duties fall out of these connections, Wollstonecraft nonetheless rejects the view that female virtues are to be formed as a complement to male virtues. She argues instead that every individual is 'a world in itself',³⁷ and insists that women's virtues must be formed in a way that develops their 'greatness of soul'.³⁸ Denying the 'many ingenious arguments [that] have been brought forward to prove, that the two sexes, in the acquirement of virtue, ought to aim at attaining a very different character',³⁹ she notes that 'women are not allowed to have sufficient strength of mind to acquire what really deserves the name of virtue'.⁴⁰ What really deserves that name are those traits that 'ennoble the human character',⁴¹ whereas the alleged 'feminine' virtues give women 'artificial, weak characters' and make them 'useless members of society'.⁴²

Furthermore, she objects to the many writers of her own era who insisted that female virtues were to be cultivated to the end of male pleasure and satisfaction. Rousseau, a favorite target, made this claim quite explicitly: '[T]he education of the women should be always relative to the men. To please, to be useful to us . . . to render our lives easy and agreeable: these are the duties of women at all times, and what they should be taught in their infancy'.⁴³ Burke, too, argued that 'respect and love are antagonist principles',⁴⁴ and was forced to conclude that women are commanded by God and nature 'not to cultivate the moral virtues', since such cultivation would 'interfere with the pleasing sensations they were created to inspire'.⁴⁵ Both Rousseau and Burke advance a standard eighteenth-century understanding of the virtues as gendered: there are distinct feminine and masculine virtues. Furthermore, they believe that what makes the feminine virtues genuine is that they are useful and pleasing to men. Wollstonecraft's rejection of these views is not aimed at making female-male relations equal exchanges of utility and pleasure. She does not argue that male virtues ought to be developed so as to be more pleasing and useful to women. To the contrary, she makes *utility* itself the target of her criticism. She objects that '[w]riters have too

³⁶ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 95.

³⁷ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 127.

³⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin (1987), *A Short Residence in Sweden and Memoirs of the Author of The Rights of Woman* (New York: Penguin), p. 217.

³⁹ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 87.

⁴⁰ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 87.

⁴¹ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 75.

⁴² Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 90.

⁴³ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 158.

⁴⁴ Wollstonecraft, *VRM*, p. 48.

⁴⁵ Wollstonecraft, *VRM*, p. 47.

often considered virtue in a very limited sense, and made the foundation of it *solely* worldly utility',⁴⁶ and she insists that the virtues must be understood in terms of the perfection of human character traits. Only in this way can a person have a flourishing life. This is an important insight, one that sets her understanding of the virtues apart from Rousseau's and Burke's, and from Aristotle's gendered view of the virtues, and brings it closer to Aristotle's more considered position that the moral virtues are ways to express the excellences peculiar to humans.

Wollstonecraft's criticism of utility is grounded in several concerns. First, it is directed against those who advance an improper conception of the virtues. Wollstonecraft recognizes that though the virtues are cultivated in social relations, it does not follow that they are to be valued merely on the basis of their social utility, and she is particularly concerned about the tendency to conceive of female virtues in terms of the utility they provide to men. Noting that some seemingly praiseworthy traits, such as docility, good humor, patience, and flexibility are in fact 'negative' virtues because they are passive, requiring no 'vigorous exertion of the intellect',⁴⁷ she claims that these traits 'have no other foundation but utility, and of that utility men... arbitrarily... judge, shaping it to their own convenience'.⁴⁸ Her point is that conceiving of the virtues in terms of utility rather than human perfectibility, as Rousseau, Burke, and others do, makes them relative and unstable: they become subject to the 'wayward fluctuating feelings of men'.⁴⁹ In other words, the standard of virtue becomes taste. Furthermore, she warns that when utility is made the foundation of the virtues, the distinction between virtues and vices becomes blurred: '[a]lmost every vice that has degraded our nature might be justified by shewing that it had been productive of *some* benefit to society'.⁵⁰ Wollstonecraft rejects a conception of the virtues held by some eighteenth-century moral theorists that fails to regard these virtues as goods in themselves. While the virtues may (and do) have social benefits, the primary aim in cultivating them is to manifest or instantiate human excellence, not to be useful.⁵¹

Second, Wollstonecraft is concerned about the ontological commitments that underlie relationships grounded in utility. To make this point clear, let's return to the Aristotelian view that friendships of utility arise from a lack. In these associations, each friend lacks something but each possesses something, and each

⁴⁶ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 150. See also *VRM*, p. 47. ⁴⁷ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 133.

⁴⁸ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 124. ⁴⁹ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 150.

⁵⁰ Wollstonecraft, *VRM*, p. 54. Indeed, Bernard Mandeville argued in *The Fable of the Bees* (1714) just how beneficial to society vices could be.

⁵¹ Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski explains: 'Pure virtue theorists deny that virtue is an excellence because it is a means to some external good, but that does not commit them to denying that virtue always brings about good to others.' Zagzebski (1996), *Virtues of the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 99. I take Wollstonecraft to be a pure virtue ethicist in this way.

receives benefits from the friendship that he or she would not have received otherwise. While the lack or deficiency points to social and political advantages that each brings to and receives from the friendship, we must not lose sight of the fact that Aristotle is also making an ontological claim. The friends *themselves* are incomplete; they are two parts of a whole, and their bond is the means through which they strive to complete themselves. It is precisely *this* conception of human relations as it is applied to the marriage bond that Wollstonecraft rejects. She denies, for example, that a husband and wife 'together make but one moral being'.⁵² She rejects the view that 'man was made to reason woman to feel: and that together, flesh and spirit, they make the most perfect whole, by blending happily reason and sensibility into one character'.⁵³ Wollstonecraft insists instead that the moral virtues belong to a person *essentially*, while qualities of usefulness are relational properties that belong to a person *incidentally*;⁵⁴ consequently, she refuses to treat wife and husband as incomplete parts striving to complete themselves.

Natalie Fuehrer Taylor also understands Wollstonecraft to be concerned with female wholeness, but she sees this in terms of woman's unity as 'rational mother' and 'affectionate wife'.⁵⁵ An 'unfractured woman', on Taylor's reading of Wollstonecraft, is one 'who practices reason and virtue, but who is, nonetheless, an affectionate wife'.⁵⁶ Taylor thus sees female wholeness as a matter of completion rather than perfection, and this leads her to understand Wollstonecraft's view of marriage in terms very much like those advanced by Richard Kraut in his discussion of Aristotelian marriage. In fact, Taylor argues both that Aristotelian marriage *can* be a virtue friendship, though it is a friendship of inequality, and that Wollstonecraft's view of marriage is Aristotelian in precisely this way.⁵⁷ Taylor claims that Wollstonecraft conceives of marriage as an imperfect virtue friendship, one in which there is a moral inequality between husbands and wives. Though she correctly notes that Wollstonecraft attributes woman's moral inferiority to social conditions rather than natural ones, Taylor nonetheless contends

⁵² Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 169.

⁵³ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 139.

⁵⁴ This is a further example of Wollstonecraft's Aristotelianism. See Cooper, 'Aristotle on Friendship', p. 312; and also Julie K. Ward, who writes: '[I]n virtue friendships the thing loved (i.e., moral character) belongs to the one being loved and does not depend on some relation that the one who loves has to the loved one.' Ward (1996), 'Aristotle on *Philia*: The Beginnings of a Feminist Ideal of Friendship?' in *Feminism and Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Julie K. Ward (New York and London: Routledge), pp. 155–71, p. 163. She adds in a footnote: 'This is so because in the case of virtue friendships the thing loved is a *per se*, or essential property of the person loved, not merely an accidental, relational property that obtains between [one person] and the other, . . . such as being pleasant or useful', p. 247, fn 31.

⁵⁵ Taylor, *Rights of Woman as Chimera*, p. 136.

⁵⁶ Taylor, *Rights of Woman as Chimera*, p. 138.

⁵⁷ Taylor, *Rights of Woman as Chimera*, pp. 145–62.

that Wollstonecraft overcomes the inequality issue by holding that husbands and wives have different but complementary virtues. This is the reasoning advanced by Kraut, and, as I argued above, it does not succeed in making Aristotelian marriage a virtue friendship.

Taylor's reading makes Wollstonecraft a defender of the status quo with respect to marriage, whereas the reading I have been pressing makes her a critic of it. One cannot deny, of course, that part of Wollstonecraft's aim in the *Vindication* is to point out that the benefits received by wives and husbands are rather unequal. But, the target of her criticism is not the absence of *reciprocity* in the marriage bond; the target of her criticism is the *complementarity* in the marriage bond. Thus, her solution to marriage inequality is not to make marriage a more equal association of utility by arguing that male virtues ought to be cultivated in such a way that a wife would receive benefits and pleasures from a husband equal to those she gives. Instead, her approach is to abandon altogether the idea that marriage *is* a friendship of utility grounded in complementary character traits. Even on more equal terms of reciprocity between wives and husbands, the same problem would remain. The virtues would still be understood as a way to complete oneself, not as a way to perfect oneself. Wollstonecraft's solution is to conceive of marriage as a virtue friendship in the way I have suggested: as a friendship that *perfects* women as moral selves, not as a friendship that *completes* women in relation to men.

This brings us to the third and overarching factor motivating Wollstonecraft's attack on utility: her desire to remove marriage from the realm of the *transactional* and place it in the realm of the *moral*.⁵⁸ Echoing Cicero's claim that in friendship 'we do not make our feelings of affection into a business proposition',⁵⁹ Wollstonecraft writes, 'the basis of friendship is mutual respect . . . not a commercial treaty'.⁶⁰ In treating marriage as a virtue friendship, Wollstonecraft is emphasizing that the proper objects of moral assessment are character traits. This indicates, for one thing, that she is a virtue theorist, not a utilitarian.⁶¹ But it also

⁵⁸ Many commentators have recognized that there is a moral dimension to Wollstonecraft's conception of marriage, but they sometimes misconstrue this moral aspect by claiming that she believed that women have a duty both to marry and to be mothers. See, for example, Abbey, 'Back to the Future', p. 81. An exception is Bergès, *The Routledge Guidebook to Wollstonecraft's Vindication*, p. 121. Wollstonecraft does, of course, think there are certain duties entailed if one is a wife or a mother (or a husband or father) but she doesn't think *being* a wife is a duty.

⁵⁹ Cicero (1991), *De Amicitia*, in *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship*, ed. Michael Pakaluk (Indianapolis, IL: Hackett), pp. 79–116, p. 91.

⁶⁰ Wollstonecraft, *VRM*, p. 39.

⁶¹ I disagree with those who think Wollstonecraft's moral philosophy is utilitarian. See Duran, *Eight Woman Philosophers*, p. 113.

shows that she believes that bonds grounded in exchanges of benefits are not associations in which the uniquely human excellences are manifested. In other words, she, like Aristotle, understands relations grounded in utility to stand outside the moral realm. Thus, if marriage is merely a friendship of utility, it is, Wollstonecraft thinks, nothing more than a set of transactional exchanges.

2.4 Wollstonecraft on Female Friendship

In addition to these criticisms of utility, Wollstonecraft identifies another problem with the failure to conceive of marriage as a virtue friendship: it impedes the formation of female friendships. She suggests that women are kept from forming virtue friendships with each other because their *role* virtues—that is, the character traits enabling them to perform well the functions of a wife, a sister, or a mother—undermine the development of their *moral* virtues, and this keeps them from forming bonds grounded in merit and esteem.⁶² In the following passage she paints a clear picture of the way role virtues create a barrier to female friendship:

Girls who have been weakly educated, are often left cruelly by their parents without any provision . . . and are dependent on the bounty of their brothers. . . . These brothers . . . give as a favour, what children of the same parents had an equal right to. In this . . . humiliating situation, a docile female may remain some time. . . . But when the brother marries . . . she is viewed with averted looks as an intruder, an unnecessary burden on the benevolence of the master of the house, and his new partner. . . . The wife, a cold-hearted, narrow-minded woman, and this is not an unfair supposition; for the present mode of education does not tend to enlarge the heart any more than the understanding, is jealous of the little kindness which her husband shews to his relations; and her sensibility not rising to humanity, she is displeased at seeing the property of *her* children lavished on a helpless sister. . . . The consequence is obvious, the wife has recourse to cunning to undermine the habitual affection, which she is afraid openly to oppose; and neither tears nor caresses are spared till the spy is worked out of her home, and thrown on the world . . . with a small stipend and an uncultivated mind, into a joyless solitude.⁶³

⁶² This points to yet another Aristotelian aspect of Wollstonecraft's moral theory: role virtues. Role virtues, as Aristotle presents them, are character traits conducive to performing specific functions well—say, those of a citizen, or a sailor, or a wife, and they are distinct from moral virtues. Howard Curzer explains that 'insofar as the virtues of certain roles are incompatible with the virtues that characterize the good person, not only these roles, but also their associated institutions, are corrupt': Curzer (2010), 'An Aristotelian Critique of the Traditional Family', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 47 (2): 135–47, p. 138. Curzer uses the distinction between role virtues and moral virtues to offer an Aristotelian criticism of traditional marriage. I'm suggesting that Wollstonecraft also used this distinction as a means to criticize marriage.

⁶³ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, pp. 141–2. See *VRM*, p. 55 for another example of *right as a favor*.

There are two important points to note here: first, in none of these relations does one find the necessary condition for *any* friendship—reciprocated goodwill—or the necessary condition for *virtue* friendship—praiseworthy character traits. The sister is the recipient of the brother’s charity, not of his esteem. All she can offer him in return is a demeaned gratitude. Between the sisters-in-law, there are no virtues; there is only the passive docility of one and the cunning selfishness of the other. The second point is that Wollstonecraft is suggesting that marriage is a corrupt institution precisely because it creates women who not only fail to cultivate the moral virtues, but who, in fact, cultivate the moral vices. She continues:

These two women may be much upon a par, with respect to reason and humanity; and changing situations, might have acted just the same selfish part; but had they been differently educated, the case would also have been very different. The wife would not . . . wish to love [her husband] merely because he loved her, but on account of his virtues.⁶⁴

Wollstonecraft is pointing out that when marriage is conceived of and practiced as a friendship of utility, women are interchangeable placeholders. In one situation a woman is a sister, in another she is a wife, and the more competently a woman fulfills her role, the more she either weakens her virtues (through passive docility) or strengthens her vices (through jealousy and cruelty). Thus, female bonds appear impossible.

How, then, does Wollstonecraft think female bonds are formed? What does she think grounds female friendship? Many commentators look to her works of fiction for answers to these questions, and in particular to her unfinished novel, *The Wrongs of Woman: or Maria*, and they focus on two issues: solidarity and reciprocity. Some commentators understand Wollstonecraft to define friendship between women—in the characters of Maria and Jemima—in a solidarity grounded in protection or in an exchange.⁶⁵ But this reading seems problematic. Given Wollstonecraft’s irritation in the *Vindication* with ‘the insolent condescension of protectorship’⁶⁶ that men impose upon women, it seems unlikely that she would find guardianship an acceptable basis for forging female friendship bonds. Furthermore, though Jemima does act as Maria’s ally in engineering her escape from the asylum and though Maria does, in return, make Jemima a part of her household, it is unlikely—given her arguments against utility—that Wollstonecraft means to ground their friendship in a *quid pro quo* transaction. To the contrary, she seems more interested in establishing their bond through their

⁶⁴ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 142.

⁶⁵ See Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, ch. 9.

⁶⁶ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 211.

attempts to create themselves in ways that warrant the other's esteem. For example, it is precisely Maria's respect that Jemima fears losing when she relates the tale of the role she played in encouraging a tradesman, who had taken a liking to her, to turn out the young woman who was pregnant with their child, and who, as a consequence, kills herself. Jemima is filled with painful remorse over her complicity in the treatment of the young woman fearing that it 'will entirely deprive [her] of Maria's esteem'.⁶⁷ Wollstonecraft's point appears to be *not* that female friendship is grounded in creating a refuge from the arbitrary power of men, but that it must be founded on benevolence and esteem for each other's virtuous character.

2.5 Conclusion

Wollstonecraft believes that through virtue friendship a person becomes a fully articulated moral agent, one who gives and receives good will *for who she is*. In conceiving of marriage as a virtue friendship, Wollstonecraft is not blindly endorsing an ideal conception of friendship. Neither is she 'scorn[ing] romantic love'⁶⁸ nor expressing 'a violent antagonism to the sensual'.⁶⁹ She is rejecting one of 'the mistaken notions that enslave [the female] sex',⁷⁰ namely, a conception of the virtues based in utility rather than perfectibility.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs*, p. 117.

⁶⁸ Marilyn Butler (1984), *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 74–5.

⁶⁹ Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, p. 117.

⁷⁰ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 107.

⁷¹ Versions of this chapter were presented at the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (McMaster University, 2011), the Northern New England Philosophical Association (University of Massachusetts-Lowell, 2012), the Eighteenth-Century Studies Seminar (Harvard University, 2013), Trinity College, Dublin, Philosophy Department Colloquium (2013), and the University of Helsinki, History of Philosophy Research Seminar (2013). I am grateful to Susan Lanser, Tim Nulty, Ville Paukkonen, Ruth Perry, Martina Reuter, May Sim, Ericka Tucker, Charlotte Witt, and to many others for their probing questions and helpful comments. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the volume editors, Sandrine Bergès and Alan Coffee, and to Lisa Lebduska, Dana Polanichka, Hyun Kim, Gina Luria Walker, Jessica Gordon-Roth, and John Partridge for their useful comments on a penultimate draft of this chapter.

3

The Role of the Passions in Mary Wollstonecraft's Notion of Virtue

Martina Reuter

In her treatment of virtue, Mary Wollstonecraft puts a strong emphasis on the role of reason and though her writings testify that passions also contribute to virtuous action, it is not very clear exactly how they do so. My aim in this chapter is to explore the various roles played by the passions in Wollstonecraft's understanding of moral thought and action.¹

Like many of her contemporaries, Wollstonecraft is not very systematic in her use of the terms passion, feeling, and emotion, which are used interchangeably and with a great amount of overlap. In my analysis, I have chosen passions as the central term, because it is the term that has the most evident positive connotations in Wollstonecraft's writings. Her preferences become very clear, for example, when she writes that "it is not against strong, preserving passions; but romantic wavering feelings that I wish to guard the female heart by exercising the understanding".²

In my interpretation of Wollstonecraft's moral philosophy, I follow those who have argued that she is a virtue ethicist.³ Wollstonecraft repeatedly emphasizes

¹ Earlier versions of this chapter were presented at the workshop "Three Women Political Philosophers of the Late Enlightenment", Bilkent University, May 2015, and at the conference "The Good, the One, and the Many", University of Jyväskylä, June 2015. I thank the organizers of these events and my fellow participants for their generous comments. Special thanks to Sandrine Bergès, Alan Coffee, Lena Halldenius, Zübeyde Karadağ, Nancy Kendrick, Valerie Kennedy, Frans Svensson, and Miira Tuominen.

² Mary Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, 7 vols, eds. J. Todd and M. Butler (London: William Pickering), vol. 5, p. 143. All references to Wollstonecraft's published works will be to this edition.

³ See Sandrine Bergès (2013), *The Routledge Guidebook to Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London and New York: Routledge); and Nancy Kendrick's chapter in this volume.

the close connection between moral action and character, as when she points out the need “to fulfil the duties of life, and to [...] pursue with vigour the various employments which form the moral character”.⁴ A virtuous character is formed by virtuous actions, and in order to examine how the passions contribute to the formation of a virtuous character, we will have to examine the roles the passions play in particular situations where we have to think and act.

The chapter consists of three sections. In section 3.1, I give an overview of how previous feminist scholarship has treated Wollstonecraft’s views on the passions and their relation to reason. In Section 3.2, I examine what Wollstonecraft means by her claim about “the futility of degrading the passions”, made in a remark on Jonathan Swift’s description of the overtly rational Houyhnhnm.⁵ I argue that by examining this remark in the context of some other related passages we are able to grasp several aspects of how the passions contribute to virtue. In Section 3.3, I will discuss the interconnection between reason and passion by examining in what respect reason itself, according to Wollstonecraft, is dependent on the passions. The section closes with a discussion of Wollstonecraft’s view on the dependent nature of human life.

3.1 Passions and Reason

When feminist scholars first became interested in Wollstonecraft’s thought, some were puzzled by her strong emphasis on the role of reason, which they identified as an inherently male feature, denigrating the passions and other aspects of human embodiment.⁶ Moira Gatens, most prominently, interprets Wollstonecraft as an advocate of a hierarchical dichotomy between reason and feeling, which governs other related dichotomies, such as the nature/culture and private/public distinctions.⁷ Gatens attributes to Wollstonecraft a view according to which

⁴ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 99.

⁵ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 181.

⁶ On this feminist puzzlement, see also Martina Reuter, Lena Halldenius, and Alan Coffee (2014), “Cluster Introduction: Mary Wollstonecraft: Philosophy and Enlightenment”, *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 29 (4): 906–7.

⁷ Moira Gatens (1991a), “‘The Oppressed State of My Sex’: Wollstonecraft on Reason, Feeling and Equality”, in *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory*, eds Mary Lyndon Shanley and Carole Pateman (Cambridge: Polity Press), p. 112; see also Moira Gatens (1991b), *Feminism and Philosophy: Perspectives on Difference and Equality* (Cambridge: Polity Press), p. 21. For other claims about Wollstonecraft’s denigration of the passions, see Cora Kaplan (1986), *Sea Changes: Essays on Culture and Feminism* (London: Verso); and Mary Jacobus (1986), *Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press). For a good overview of these early positions on the role of the passions in Wollstonecraft’s thought, see Catherine Villanueva Gardner (2003), *Women Philosophers: Genre and the Boundaries of Philosophy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press), pp. 90–5.

reason and the bodily aspects of human life are strictly separated: what belongs to the realm of reason excludes the passions and the body, and vice versa.⁸ By overlapping with the private/public dichotomy, the dichotomy between passion and reason becomes, according to Gatens, both conceptual and spatial. While men are able to move between the spheres of private passion and those of public reason, women are relegated to the former.⁹ Gatens argues that Wollstonecraft's commitment to these dichotomies undermines her analysis of social life as well as her attempt to formulate a feminist politics.¹⁰

The picture of Wollstonecraft as somebody who overlooked the importance of feelings, passions, and the body was first challenged, independently, by Virginia Sapiro and Catriona Mackenzie. Mackenzie is particularly interested in Wollstonecraft's conception of self-governance and, arguing in explicit dialogue with Gatens, she agrees that Wollstonecraft is limited by the dichotomies between soul/body, reason/passion, and masculine/feminine, but argues, against Gatens, that *despite* this limitation, Wollstonecraft is able to "articulate a more subtle view of self-governance, one that would not pit women's reason in opposition either to their bodies or to affectivity".¹¹ Mackenzie emphasizes that the passions play an important role in Wollstonecraft's conceptions of knowledge and virtue, and she points out that Wollstonecraft's understanding of self-governance includes an emphasis on women's right to self-governance with respect to their bodies.¹² But since Mackenzie, like Gatens, is reading Wollstonecraft through an assumed dichotomy between reason and the claims of the body, including the passions, she can defend her interpretation only by claiming that there is an apparent tension between Wollstonecraft's emphasis on, respectively, reason and passion, and that Wollstonecraft's text wavers between two different ideals of self-governance:

⁸ The assumed dichotomy that guides Gatens's interpretation becomes visible also in her portrayal of Wollstonecraft's two major love relationships. Gatens claims that whereas Wollstonecraft's relationship with Gilbert Imlay testifies to the difficulty of combining passion and friendship, especially under the historical conditions that structured Wollstonecraft's life, her relationship with William Godwin was a rational companionship untainted by passion, see Gatens (1991a), pp. 124–5. This dichotomy between passion and friendship is of Gatens's own making and can be questioned by pointing out the rational elements in the former as well as the passionate elements in the latter relationship. For the latter, see for example, one of Wollstonecraft's letters to Godwin, written in November 1796, where she remembers "the felicity of last night" and describes the "live fire running about my features" while remembering it, Mary Wollstonecraft (2004), *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd (London: Penguin Books), p. 375.

⁹ Gatens (1991a), p. 125. ¹⁰ Gatens (1991a), pp. 113–14, 122.

¹¹ Catriona Mackenzie (1993), "Reason and Sensibility: The Ideal of Women's Self-Governance in the Writings of Mary Wollstonecraft", *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 8 (4): 181–203, p. 183. See also Mackenzie's chapter in this volume, where her argument does not rely on a dichotomy between reason and passion.

¹² Mackenzie (1993), pp. 190–3.

one emphasizing the passions and one emphasizing that self-governance is a matter of reason's sovereignty over the body.¹³ And further, since Mackenzie assumes a conflict between reason and passion, she finds it necessary to downplay the role of reason in order to emphasize the significance of the passions. This is done by claiming that Wollstonecraft's emphasis on the role of reason was in part strategic, motivated by her wish to argue, against thinkers such as Rousseau, that women and men have an equal capacity to reason.¹⁴

Sapiro's interpretation provides a more far-reaching alternative to a dichotomous reading of Wollstonecraft's position. She claims that not only did Wollstonecraft not "condemn passion, emotion, or appetite", but also that neither did she "believe in a radical dualism between mind and body".¹⁵ Sapiro argues that rather than dividing the mind into two opposite faculties—reason and passion—or considering passion as a force external to the true nature of the mind, Wollstonecraft held a unitary conception of the mind, including reason as well as passion.¹⁶ From this conception of the unitary nature of the mind it follows that neither reason nor passion is able to function on its own. Most interestingly, Sapiro points out that though Wollstonecraft emphasizes that the passions must always be governed by reason, the governing role of reason is productive of the passions rather than merely limiting or controlling them. The absence of the governing power of reason does not free the passions, but makes them unintelligible, as in madness.¹⁷ This is an important insight, because it shows that, *pace* Mackenzie, one does not have to assume an internal inconsistency or even tension between Wollstonecraft's emphasis on the governing role of reason and her emphasis on the beneficiary roles of the passions. A similar view has more recently been defended by Barbara Taylor.¹⁸

According to Wollstonecraft, reason provides intelligibility as well as constancy to the passions and therefore strong passions are characteristically passions closely connected to reason. In one of her letters to the unfaithful Gilbert

¹³ Mackenzie (1993), p. 197.

¹⁴ Mackenzie (1993), pp. 184–5, 191. See also Martina Reuter (2014), "'Like a Fanciful Kind of Half Being' Mary Wollstonecraft's Criticism of Jean-Jacques Rousseau", *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 29 (4): 925–41, where I discuss the role of reason in Wollstonecraft's criticism of Rousseau.

¹⁵ Virginia Sapiro (1992), *A Vindication of Political Virtue: The Political Theory of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), p. 52.

¹⁶ Sapiro (1992), pp. 61–2.

¹⁷ Sapiro (1992), p. 60. Passions without reason are, for example, described as mere "shadowy reveries", Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 143.

¹⁸ Barbara Taylor (2003), *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Imlay she emphasizes the need to “convert appetite into love, cemented by according reason”.¹⁹ Sapiro argues that not only are passions dependent on reason, according to Wollstonecraft, but that reason also depends on the passions. As constant passions are governed and elevated by reason, a similar engagement with reason distinguishes sensibility from mere sensualism or mechanically explicable sensation.²⁰ Sapiro emphasizes the role of sensibility as an acquired habit of the mind which enables human beings to act virtuously in accordance with reason, but spontaneously, without engaging in calculative reasoning.²¹

Karen Green has discussed the role of the passions in Wollstonecraft’s understanding of moral judgement. She describes a position characterized by contemporary moral philosophers as cognitivist or rationalist, according to which the good is known by reason, whereas the passions contribute solely to our motivation to act in accordance with the good. According to this view, the passions may be necessary in order for humans to act virtuously, but this would be a weak necessity tied to contingent human nature, without involving any epistemological or ontological necessity. Green asks whether Wollstonecraft held this kind of view or whether she thought that the passions played a role intrinsic to moral judgement. She approaches the question by comparing Wollstonecraft’s position to those of Rousseau, Richard Price, and William Godwin. Green argues that while Wollstonecraft rejects Rousseau’s belief in a moral instinct distinct from reason, she does also distance herself from both Price’s typically cognitivist position and Godwin’s attempt to establish the perspective of an impartial spectator as the standard of moral judgement.²² Green emphasizes that contrary to Price and Godwin, Wollstonecraft claims that “the passions are a *necessary* auxiliary to reason”,²³ though it is far from clear exactly what this necessity includes. I now proceed by developing an interpretation of how Wollstonecraft’s remark about the necessity of the passions should be understood.

¹⁹ Wollstonecraft (2004), p. 297. ²⁰ Sapiro (1992), pp. 64–5.

²¹ Sapiro (1992), pp. 63–7. For additional accounts of Wollstonecraft’s conception of sensibility, see Syndy McMillen Conger (1994), *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Language of Sensibility* (Rutherford, Madison, Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press); Saba Bahar (2002), *Mary Wollstonecraft’s Social and Aesthetic Philosophy: ‘An Eve to Please Me’* (Basingstoke: Palgrave); and Gardner (2003).

²² Karen Green (1997), “The Passions and the Imagination in Wollstonecraft’s Theory of Moral Judgement”, *Utilitas* 9 (3): 271–90, pp. 274–8, 282–3.

²³ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 16. My emphasis.

3.2 The Passions as Necessary Auxiliaries and Generous Feeling

The passage where Wollstonecraft refers to the passions as necessary auxiliaries of reason is to be found in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* and it continues by emphasizing that the passions contribute to our mental life by establishing a “habit of thinking”. Wollstonecraft writes:

The passions are necessary auxiliaries of reason: a present impulse pushes us forward, and when we discover that the game did not deserve the chase, we find that we have gone over much ground, and not only gained many new ideas, but a habit of thinking. The exercise of our faculties is the great end, though not the goal we had in view when we started with such eagerness.²⁴

The passage resembles a passage in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, where Wollstonecraft connects the exercise of the mental faculties, provided by the passions, directly to the capacity of making judgements. Here she writes:

[T]he regulations of the passions is not, always, wisdom.—On the contrary, it should seem, that one reason why men have superior judgement, and more fortitude than women, is undoubtedly this, they give a freer scope to the grand passions, and by more frequently going astray enlarge their minds. If then by the exercise of their own reason they fix on some stable principle, they have probably to thank the force of their passions, nourished by *false* views of life, and permitted to overleap the boundary that secures content. But if, in the dawn of life, we could soberly survey the scenes before as in perspective, and see every thing in its true colours, how could the passions gain sufficient strength to unfold the faculties?²⁵

In both passages the passions present goals that may be based on false views, undeserving of the effort put into chasing them, but which are still valuable, because the chase contributes to unfolding our mental faculties and establishing habits of thinking. The passions are not contrary to reason, but rather act as an opportunity to exercise one’s reason. The habit of thinking and judging cannot be established by reason alone. The passions play a motivational role, but it is not a question of motivating moral action. On the contrary, the passions may motivate us to commit wrongs, but by doing so they contribute to teaching the distinction between right and wrong, which in the long run contributes to reason’s ability to fix stable principles.

²⁴ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 16.

²⁵ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 179.

We have to look at another passage in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in order to find an example of how Wollstonecraft thinks the passions contribute to specifically moral thought and action. Here she writes:

I descend from my height, and mixing with my fellow-creatures, feel myself hurried along the common stream; ambition, love hope, and fear, exert their wonted power, though we be convinced by reason that their present and most attractive promises are only lying dreams; but had the cold hand of circumspection damped each generous feeling before it had left any permanent character, or fixed some habit, what could be expected, but selfish prudence and reason just rising above instinct? Who that has read Dean Swift's disgusting description of the Yahoos, and insipid one of Houyhnhnm with a philosophical eye, can avoid seeing the futility of degrading the passions, or making man rest in contentment.²⁶

This passage begins by describing the passions in a manner similar to the two previous quotes: the passions present false goals, but by doing so they exercise our habit of thinking. The difference is that toward the end of this passage the passions clearly contribute also to the moral content of our thought. Wollstonecraft emphasizes the role of “generous feeling” and contrasts this impulse with selfishness and “reason just rising above instinct”. She seems to claim that the feeling of generosity is a necessary component of virtue and that this component cannot be produced by reason alone.

I claim that Wollstonecraft's understanding of how the passions contribute to virtue can be more deeply understood by taking a closer look at her comment on Jonathan Swift's description of the exclusively rational, equine Houyhnhnm and the humanoid, but—in their lack of reason—animal-like Yahoos, presented in the fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels*. Why does Wollstonecraft think that Swift teaches his reader the futility of degrading the passions? Swift's story is, among other things, a satirical criticism of Stoicism, including its conceptions of *apatheia* and of the possibility of human perfection based on reason. Wollstonecraft referred to Swift and *Gulliver's Travels* in several different contexts and most of her remarks are critical of his views. In two book reviews she blames Swift for his misanthropic picture of human nature and his contempt for the idea of educability. In the latter review she places Swift among those “men who wish to insinuate, contrary to all experience, that it is the nature of man to degenerate rather than improve”.²⁷

²⁶ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 181.

²⁷ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 7, p. 479. The review, written for *Analytical Review* in 1797, is of a nonfiction travel account from Africa by the French ornithologist Francois Levaillant, which according to Wollstonecraft showed, *contra* Swift, that humans are indeed capable of development. The other review, also published in *Analytical Review* and written in 1789, was of a book in the same genre as *Gulliver's Travels*, William Thomson's *Mammuth; or Human Nature displayed on a grand*

It is not immediately evident why Wollstonecraft is dissatisfied with the Houyhnhnms's views on the passions.²⁸ They are not described as insensitive or cold-hearted. When Gulliver first arrives in their country, he is saved from the harassment of a group of Yahoos by an honourable Dapple-Grey, who becomes his host. Together with a friend the host looks at him with signs of wonder and when they realize that their examination of him with their hoofs is too rough, they thereafter touch him "with all possible Tenderness".²⁹ The Houyhnhnms are certainly not incapable of fellow feeling or of generosity, as becomes clear when Swift describes their conception of virtue. He writes:

Friendship and *Benevolence* are the two principal Virtues among the *Houyhnhnms*; and these not confined to particular Objects, but universal to the whole Race. For, a stranger from the remotest Part, is equally treated with the nearest Neighbour.³⁰

Wollstonecraft greatly esteemed friendship, which she claimed should constitute the basis for the relation between man and wife (as is indeed the custom among the Houyhnhnms).³¹ She also emphasized the importance of showing benevolence on a universal, not only on a particular, level. In a short chapter on love in her early *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, she does in fact criticize Swift precisely for his lack of universal benevolence, which she here claims to be "the first duty".³² If Wollstonecraft did not, in her reference to the Yahoos and Houyhnhnms, explicitly criticize "the futility of degrading the passions", it would

Scale: in a Tour with the Tinkers into the inland Parts of Africa, Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 7, p. 104. For Wollstonecraft's comments on Swift, see also *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 4, p. 30; and one of her letter notes to Godwin, written in 1796, Wollstonecraft (2004), p. 373.

²⁸ For a detailed discussion of Stoic elements in Wollstonecraft's thought, see Richard Vernon (2005), *Friends, Citizens, Strangers: Essays on Where We Belong* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press), pp. 58–80. I think Vernon is right when arguing that Wollstonecraft's understanding of the universal—and thus gender-neutral—character of morality is compatible with and perhaps loosely influenced by Stoic doctrine, but I hope to show that he is wrong when he claims that she shared a Stoic view on the passions and particularly wrong when he writes that "Wollstonecraft pursues [the] ancient theme of non-attachment vigorously and systematically", p. 61.

²⁹ Jonathan Swift (2005), *Gulliver's Travels*, eds Claude Rawson and Ian Higgins (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 211.

³⁰ Swift (2005), p. 250.

³¹ Swift (2005), pp. 250–1; Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, pp. 98, 142. For detailed discussions of Wollstonecraft's conception of friendship, see: Nancy Kendrick's chapter in this volume; Martina Reuter (2005), "Mary Wollstonecraft on Love and Friendship", in *Philosophical Aspects on Emotions*, ed Åsa Carlson (Stockholm: Thales), pp. 119–39; and Natalie Fuehrer Taylor (2007), *The Rights of Woman as Chimera: The Political Philosophy of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York and London: Routledge), pp. 110–12, 145–54.

³² Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 4, p. 30. The accusation is related to Swift's claimed ill treatment of Esther Johnson, alias Stella.

be tempting to read her remark as a criticism of Swift's disgusting and insipid description of human degradation rather than of the universal virtue personified by the Houyhnhnms.

The problem, from Wollstonecraft's perspective, is clearly not the Houyhnhnms' capacity for universal benevolence, but possibly their indifferent attitude toward particular individuals. The Houyhnhnms are indeed portrayed as exaggerated Stoics: they do not show any signs of grief even at the death of a close friend, spouse, or colt. It is the procreative duty of each couple to have one male and one female foal, but particular foals are interchangeable in cases of early death or when a couple has offspring of only one sex.³³ The Houyhnhnms thus feel universal benevolence without having strong emotional attachments to particular individuals.

I suggest that Wollstonecraft is criticizing the plausibility of this account. A few pages before her reference to the Yahoos and Houyhnhnms, she explicitly argues that we have to feel passionately for particular individuals in order to be able to learn how to love universal beings and values. She writes:

Perhaps it is necessary for virtue first to appear in a human form to impress youthful hearts; the ideal model, which a more matured and exalted mind looks up to, and shapes for itself, would elude their sight. He who loves not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God?³⁴

Wollstonecraft's claim, and the passage from the Gospel of John (4: 20) to which she is alluding, are versions of the doctrine Plato presented in the *Symposium*, according to which the love of particular beautiful bodies and souls constitutes a ladder that we have to climb in order to be able to love the highest idea of the beautiful, good, and true in itself. Plato scholarship and Platonist philosophers have disagreed ever since on whether the ladder is a mere pedagogical tool, which can be left behind once we have learned—or rather activated our inborn capacity—to perceive universal ideas, or whether the love of particulars remains as a necessary aspect of our love of the idea itself.³⁵ Wollstonecraft's position is

³³ Swift (2005), pp. 249–52, 256–7. Here we must keep in mind that Swift's description of the Houyhnhnms is a caricature, not an accurate interpretation of Stoic philosophy.

³⁴ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 177.

³⁵ Gregory Vlastos has argued that particular individuals cannot, according to Plato, be the objects of love: see "The Individual as an Object of Love in Plato", in Gregory Vlastos (1981), *Platonic Studies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press) (first published 1973). Vlastos's interpretation has been challenged by, among others, Martha Nussbaum (1979), "The Speech of Alcibiades: A Reading of Plato's *Symposium*", *Philosophy and Literature* 3 (2): 131–72; and Richard Foley (2010), "The Order Question: Climbing the Ladder of Love in Plato's *Symposium*", *Ancient Philosophy* 30: 57–72.

ambiguous.³⁶ On the one hand she emphasizes that a “matured and exalted mind” is able to shape for itself an ideal model of virtue. Thus virtue appearing in a particular human form seems to be a mere preparatory phase, which can be left behind. But on the other hand, she clearly states that one cannot love God as a universal being, without loving one’s brother, or particular beings. The ambiguity in Wollstonecraft’s position is increased rather than decreased by the one passage in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* where she does explicitly refer to Plato’s ladder of love. Here, commenting on Rousseau’s and John Milton’s views of the couple in love, she writes:

An imagination of this vigorous cast can give existence to insubstantial forms, and stability to the shadowy reveries which the mind naturally falls into when realities are found vapid. It can then depict love with celestial charms, and dote on the grand ideal object—it can imagine a degree of mutual affection that shall refine the soul, and not expire when it has served as a ‘scale to heavenly’; and, like devotion, make it absorb every meaner affection and desire. In each others arms, as in a temple, with its summit lost in the clouds, the world is to be shut out, and every thought and wish, that do not nurture pure affection and permanent virtue.³⁷

Up to this point the passage seems to describe a position according to which the love of a particular person does not expire when the ladder has been climbed, but on the contrary absorbs meaner affections and nurtures permanent virtue. The problem is that Wollstonecraft continues: “Permanent virtue! alas! Rousseau, respectable visionary! thy paradise would soon be violated by the entrance of some unexpected guest. Like Milton’s it would only contain angels, or men sunk below the dignity of rational creatures”. Rousseau’s and Milton’s idea, that romantic love can produce true virtue and devotion, belongs, according to Wollstonecraft, to the realm of “paradisiacal reveries”.³⁸ Romantic love easily changes its object and cannot be trusted as the foundation of permanent virtue. The problem though, is not the passions as such, but only cases where the idealized object of the beloved one takes the place of the truly ideal object, here

³⁶ Wollstonecraft was not a Platonist thinker in any strict sense of the word, but she was a great, though not uncritical admirer of John Milton’s Platonist conception of love and she was directly influenced by Richard Price’s Platonism. Milton’s Platonism, like many versions of Christian Platonism, emphasized particularity, whereas Price’s Platonism was closely tied to his mathematical interests and focused on universal and ideal existence. For discussions of Wollstonecraft’s indebtedness to Christian Platonism, see Sylvana Tomaselli’s chapter in this volume and Taylor (2003), pp. 108–11. For interpretations emphasizing Platonist elements in Wollstonecraft’s thought, see also Susan Khin Zaw (1998), “The Reasonable Heart: Mary Wollstonecraft’s View of the Relation between Reason and Feeling in Morality, Moral Psychology, and Moral Development”, *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 13 (1): 78–117; and Reuter (2014), pp. 935–7.

³⁷ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 143.

³⁸ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 143.

referred to as God. Wollstonecraft continues by emphasizing that “it is not against strong, preserving passions; but romantic wavering feelings that I wish to guard the female heart by exercising the understanding”.³⁹ The passions clearly play an important role, but in this passage it remains ambiguous whether they should be directed at God as the ideal object or whether the love of particulars is a necessary aspect of virtue and religious devotion.

The need to show compassion towards particular individuals is more strongly emphasized towards the end of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, when Wollstonecraft discusses the dehumanizing effects of cruelty against animals. Here she points out that humanity can only be acquired by the “exercise of compassion to every living creature” and a few paragraphs later that “it may be delivered as an axiom, that those who can see pain, unmoved, will soon learn to inflict it”.⁴⁰ These passages illuminate, I think, what disturbs Wollstonecraft in the Houyhnhnms’ attitude. She claims that the ideal of Houyhnhnm virtue is implausible in its attempt to develop universal benevolence at the expense of individual feeling: somebody unmoved by pain, for example the pain caused by the loss of a loved one, cannot show universal compassion. In this respect our affection for universal humankind depends on our affections for particular beings.

The necessity to feel for particular others is also the reason why the perspective of an unmoved spectator cannot serve as a standard for moral evaluation. Only two paragraphs after her reference to the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms, Wollstonecraft writes: “The world cannot be seen by an unmoved spectator, we must mix in the throng, and feel as men feel before we can judge of their feelings”.⁴¹ She emphasizes the connection between self-knowledge and knowledge of others: “we must attain a knowledge of others at the same time that we become acquainted with ourselves—knowledge acquired any other way only hardens the heart and perplexes the understanding”.⁴² Wollstonecraft is very aware of the risks involved in “mixing in the throng”. Knowledge acquired this way may be purchased at a dear rate since we are often led astray, but, she points out, knowledge can never be achieved without labour and sorrow. Here, Wollstonecraft is discussing the education of young people and she argues that in order for children to become truly wise and virtuous, they cannot be spared labour and sorrow. True wisdom and virtue is here, as in connection with the reference to the Yahoos and Houyhnhnms, contrasted with “prudence [which is] but the cautious

³⁹ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 143.

⁴⁰ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, pp. 243–4. The importance of teaching children not to treat animals with cruelty is emphasized also in Wollstonecraft’s *Original Stories*. For a further discussion of Wollstonecraft’s views on children and animals, see Eileen Hunt Botting’s chapter in this volume.

⁴¹ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 181.

⁴² Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 181.

craft of ignorant self-love”.⁴³ Wollstonecraft emphasizes that it is important to experience and understand human fallibility in oneself as well as in others, before one can become truly virtuous.⁴⁴

As we saw above, Karen Green distinguishes Wollstonecraft’s view on the role of the passions from William Godwin’s use of the perspective of an unmoved spectator. It is interesting to note that Godwin does in fact evaluate Swift’s story about the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms quite differently from Wollstonecraft. Like Wollstonecraft, who wishes to read Swift “with a philosophical eye”,⁴⁵ Godwin emphasizes that Swift can be read in a morally educative light, but the lesson he draws is quite different from hers. In *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature* (1797), Godwin writes:

[It has been asked] whether, under the names of Houyhnhnms and Yahoos, Swift has done any thing more than exhibit two different descriptions of men, in their highest improvement and lowest degradation; and it has been affirmed that no book breathes more strongly a generous indignation against vice, and an ardent love of every thing that is excellent and honourable to the human heart.⁴⁶

Where Wollstonecraft learns “the futility of degrading the passions, or making man rest in contentment”,⁴⁷ Godwin seems to read the description of the Houyhnhnm as a description of the highest improvement of man. This explicit difference between Wollstonecraft’s and Godwin’s views on the Houyhnhnms strengthens Green’s claim about their different views on the value of the perspective of an impartial spectator.⁴⁸

⁴³ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 182.

⁴⁴ Wollstonecraft also thinks that fiction has an important role to play in teaching us to understand human nature. See for example her review of Macaulay’s *Letters on Education*, where she distances herself from Macaulay’s severe view and writes: “The remarks on some celebrated novels are just; but still we are of opinion, that we should not so widely deviate from nature, as not to allow the imagination to forage a little for the judgment. [...] It may be necessary for the passions to be felt before their operations can be understood”, Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 7, p. 313. For an excellent study of how Wollstonecraft uses her novels in order to articulate philosophical claims, see Lena Halldenius (2013), “The Political Conditions of Free Agency: The Case of Mary Wollstonecraft”, in *Freedom and the Construction of Europe*, vol. 2, eds Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 227–43.

⁴⁵ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 181.

⁴⁶ William Godwin (1993), *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, vol. 5, gen. ed. Mark Philip, ed. Pamela Clemit (London: William Pickering), p. 138.

⁴⁷ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 181.

⁴⁸ Green points out that in his early works, Godwin favours the universal perspective of an impartial spectator over domestic affections, whereas in later works, such as *Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr. Parr’s Spital Sermon* (1801), he holds that domestic and private affections are not indifferent, see Green (1997), p. 280. Commentators have argued that Wollstonecraft influenced Godwin’s view on domestic affection: see for example George Woodcock (1989), *William Godwin: A Biographical Study* (Montréal and New York: Black Rose Books), pp. 135–51. This influence does

3.3 Deliberation and the Problem of Self-Sufficiency

When looking at the role of the passions, we see that they are, according to Wollstonecraft, necessary in order for humans to acquire virtue. They contribute by exercising our minds as well as making us feel compassion for other beings. The role of compassion is not only to act as a value-neutral exercise of the mental faculties, but also involves a value-laden “generous feeling” and “love”, which are contrasted with “reason just rising above instinct”.⁴⁹ It is less clear what role the passions play when the “matured and exalted mind”⁵⁰ has acquired virtue grounded in reason. Does a mature mind need passion in order to make moral judgements? Though Wollstonecraft obviously thinks that certain passions, such as generosity and love, can be virtuous when they are grounded in reason rather than in fleeting romantic sensibility, there are other virtues, such as justice, where the role of the passions is less clear. The question of how the passions contribute to moral judgement can, I think, be correctly approached only if we take into account that Wollstonecraft does not assume a mutually exclusive distinction between reason and passion. As we saw in Section 3.1, Sapiro has argued that Wollstonecraft held a unitary conception of the mind, emphasizing the mutual interdependence of reason and passion.⁵¹ I will now take a closer look at how this idea should be understood and I will argue that according to Wollstonecraft, mature reason, as distinguished from “selfish prudence and reason just rising above instinct”,⁵² is an intrinsically deliberative activity and that all reasoning creatures need the passions in order to deliberate.⁵³

We can again approach the question by analysing Wollstonecraft’s reference to the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms. What does Wollstonecraft have in mind when she refers to reason “just rising above instinct”? Swift describes two different kinds of reason, one kind characteristic of the Yahoos and one kind characteristic for the Houyhnhnms. The Yahoos have a purely instrumental kind of reason,

not seem to be present yet in *The Enquirer*, written while Godwin and Wollstonecraft shared their lives. It may well be that Godwin’s re-evaluation of particular affection was in part caused by Wollstonecraft’s sudden and tragic death. At least it was first articulated in his beautiful *Memoirs of the Author of ‘The Rights of Woman’* (1798). This does not mean that he was not influenced by her thought, and the *Memoirs* witness the extent of that influence, but he seems to have rearticulated his own thought in the light of her influence only after she died. When we compare Wollstonecraft’s and Godwin’s views, we should also keep in mind that by the time Godwin wrote *The Enquirer*, he was an outspoken atheist. This means that he did not have to worry about the theological problems involved in the Houyhnhnms’ position, which I will discuss in the next section.

⁴⁹ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, pp. 177, 181.

⁵⁰ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 177.

⁵¹ Sapiro (1992), pp. 61–5.

⁵² Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 181.

⁵³ On Wollstonecraft’s notion of deliberative reason, see also Alan Coffee’s chapter in this volume.

which they use to advance their rather narrowly understood self-interests, guided by their desires and aversions and without any regard for greater good. Swift compares this aspect of their behaviour with human behaviour. The Houyhnhnms' reason is very different—not to say opposite—in character: it consists in an immediate perception of truth, which prompts them to act in complete conformity with the necessary order of nature and to assume an indifferent attitude, not only towards narrow self-interest, but also towards death and procreation.⁵⁴

Wollstonecraft has reasons to be dissatisfied with both these concepts of reason.⁵⁵ In the case of the Yahoos, the problem is clearly that the little reason they have becomes the handmaid of their selfish passions. But the Houyhnhnms' reason is, despite its capacity to conceive the general good, also defective. Wollstonecraft holds that virtue has to be "...acquired and based on the possibility to fail." This claim has a theological foundation: humans were not created perfect and cannot act virtuously by necessity. She writes that "were men created perfect, or did a flood of knowledge break upon him, when he arrived at maturity, that precluded error, I should doubt whether his existence would be continued after the dissolution of the body".⁵⁶ The immortality of the soul is thus dependent on the fact that virtue, which constitutes human perfectibility, is an acquired achievement, not given.⁵⁷ Again here, in connection to the immortality of the soul, we find Wollstonecraft claiming that prudence is a defective form of virtue. She writes: "Prudence, supposing we were mortal, would be true wisdom, or, to be more explicit, would procure the greatest portion of happiness,

⁵⁴ Swift (2005), pp. 231, 249. This view contains Stoic elements, but it is important to keep in mind that it is a caricature, which does not do justice to the Stoics' elaborate discussions about necessity, deliberation, and moral action. On the Stoic views, see Susanne Bobzien (1998), *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

⁵⁵ For a similar interpretation of Wollstonecraft's remark about the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos, see John Whale (2000), *Imagination under Pressure 1789–1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 78.

⁵⁶ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 122. On the theological reasons why humans cannot be made virtuous by necessity, see also Wollstonecraft's review of Catherine Macaulay's *Letters on Education*, in Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 7, p. 318. The theological foundations of Wollstonecraft's thought has been discussed by: Whale (2000), pp. 74–86, Taylor (2003), pp. 95–142; Eileen Hunt Botting (2006), *Family Feuds: Wollstonecraft, Burke, and Rousseau on the Transformation of the Family* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press), pp. 131–88; Fuehrer Taylor (2007), p. 43; Martina Reuter (2010), "Revolution, Virtue and Duty: Aspects of Politics, Religion and Morality in Mary Wollstonecraft's Thought", in *The Body Unbound: Philosophical Perspectives on Politics, Embodiment and Religion*, eds M. T. Mjaaland, O. Sigurdson, and S. Thorgeirsdottir (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing), pp. 107–22; and Reuter (2014).

⁵⁷ Wollstonecraft does not give any articulated metaphysical argument for why this is so, but her claim is connected to the idea that immaterial reason is an activity which has to be exercised in order to be perfected and in order to persist: see Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, pp. 122–3.

considering the whole of life”.⁵⁸ But, since the human soul is immortal, Wollstonecraft implies, we cannot settle for prudence. Instead humans must strive for true virtue, based on knowledge which encompasses more than that which is immediately convenient, in the hope of thus achieving eternal happiness.⁵⁹

On the one hand, human freedom of deliberation and action distinguishes humans from other creatures, whose behaviour is governed by necessity.⁶⁰ Instincts and animal behaviour based on instinct are amoral exactly because they are based on necessity and lack the possibility of deliberation. On the other hand, Wollstonecraft’s emphasis on human freedom of deliberation distinguishes her preferred concept of reason from the Houyhnhnms’ reason, which is necessarily compelled by the truth. Here necessity causes similar problems as in the case of animals. The Houyhnhnm appear to act virtuously, but when their actions are compelled by truth, they act out of necessity and do not, from Wollstonecraft’s point of view, possess true virtue. If a rational creature acts according to the order of nature by necessity, without the possibility of true deliberation, then these acts are comparable to instinctual behaviour and morally worthless, exactly because they are not based on deliberation or on a struggle to overcome selfish interests.

Swift explicitly connects the compelling character of Houyhnhnm reason with the fact that they are not affected by passion. He writes that reason among the Houyhnhnm is not “problematical as with us, where Men can argue with Plausibility on both Sides of a Question; but strikes you with immediate Conviction, as it must needs do where it is not mingled, obscured, or discoloured by Passion and Interest”.⁶¹ Here the passions play—or, in the case of the Houyhnhnm, do not play—the role Wollstonecraft attributes to them when she argues, in the two passages discussed at the beginning of Section 3.2, that the passions are necessary, because they exercise our faculties, even if the goals they present are mere lying dreams. It is the passions that make deliberation possible by introducing the possibility of choosing what is wrong.⁶²

When Wollstonecraft writes that Swift’s description teaches “the futility of degrading the passions, or making man rest in contentment”, she may very well

⁵⁸ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 178.

⁵⁹ There is a clear connection between this theological claim and Wollstonecraft’s claim that the achievement of knowledge is always accompanied by labour and sorrow, discussed in the previous section.

⁶⁰ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 116.

⁶¹ Swift (2005), p. 249.

⁶² For a detailed discussion of Wollstonecraft’s views on the will, see Martina Reuter (2007), “Mary Wollstonecraft and Catharine Macaulay on the Will”, in *Virtue, Liberty, and Toleration: Political Ideas of European Women, 1400–1800*, eds Jacqueline Broad and Karen Green (Dordrecht: Springer), pp. 149–69.

be thinking of the Houyhnhnm rather than the Yahoos as an example of “selfish prudence and reason just rising above instinct”.⁶³ As representatives of (an exaggerated) Stoicism, the Houyhnhnm possess prudence as a guarantee of the greatest portion of contentment in this life, without any interest in the possibility of eternal happiness. It is essential that Wollstonecraft refers to the futility of “making man rest in contentment” as well as of “degrading the passions”. The problem of contentment is related to theological problems connected with the Stoic ideal of self-sufficiency. Wollstonecraft nowhere discusses Stoicism in any detail, but in her review of Catharine Macaulay’s *Letters on Education*, she agrees with Macaulay’s remarks on the Stoics.⁶⁴

Macaulay included three chapters on the Stoics in her *Letters on Education*, focusing particularly on Epictetus, whose works had recently been translated into English by Elizabeth Carter.⁶⁵ Like many of her contemporaries, Macaulay wanted to reconcile Stoicism with Christianity, arguing that the Stoic attempt to equate human intellectual excellence with the Deity originated in the mere ignorance of God’s revealed will, not in any “criminal arrogance”.⁶⁶ Despite her generally reconciliatory approach, Macaulay disagrees with the Stoics on the final self-sufficiency of human beings and emphasizes that humans are in the end created beings dependent on God. She concludes her discussion of Stoicism by distancing herself from the “defects... which are to be found in the doctrine of the Stoics” and which “proceed from their considering the infirm and dependent creature, man, in the light of a self sufficient independent being”.⁶⁷

As humans we cannot find contentment in self-sufficiency, because we are not independent beings capable of a self-sufficient mode of existence. In Wollstonecraft’s case this claim has a theological basis, but it is important to note that it is perfectly compatible with contemporary twenty-first century attempts to emphasize the relational character of ethics.⁶⁸ Wollstonecraft defended personal independence as a necessary condition for virtue, emphasizing that women

⁶³ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 5, p. 181.

⁶⁴ Wollstonecraft (1989), vol. 7, p. 320.

⁶⁵ For a discussion of Carter’s and Macaulay’s views on Stoicism, see Sarah Hutton (2007), “Virtue, God, and Stoicism in the Thought of Elizabeth Carter and Catharine Macaulay”, in *Virtue, Liberty, and Toleration: Political Ideas of European Women, 1400–1800*, eds Jacqueline Broad and Karen Green (Dordrecht: Springer), pp. 137–48.

⁶⁶ Catharine Macaulay (1996), *Letters on Education; with Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects* (reprint of 1790 ed.), ed. Janet Todd (London: William Pickering), p. 430.

⁶⁷ Macaulay (1996), p. 452.

⁶⁸ See Sandrine Bergès’ chapter in this volume for a discussion of dependence in connection to motherhood, and Mackenzie’s chapter for a detailed discussion of Wollstonecraft’s views in the context of recent discussions of relational autonomy.

cannot be virtuous as long as they live in a socially, economically, and emotionally dependent state, but her understanding of independence must not be confused with an ideal of self-sufficiency.⁶⁹ The Stoic's conception of self-sufficiency is closely connected to their view on the passions: in order to be self-sufficient, humans must attach themselves only to things that are in their own power and this rules out passionate attachments to mortal beings. Like more recent ethicists who emphasize human relational dependence, Wollstonecraft criticizes this view and emphasizes the importance of passionate attachments, but her grounds for doing so are partly different.

For Wollstonecraft, human dependence is closely connected to the fact that humans may fail because they are created beings, created imperfect and thereby fallible. As we have seen, the role of the passions is closely related to human fallibility: humans fail because of the passions, but this possibility of failure is simultaneously an essential aspect of virtue. Since acting out of necessity is not virtuous and since reason is not supposed to choose truth through necessity, even in its mature and exalted state, it seems that reason is continuously dependent on the passions at least as a source of choosing otherwise.

⁶⁹ For discussions of Wollstonecraft's understanding of independence, see especially Mackenzie's chapter in this volume, as well as Lena Halldenius (2007), "The Primacy of Right: On the Triad of Liberty, Equality and Virtue in Mary Wollstonecraft's Political Thought", *British Journal of the History of Philosophy* 15 (1): 75–99; Lena Halldenius (2015), *Mary Wollstonecraft and Feminist Republicanism: Independence, Rights and the Experience of Unfreedom* (London: Pickering and Chatto); and Alan Coffee (2014), "Freedom as Independence: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Grand Blessing of Life", *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 29 (4): 908–24.

4

Mary Wollstonecraft

An Early Relational Autonomy Theorist?

Catriona Mackenzie

Wollstonecraft's analysis of women's oppression is structured around a central contrast between dependence and independence. To be dependent is to "act according to the will of another fallible being and submit, right or wrong, to power".¹ Wollstonecraft argued that, denied the rights of citizenship and political participation, and dependent both economically and for their civil status on their husbands, fathers, or brothers, women "in the present state of [her] society" were oppressed by virtue of their subjection to men's arbitrary power. For Wollstonecraft, however, the ills of dependence are not restricted to civil, legal, and political subjection. These forms of subjection, she claims, and the slavish obedience to men's power that is demanded of women weaken their bodies, enfeeble their minds, and corrupt their morals, thereby undermining women's capacities to govern themselves. Overcoming women's oppression therefore requires women to become independent in a twofold sense: legally, politically and civilly, or able to act as persons in their own right; and independent of mind, or capable of rational and moral self-governance. Achieving independence in the first sense requires socio-relational equality or equality of status, thus a radical transformation of women's legal and political rights; achieving independence in the second sense requires a social "revolution", not only in "female manners",² but also in the social norms and customs governing interaction between the sexes.³

¹ Mary Wollstonecraft (1975 [1792]), *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books), p. 135.

² Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 132.

³ I discuss these two aspects of Wollstonecraft's conception of independence in Catriona Mackenzie (1993), "Reason and Sensibility: The Ideal Women's Self Governance in the Writings

Recent commentators have drawn attention to the republican strains in Wollstonecraft's thought, highlighting connections between the republican conception of freedom as the absence of arbitrary power and Wollstonecraft's analysis of dependence and independence.⁴ Alan Coffee, for example, claims:

As Wollstonecraft uses it, the term independence should be understood in the context of the republican or Commonwealthman tradition in which freedom is contrasted with slavery... To be free was to be independent in the sense of having the capacity to act in one's own name without having to ask permission or rely on the goodwill of others. To lack this right was the mark of a slave.⁵

In developing this republican interpretation, Coffee also points to resonances between Wollstonecraft's thought and contemporary neo-republican conceptions of freedom as non-domination.⁶ I find this republican interpretation of Wollstonecraft's thought persuasive and I will draw on it at various points in this chapter. The aim of my discussion, however, is not to focus primarily on the links between Wollstonecraft's conception of independence and neo-republican conceptions of freedom. Rather, in a parallel line of argument, I want to suggest that Wollstonecraft's visionary analysis of women's oppression, with its structuring contrast between dependence and independence, anticipates contemporary relational theories of autonomy.⁷

of Mary Wollstonecraft", *Hypatia* 8 (4): 35–55. As well as drawing on this earlier analysis and my subsequent work on relational autonomy, my discussion in this chapter has been influenced by the insightful work of Lena Halldenius and Alan Coffee. Halldenius and Coffee both distinguish these two aspects of independence, while arguing that they are intertwined in Wollstonecraft's thought. See Lena Halldenius (2014), "Mary Wollstonecraft's Feminist Critique of Property: On Becoming a Thief from Principle", *Hypatia* 29 (4): 942–57; Alan Coffee (2013), "Mary Wollstonecraft, Freedom and the Enduring Power of Social Domination", *European Journal of Political Theory* 12 (2): 116–35; and Alan Coffee (2014), "Freedom as Independence: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Grand Blessing of Life", *Hypatia* 29 (4): 908–24.

⁴ See for example, Lena Halldenius (2007), "The Primacy of Right. On the Triad of Liberty, Equality, and Virtue in Wollstonecraft's Political Thought", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 15 (1): 75–99; Coffee, "Freedom and Social Domination" and "Freedom as Independence".

⁵ Coffee, "Freedom as Independence", p. 910.

⁶ See for example, Phillip Pettit (1997), *Republicanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); and Phillip Pettit (2012), *On the People's Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁷ For an overview of relational conceptions of autonomy see Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar (eds) (2000), *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency and the Social Self* (New York: Oxford University Press). Two recent volumes that engage with debates about relational autonomy since 2000 are Andrea Veltman and Mark Piper (eds) (2014), *Autonomy, Oppression, and Gender* (New York: Oxford University Press); and Marina Oshana (ed.) (2015), *Personal Autonomy and Social Oppression: Philosophical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge).

Some contemporary feminists have criticized autonomy as an excessively masculinist and individualist ideal, associating it with ideals of rugged individualism and with libertarian forms of liberalism.⁸ Relational autonomy theorists, in response, argue that it is a mistake for feminists to jettison the value of autonomy; not only is autonomy central to democratic citizenship, it is also an important component of a flourishing and meaningful life. On both counts, therefore, autonomy is crucial for women's emancipation. The aim of relational theories is to refigure the concept of autonomy from a feminist perspective, by explicating its relational structure and analysing the autonomy-impairing effects of internalized oppression. Similarly, I will suggest, by understanding independence through the lens of women's oppression Wollstonecraft sought to refigure the concept of independence relationally.⁹

One of the fault lines that has emerged in recent debates about how to understand the autonomy-impairing effects of social oppression concerns whether agents must have a certain kind of socio-relational status, in particular, whether they must stand in relations of social equality to each other, or whether autonomy requires only that agents enjoy a certain kind of socially scaffolded psychological freedom – in Wollstonecraft's terms, rational freedom or independence of mind.¹⁰ In drawing out the connections between relational theories of autonomy and Wollstonecraft's conception of independence, I will develop two main lines of argument. First, in the following three sections (4.1, 4.2, and 4.3), I will argue that Wollstonecraft's conception of independence prefigures relational autonomy theorists' attention to the relational, social, and political constitution of persons and of individual autonomy. Moreover, her two-pronged account of independence aligns her with those theorists who understand autonomy as requiring both socio-relational equality and socially scaffolded psychological freedom. This account also highlights the importance of distinguishing

⁸ These criticisms are discussed in detail in Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar (2000), "Introduction: Autonomy Refigured", in Mackenzie and Stoljar (eds), *Relational Autonomy*, pp. 3–31.

⁹ Laura Brace suggests, similarly, that Wollstonecraft's "theory of the reciprocal bonds of duty and of a common humanity united by reason has the potential to reconstruct the individual self and notions of autonomy and responsibility, moving towards a 'relational individualism'". However, she makes this suggestion at the end of her article and does not develop it, nor does she connect it to the conceptual vocabulary of relational autonomy theory. See Laura Brace (2000), "Not Empire but Equality: Mary Wollstonecraft, the Marriage State and the Sexual Contract", *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8 (4): 433–55, p. 455.

¹⁰ The view that autonomy requires socio-relational equality is associated mostly with the work of Marina Oshana, as discussed later. See for example, Marina Oshana (1998), "Personal Autonomy and Society", *Journal of Social Philosophy* 29 (1): 81–102; and Oshana (2006), *Personal Autonomy in Society* (Aldershot: Ashgate).

two dimensions of autonomy that are often conflated: autonomy as self-determination, and autonomy as self-governance. I will further suggest that Wollstonecraft's thought can help to articulate salient points of connection between relational conceptions of autonomy and neo-republican conceptions of freedom as non-domination, connections that have not hitherto been articulated in the literature.

Second, in the final section (4.5), I will argue that Wollstonecraft's attention, not just to the legal and political dimensions of oppression, but also to its social and psychic dimensions, reveals a third prong in her account of dependence and independence. This third prong is centred on the self-affective relations required for independence of mind or rational and moral self-governance, in particular self-respect, which is dependent on a person's status as an independent person in the eyes of others. The three aspects of independence—freedom from domination (or socio-relational equality), rational and moral self-governance, and self-respect—are intertwined in Wollstonecraft's view. Genuine self-respect, she thought, is only possible in the context of reciprocal relations of respect between self-governing persons who stand to each other in social and political relations of equality. This focus on self-respect as an integral component of independence, and the idea that self-respect is dependent on a person's social status as independent in the eyes of others is, of course, central to the republican tradition. In Phillip Pettit's words: "In the received republican image, free persons can walk tall, and look others in the eye. They do not depend on anyone's grace or favour for being able to choose their mode of life".¹¹ However, I will suggest that Wollstonecraft's sensitivity to the social and psychic dynamics of oppression and dependence and their effects on women's self-affective relations, brings a distinctive feminist inflexion to this theme in republican thought. This theme has also been brought to the fore in recent work on relational autonomy, and suggests the importance of distinguishing a third dimension of autonomy: autonomy as self-authorization.¹²

Before developing these arguments in detail, it is important to acknowledge that there are significant conceptual differences between Wollstonecraft's conception of independence and contemporary relational conceptions of autonomy. In particular, Wollstonecraft links independence of mind to virtue and to the

¹¹ Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, p. 82.

¹² Elsewhere I argue that autonomy is a multidimensional concept, and distinguish three distinct, but interrelated dimensions of autonomy: self-determination, self-governance, and self-authorization. The argument of this chapter draws on this multidimensional analysis. See Catriona Mackenzie (2014), "Three Dimensions of Autonomy: A Relational Analysis", in Veltman and Piper (eds), *Autonomy, Oppression and Gender*, pp. 15–41.

idea of the perfectibility of the soul, whereas relational theorists are concerned with personal autonomy rather than with virtue. Moreover, in the intervening two centuries, women in many parts of the world, especially in liberal democracies, have gained a significant measure of the legal, civil, and political independence that Wollstonecraft strived to achieve. Nevertheless, her concern with the way that social oppression and domination undermine women's capacities for independence still resonates today, and the extent to which this concern prefigures themes in contemporary feminist work on autonomy is worth investigating.

4.1 Wollstonecraft on Independence

... some degree of liberty of mind is necessary even to form the person ...

(Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 171).

When therefore I call women slaves, I mean in a political and civil sense ...

(Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 286).

In the opening Dedication of *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft describes independence as “the grand blessing of life, the basis of every virtue”.¹³ One of the wrongs of women's oppression, she goes on to say, is that by making women slaves of men, oppression deprives them of the capacity to develop independence and virtue. Independence, as Wollstonecraft is using the term here, refers to independence of mind or self-governance. Underpinning the tight link between self-governance and virtue in Wollstonecraft's thought is the importance of the distinctively human capacity for reason.¹⁴

Wollstonecraft characterizes reason as “the simple power of improvement or, more properly, of discerning truth”.¹⁵ Although this capacity may be more conspicuous in some individuals than in others, “the nature of reason must be the same in all, if it be an emanation of Divinity, the tie that connects the creature with the Creator; for, can that soul be stamped with the heavenly image, that is not perfected by the exercise of its own reason?”¹⁶ With this argument, Wollstonecraft seeks to debunk the claims of Rousseau and other contemporaries who propose sexually specific virtues on the grounds that women have lesser capacities for reason than men.¹⁷ Women, she says, are either human beings or they are not; they are either capable of reason and virtue or they are not; they either have

¹³ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 85.

¹⁴ Parts of my discussion in this section draw on the argument of Mackenzie, “Reason and Sensibility”.

¹⁵ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 142.

¹⁶ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 142.

¹⁷ Jean Jacques Rousseau (1974 [1762]), *Emile* (London: Dent/Everyman's Library).

an immortal soul or they do not. On the assumption that women are human beings and moral agents, rather than either “the link that unites man with brutes”¹⁸ or “beautiful flaws in nature”,¹⁹ then like all rational beings accountable to God, women have an obligation to expand their understanding, perfect their souls, and regulate their conduct through the exercise of their reason.

To be self-governing for Wollstonecraft is to enjoy the “rational freedom” that comes from being guided by one’s own reason.²⁰ It involves thinking for oneself, exercising independent reasoned judgement founded on knowledge and rational principles, in contrast to having one’s opinions shaped by prejudice, social conformity, or blind obedience to authority. In Wollstonecraft’s unfinished novel *The Wrongs of Woman*, it is personified in the character of Maria’s uncle who, according to Maria, inculcated “with great warmth, self-respect, and a lofty consciousness of acting right, independent of the censure or applause of the world”.²¹ This conception of self-governance is a guiding theme in Wollstonecraft’s views on education: “only that education deserves emphatically to be termed cultivation of mind, which teaches young people how to think”.²² On this basis she condemns forms of education that teach uncritical and unquestioning belief and authority structures founded on hierarchies of rank and power as inculcating servility rather than self-governance. This condemnation extends to parents who autocratically demand blind obedience from their children, thus shackling their minds; private boys’ boarding schools, which are hotbeds of vice and tyranny; and “every profession, in which great subordination of rank constitutes its power”, including the military and the clergy, as “highly injurious to morality”.²³

With respect to women, Wollstonecraft concedes that “in the present state of society” women’s understanding is cramped and their capacities for self-governance impaired. This is not because of any innate deficiency, however, but because “women have been allowed to remain in ignorance and slavish dependence many, very many, years”, deprived of both the right to act freely according to the dictates of their own reason and of an education that would expand their minds and develop their capacities for “rational freedom”.²⁴ Wollstonecraft also concedes that the morals of leisured middle-class and aristocratic women are corrupt. This is the result, however, not of an innate incapacity for

¹⁸ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 120.

¹⁹ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 122.

²⁰ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 270.

²¹ Mary Wollstonecraft (1980 [1798]), “The Wrongs of Woman; or Maria, a Fragment”, in J. Kinsley and G. Kelly (eds), *Mary and “The wrongs of woman”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 128.

²² Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 280.

²³ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 96.

²⁴ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 285.

virtue but because women are required to conform to a false morality that subjects them to an unjust sexual double standard, teaches them “manners” rather than “morals”,²⁵ and enculturates them into norms of feminine beauty that weaken their bodies and their minds: “Taught from their infancy that beauty is woman’s sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adore its prison.”²⁶ Thus trapped, women can only exercise power through coquetry or cunning, and “become either abject slaves or capricious tyrants”.²⁷

Wollstonecraft’s account of self-governance has been criticized by feminists on two main grounds. One set of criticisms centres on the role of reason, and the relationship between reason and passion, in her thought. This kind of criticism is summed up in Jane Martin’s claim that Wollstonecraft adopts “a sovereignty model of personality”, positing reason in opposition to feeling “as the ruling element of the soul” and allowing between reason and feeling “no give and take, no interaction, no sensitivity to context”.²⁸ Another criticism, articulated by Anne Phillips, is that Wollstonecraft was overly preoccupied with the importance of independence of mind, neglecting the effects of the sexual division of labour and “the stark material inequalities between men and women” in perpetuating women’s subordination.²⁹

In my view, the first kind of criticism is misplaced and overlooks both the subtlety of Wollstonecraft’s analysis of the roles of reason and feeling in the formation of virtuous character, and the relational structure of her conception of self-governance. For Wollstonecraft, being guided by reason is only one part of a virtuous character; acquiring virtue is not just a matter of enlarging the mind but also of expanding the heart, and requires capacities for affection, friendship, and “strong, persevering passions”.³⁰ It is true that in *Vindication* Wollstonecraft seems to put more emphasis on the role of reason than feeling in virtue and sometimes presents an austere picture of virtue as requiring the subordination of

²⁵ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, pp. 106, 122.

²⁶ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 131.

²⁷ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 132.

²⁸ Jane Roland Martin (1985), *Reclaiming a Conversation: the Ideal of the Educated Woman* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), p. 90. Moira Gatens argues along similar lines that Wollstonecraft adopts ideals of reason and virtue that perpetuate traditional philosophical dichotomies between mind and body, reason and passion, and public and private: Moira Gatens (1986), “Rousseau and Wollstonecraft”, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, in J. Thompson (ed.), *Women and Philosophy* Supplement to 64: 1–15; and Moira Gatens (1991a), “The Oppressed State of My Sex: Wollstonecraft on Reason, Feeling, and Equality”, in C. Pateman and M. L. Shanley (eds), *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press), pp. 112–28.

²⁹ Anne Phillips (2000), “Feminism and Republicanism: Is this a Plausible Alliance?”, *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8 (2): 279–93, p. 290.

³⁰ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 169.

passions and emotions to reason.³¹ However, she also emphasizes the importance of passion and imagination in forming the character and enlarging the understanding.³² Thus, she suggests that “the regulation of the passions, is not always, wisdom”, and that one reason why men seem more capable of independent judgement than women is that “they give a freer scope to the grand passions, and by more frequently going astray enlarge their minds”.³³ Wollstonecraft also makes an important distinction between the kind of “inflamed passions” that undermine virtue and that arise from “romantic, wavering feelings” and the pursuit of pleasure, on the one hand, and, on the other, those forms of feeling and emotional responsiveness that are integral to virtue.³⁴ In this vein, she contrasts lust with love, sensuality with sensibility, and parental self-love with parental affection. The kind of feelings that strengthen virtue include not only those capacities for sympathetic responsiveness to others that support bonds of genuine affection and friendship, but also aesthetic sensibility: “the power of looking into the heart, and responsively vibrating with each emotion, that enables the poet to personify each passion, and the painter to sketch with a pencil of fire”.³⁵

Wollstonecraft understood, however, that “in the present state of [her] society”, with its sexual double standard and false notions of female virtue as consisting in “chastity, submission, and the forgiveness of injuries”, it was almost impossible for women to give free scope to the grand passions, and to achieve a virtuous balance between reason and passion.³⁶ This awareness is poignantly expressed in one of her letters, when she writes of her daughter Fanny:

I feel more than a mother’s fondness and anxiety when I reflect on the despondent and oppressed state of her sex. I dread lest she should be forced to sacrifice her heart to her principles, or principles to her heart. With trembling hand I shall cultivate sensibility, and cherish delicacy of sentiment, lest, while I lend fresh blushes to the rose, I sharpen the

³¹ In Mackenzie, “Reason and Sensibility”, I discuss Wollstonecraft’s response to Rousseau in some detail and argue that her sometimes austere picture of virtue may be explained in part by her vehement objection to Rousseau’s depiction of Sophie in *Emile*, and to his view that the most important virtue for women is modesty. In her chapter in this volume Marina Reuter rejects this explanation, on the grounds that “it distorts our grasp of how Wollstonecraft conceives of the relationship between reason and passion”. While it is beyond the scope of my concerns in this chapter to debate this point, I am sympathetic to Reuter’s account of the role of passions in Wollstonecraft’s conception of virtue.

³² Karen Green argues, similarly, that in Wollstonecraft’s moral psychology “reason, feeling and imagination were all integral elements of the moral personality” and that central to Wollstonecraft’s conception of reason is the capacity for sympathetic moral imagination: Karen Green (1995), *The Woman of Reason: Feminism, Humanism, and Political Thought* (Cambridge: Polity Press), p. 101.

³³ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 212.

³⁴ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 169.

³⁵ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 285.

³⁶ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 197.

thorns that will wound the breast I would fain guard . . . I dread to unfold her mind, lest it should render her unfit for the world she is to inhabit—Hapless woman, what a fate is thine!³⁷

Through the character of Maria in *The Wrongs of Woman*, Wollstonecraft deplores the idea that “a woman’s coldness of constitution, and want of passion” should be considered virtuous, and she articulates an ideal of relations between the sexes in marriage as founded on mutual respect, reciprocal desire and affection, and friendship.³⁸ Yet, she also laments the difficulty of realizing this ideal in a context in which marriage laws subjected women to the arbitrary power of their husbands, thereby exposing them to sexual, physical, and psychological abuse of the kind experienced by Maria at the hands of her husband George Venables.

Wollstonecraft’s account of the roles of reason, feeling, and imagination in the formation of virtuous character, combined with her analysis of women’s oppression, highlight the relational structure of her conception of self-governance. Her conception is relational in two senses that anticipate contemporary feminist relational conceptions of autonomy. The first sense is that she understands self-governance as quite consistent with deep affective bonds and relations of mutual interdependence. In fact, Wollstonecraft seems to think genuine self-governance, as distinct from self-sufficient independence, can only be developed and sustained through such bonds. In *The Wrongs of Woman*, this is made evident through the character of Jemima, in whom “virtue, never nurtured by affection, assumed the stern aspect of selfish independence”.³⁹ The second sense in which Wollstonecraft’s conception is relational is that in her view the capacities underpinning self-governance—reason and virtue—are relationally and socially scaffolded. In other words, a person can only be self-governing in a context in which both her interpersonal relationships and the prevailing social norms and customs support the development and exercise of the capacity. This is why Wollstonecraft claimed that for women to become self-governing requires both a wholesale “revolution in female manners” and radical social and political change.⁴⁰

³⁷ Mary Wollstonecraft (1976 [1796]), *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press), p. 55.

³⁸ Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p. 153. For an insightful discussion of Wollstonecraft’s ideal of friendship see Elizabeth Frazer (2008), “Mary Wollstonecraft on Politics and Friendship”, *Political Studies* 56: 237–56. For a discussion of Wollstonecraft’s views on marriage as friendship see Ruth Abbey (1999), “Back to the Future. Marriage as Friendship in the Thought of Mary Wollstonecraft”, *Hypatia* 4 (3): 78–95.

³⁹ Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p. 82.

⁴⁰ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, pp. 132, 317.

This idea brings to the fore the second prong of Wollstonecraft's conception of independence, independence as freedom from domination or socio-relational equality of status. In explicating this aspect of her account of independence, I will suggest that the second feminist criticism mentioned earlier, that of Phillips, overlooks the centrality of socio-relational equality in Wollstonecraft's thought.⁴¹ Throughout her writings Wollstonecraft is trenchantly critical of inequalities of rank, social status, or wealth that perpetuate social relationships of domination and subordination and subject some individuals and social groups to the arbitrary power of others. Halldenius proposes that social relations of subjection are in fact the main focus of Wollstonecraft's conceptions of liberty and independence and that her argument for sex equality is simply an application of her general argument for equal liberty.⁴² This general argument is that equal liberty is a natural right of all rational agents, a right that is violated by social relations of dominance and subordination, which make one person dependent on the will of another. According to this republican conception of liberty, a person's liberty is violated even if she is not actually and presently subject to coercion or restraint by another. What matters is that the other "could restrict her, at any time and with impunity, should he wish to do so".⁴³

In applying this general argument to sex equality, Wollstonecraft seeks to expose the way that men's arbitrary power over women in both the private and public spheres deprives them of their natural right to liberty and the capacity to govern their lives. This argument is made most forcefully in *The Wrongs of Woman*, through the stories of Maria and Jemima, which dramatize the subjection of women within the private sphere of marriage and the family, and highlight both the commonalities and differences in the experiences of women of different classes. Maria's drunken and unfaithful husband gambles away her money then hounds her when she leaves him, finally orchestrating the abduction of her child and her committal to an asylum for the insane. She describes herself as being "hunted, like an infected beast",⁴⁴ and "hunted like a criminal from place to place",⁴⁵ and whenever she shuts her eyes being "haunted by Mr. Venables' image, who seemed to assume terrific or hateful forms to torment me—Sometimes a wild cat, a roaring bull, or hideous assassin, whom I vainly attempted to fly; at others he was a demon, hurrying me to the brink of

⁴¹ Coffee objects to Phillips's argument on similar grounds. See Coffee, "Freedom as Independence".

⁴² Halldenius, "Primacy of Right", pp. 93–4.

⁴³ Halldenius, "Primacy of Right", p. 81.

⁴⁴ Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p. 178.

⁴⁵ Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p. 196.

a precipice, plunging me into dark waves, or horrid gulfs".⁴⁶ Wollstonecraft exposes how Maria's subjection to this relentless harassment by her husband is made possible and sanctioned by unjust marriage and property laws. These laws entitle a husband to rob his wife "with impunity . . . and the laws of her country—if women have a country—afford her no protection or redress from the oppressor".⁴⁷ The story of Jemima, Maria's warder in the asylum, whose feelings have been deadened by poverty, sexual abuse, hard labour, and lack of affection, dramatizes the situation of working-class women, who suffer both "the wrongs of woman" and the burdens of the poor. Jemima describes herself as having been "born a slave, and chained by infamy to slavery during the whole of existence".⁴⁸

The stories of these two women are evidence that, *contra* Phillips, Wollstonecraft was in fact highly attuned not only to the effects of the stark material inequalities between the sexes in perpetuating women's subordination, but also to the effects of poverty on the lives of poor women. Moreover, in Wollstonecraft's view, socio-relational status inequality and material inequality are intimately interconnected. As the story of Maria makes clear, and as Halldenus points out, "It was possible to deny women citizenship partly because of the strong association between citizenship and property and between owners and men. A woman didn't own property; she was property".⁴⁹ The private subjection of women within marriage and the family, and their financial dependence on men, thus mirrors their subjection in the public sphere by virtue of their exclusion from the rights of citizenship, political representation, property ownership, and access to the professions.

In *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft's remarks about women's access to citizenship, political representation, property rights, and the professions are admittedly somewhat sketchy.⁵⁰ Further, many of her remarks about citizenship aim to show that socio-relational equality will enable women to fulfil their duties as

⁴⁶ Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p. 179. These descriptions recall Joseph Raz's image of the "hounded woman", a simile for the effect of severely restricted options on autonomy. Raz's imaginary woman finds herself on a desert island "with a fierce carnivorous animal which perpetually hunts for her. Her mental stamina, her intellectual ingenuity, her willpower and her physical resources are taxed to their limits by her struggle to remain alive. She never has a chance to do, or even to think of anything other than how to escape from the beast". Joseph Raz (1986), *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 374.

⁴⁷ Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p. 159.

⁴⁸ Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p. 106.

⁴⁹ Halldenus, "Primacy of Right", p. 85. Compare Maria's remark: "But a wife being as much a man's property as his horse, or his ass, she has nothing to call her own", Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p. 158. For detailed and illuminating analyses of Wollstonecraft's views on property, see Halldenus, "Primacy of Right", pp. 85–8 and "Feminist Critique of Property".

⁵⁰ But see Halldenus's contribution to this volume for a detailed analysis of Wollstonecraft's views on political representation.

citizens by better equipping them to fulfil their social duties as mothers. This is the basis on which Phillips and other critics, such as Moira Gatens, charge that Wollstonecraft fails to challenge the role of the gendered division of labour in perpetuating women's subordination.⁵¹ I acknowledge that Wollstonecraft did not have a clear vision for how women might combine civic and professional participation with maternity. Further, she sometimes seems to assume that women's biological role in gestation means that they are naturally fitted to be the primary caregivers of children.⁵² However, as I have argued elsewhere, it is also important to read Wollstonecraft's remarks about marriage, maternity, and women's responsibilities for child-rearing in the context of her frequent reminders that her texts should be read as commentaries on the "present state of society".⁵³ Further, as Coffee argues, Wollstonecraft's commitment to socio-relational equality entails that, whether or not a woman is a mother and whether or not she is employed outside the home, "the laws and social conventions that govern the organization of work and family life must guarantee independence for all".⁵⁴ Enacting this commitment, as Wollstonecraft was aware, would require radical social reform. That Wollstonecraft in 1792 did not have a detailed blueprint for such reform does not indicate failure of imagination on her part, as Phillips contends, given that the vexed issue of balancing work and family responsibilities is far from being resolved today.

I have argued that the two prongs of Wollstonecraft's conception of independence are deeply intertwined: the rational freedom required for self-governance is only possible in a context of civil, political, and social freedom. As Halldenius explains: "Social liberty is independence from the arbitrary will of others, which is a necessary condition for taking up the struggle of being master of oneself, in the sense of one's reasons guiding one's passions, which is independence of mind . . .".⁵⁵ Wollstonecraft was aware that even with radical social and political change, it would take a long time to overcome the effects of internalized oppression on women's autonomy: "who can tell, how many generations may be necessary to give vigour to the virtue and talents of the freed posterity of abject slaves?"⁵⁶ Who indeed, since contemporary feminists are still grappling with similar questions as those that preoccupied Wollstonecraft, concerning the effects

⁵¹ Phillips, "Feminism and Republicanism"; Gatens, "Rousseau and Wollstonecraft" and "Oppressed State".

⁵² For a nuanced discussion of these issues, see Sandrine Bergès's contribution to this volume.

⁵³ Mackenzie, "Reason and Sensibility", pp. 48–50.

⁵⁴ Coffee, "Freedom as Independence", p. 917.

⁵⁵ Halldenius, "Primacy of Right", p. 83. ⁵⁶ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, pp. 171–2.

of internalized oppression on the autonomy of persons who are subject to social relations of domination and subjection.

4.2 Self-Determination and Socio-Relational Equality

In the contemporary philosophical literature, autonomy is usually understood as self-governance, or having a will and mind of “one’s own”. To be autonomous is to make decisions and act on the basis of one’s own values, motives, or reasons. Different conceptions of autonomy provide different accounts of what exactly this means and entails. A common unifying thread, however, is the idea that self-governance involves critically reflecting on and taking responsibility for one’s values, motives, or reasons. Wollstonecraft’s conception of independence of mind as thinking for oneself and exercising reasoned judgement is closely allied conceptually to this understanding of autonomy.

Having a mind or will of one’s own is variously contrasted to being subject to manipulation or to others’ coercive control; acting on motives that one does not endorse; or being subject to various volitional or cognitive failings, including weakness of will, impulsiveness, self-deception, and prudential irrationality. Relational autonomy theorists claim that while the mainstream philosophical literature has focused extensively on these kinds of threats to autonomy, it has paid little attention to the autonomy-impairing effects of social oppression. In seeking to address the question of how oppression can impair autonomy, relational theorists provide a range of different answers. I cannot explicate these answers in detail here.⁵⁷ However, three broad kinds of response can be discerned in the literature.

First, theorists such as Marina Oshana argue that to be self-governing is to enjoy both the *de jure* and *de facto* power and authority to exercise practical control over one’s life.⁵⁸ Oshana claims that having this power and authority requires socio-relational equality of status and hence that agents subject to social oppression cannot be autonomous. Second, many theorists argue that to be self-governing is to act on motives, values, and reasons of one’s own and that this involves capacities for critical self-reflection. Autonomy theorists typically identify two broad sets of conditions for self-governance: competence conditions,

⁵⁷ For detailed overviews of these debates, see Mackenzie and Stoljar (eds), *Relational Autonomy* and “Autonomy Refigured”; see also the essays in Veltman and Piper (eds), *Autonomy, Oppression, Gender*; Natalie Stoljar (2014), “Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-autonomy/>>, accessed 25 May 2016; and Oshana, *Personal Autonomy and Social Oppression*.

⁵⁸ Oshana, “Personal Autonomy and Society” and *Personal Autonomy in Society*.

which specify the range of competences or skills a person must possess and exercise, to some degree at least, to be critically self-reflecting and hence self-governing; and authenticity conditions, which specify the conditions under which a value, motive, or reason counts as authentically one's own.⁵⁹ Relational autonomy theorists, such as Diana Meyers, who emphasize the importance of competence conditions seek to explicate how social oppression impairs the development or exercise of autonomy competences, while theorists who emphasize the importance of authenticity, such as John Christman, seek to explicate the ways that social oppression can interfere with authenticity.⁶⁰ Third, a number of relational autonomy theorists argue that a condition for self-governance is that agents hold certain self-affective attitudes, in particular attitudes of self-respect, self-esteem, and self-trust, and that social oppression impairs autonomy by vitiating these attitudes.⁶¹

These responses are often regarded as competitor accounts of self-governance and competitor explanations of the autonomy impairing effects of oppression. Elsewhere, I have argued that this is a mistake and that these three explanations foreground distinct, but interrelated dimensions of the concept of autonomy: self-determination, self-governance, and self-authorization.⁶² To be self-determining is to have the freedom and opportunities necessary for determining the direction of one's own life. To be self-governing is to have the competences necessary for making authentic decisions about one's life. To be self-authorizing is to regard oneself, and to be regarded by others, as having the normative authority to be self-determining and self-governing. In what follows, I draw on this multidimensional analysis of autonomy. In the remainder of this section I outline the notion of self-determination and point to its conceptual connections with Wollstonecraft's conception of independence as socio-relational liberty and equality. In the next section (4.3), I outline the notion of self-governance and point to its

⁵⁹ For a more detailed discussion of competence and authenticity conditions for autonomy, see John Christman (2009), *The Politics of Persons: Individual Autonomy and Socio-historical Selves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), ch. 7.

⁶⁰ See Diana Meyers (1989), *Self, Society and Personal Choice* (New York: Columbia University Press); Christman, *The Politics of Persons*.

⁶¹ See for example, Joel Anderson and Axel Honneth (2005), "Autonomy, Vulnerability, Recognition, and Justice", in J. Christman and J. Anderson (eds), *Autonomy and the Challenges to Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Paul Benson (1994), "Free Agency and Self-Worth", *Journal of Philosophy* 91: 650–68; Trudy Govier (1993), "Self-Trust, Autonomy and Self-Esteem", *Hypatia* 8: 99–120; Catriona Mackenzie (2008), "Relational Autonomy, Normative Authority and Perfectionism", *Journal of Social Philosophy* 39: 512–33; Carolyn McLeod (2002), *Self-Trust and Reproductive Autonomy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).

⁶² I develop this argument in detail in Mackenzie "Three Dimensions", from which I draw some of the text in this and the following sections of this chapter.

conceptual connections with Wollstonecraft's conception of independence as rational freedom or self-governance. I then propose (4.4) that there is a third prong to Wollstonecraft's account of independence, which is conceptually related to the notion of self-authorization.

One of the roles that the concept of autonomy plays in liberal moral and political discourse is to define the right of each individual to determine the direction of his or her own life, within the constraints of Mill's harm principle, and to delimit what constitutes unwarranted interference (either by the state or by other agents) with that right.⁶³ From a republican perspective, however, the articulation of this right in terms of absence of interference is misplaced. What matters is not absence of interference as such, but rather freedom from domination and from subjection to arbitrary forms of power and interference. According to this republican conception, autonomy is a status concept and the right to autonomy is a right to what Pettit refers to as "freedom of undominated status".⁶⁴ A person can only be autonomous if she enjoys this undominated status. Wollstonecraft's conception of independence as socio-relational liberty and equality of status corresponds to this conception of autonomy as freedom of undominated status, and anticipates a related relational conception of autonomy proposed by Oshana.

Oshana argues that persons who stand in relations of subordination, subservience, deference, or economic or psychological dependence cannot be self-governing because they do not enjoy practical control over their lives.⁶⁵ This is the case even if the agents in question endorse (or are not alienated from) their subordinate, subservient, or dependent position, and even if they seem to satisfy the competence and authenticity requirements for self-governance. Oshana uses an array of examples—voluntary slaves, prisoners, women subject to extreme forms of gender oppression, members of restrictive religious orders—to support the guiding intuition behind her account; namely, that a person cannot lead a self-governing life if she is effectively under the control of others. This guiding intuition shares much in common with the republican conception of freedom and with Wollstonecraft's conception of independence as socio-relational liberty and equality of status.

Oshana's analysis of self-governance as requiring equality of socio-relational status has been criticized as overly demanding on the ground that it is easy to

⁶³ John Stuart Mill (1962 [1859]), "On Liberty", in M. Warnock (ed.), *Utilitarianism, On Liberty and Other Essays* (London: Fontana), pp. 126–250.

⁶⁴ Pettit (2012), *On the People's Terms*, p. 88.

⁶⁵ Oshana, "Personal Autonomy and Society", and *Personal Autonomy in Society*.

devise counterexamples or to find real-life examples of persons who are subject to social domination but who nevertheless seem intuitively to be self-governing; an example is Nelson Mandela when he was a prisoner on Robben Island. Moreover, as Christman has argued, Oshana's account seems to impugn the autonomy of persons who, despite being subject to such crushing forms of oppression, nevertheless struggle to make plans, set goals, and have clear identity-defining commitments that are genuinely their own.⁶⁶ I would suggest, however, that both Oshana's account of self-governance and Christman's criticism conflate two dimensions of autonomy—self-determination and self-governance—that should be distinguished and that correspond to the two prongs of Wollstonecraft's account of independence. On the basis of this distinction, I suggest that Oshana's account of autonomy as incompatible with socio-relational inequality of status should be understood as an analysis of autonomy as self-determination.

The advantage of distinguishing autonomy as self-determination from autonomy as self-governance is that it helps to disentangle external structural social and political conditions for autonomy from internal conditions relating to the skills and competences needed to govern oneself. It also helps to disentangle autonomy understood as a status concept from autonomy understood as a capacity concept. I argued in the previous section that Wollstonecraft regarded the external conditions, namely socio-relational liberty and equality of status, as a necessary condition for being able to achieve the internal conditions or capacities required for self-governance. Christman's objection suggests that this position may be overly strong, and that socio-relational equality of status need not always be a necessary condition for self-governance. Although I agree with Christman on this point, I think Wollstonecraft is correct in suggesting that status and capacity, and external and internal conditions, are causally interrelated and that being subject to oppressive social relationships that make domination possible typically impairs self-governance.

Before discussing self-governance, I want to return to my definition of self-determination as having the freedom and opportunities necessary for determining the direction of one's own life. This definition implies that self-determination requires both freedom conditions and opportunity conditions. If freedom is understood in neo-republican terms as non-domination or equal status, then the freedom conditions for autonomy require that, to ensure equal status, the basic liberties must be legally, politically, and socially entrenched and resourced.

⁶⁶ Christman's criticisms of Oshana are developed in John Christman (2004), "Relational Autonomy, Liberal Individualism, and the Social Constitution of Selves", *Philosophical Studies* 117: 143–64.

Further, these liberties must be equally accessible to, and equally able to be enjoyed by, all members of a society.⁶⁷ By the basic liberties I mean the political and personal liberties that almost all contemporary republican, liberal, democratic, and feminist theorists think should be entrenched, including freedom of thought and expression, freedom of association, freedom of conscience and religious exercise, freedom to engage in political participation, freedom of occupation, freedom of movement, freedom from arbitrary arrest, freedom of sexual expression, and so on. Although Wollstonecraft's conception of the basic liberties may not have been as extensive as ours, her critique of women's oppression is clearly motivated by the conviction that the basic liberties must be equally accessible to, and equally able to be enjoyed by men and women alike.

Opportunity conditions specify the personal, social, and political opportunities that need to be available in the social environment in order to give substance to the freedom conditions and hence in order for people to lead meaningful, self-determining lives. Among theorists of autonomy, Joseph Raz (1986) is the most prominent exponent of the view that self-determination, as I have defined it, requires access to a wide array of substantive, socially supported opportunities, or what he refers to as significant options. Raz claims that autonomy depends "not on the availability of one option of freedom of choice. It depends on the general character of one's environment and culture".⁶⁸ An autonomy-supporting culture, in his view, is one that provides the institutional infrastructure—legal, educational, economic, political—to support a wide array of significant options, and develops social policy measures aimed at making these options genuinely accessible to members of marginalized, disadvantaged, or historically oppressed social groups. The opportunities required for women to lead meaningful, self-determining lives in modern, democratic societies are considerably more extensive than Wollstonecraft could have imagined. Nevertheless, her remarks on the potential occupations that women might undertake—she mentions medicine, nursing, politics, business, and farming—and on the importance for women of financial independence, are evidence that she understood the importance of opportunity conditions for independence: "How many women thus waste life away the prey of discontent, who might have practised as physicians, regulated a farm, managed a shop, and stood erect, supported by their own industry . . .".⁶⁹

The phenomenon of adaptive preference formation highlights the importance of both freedom and opportunity for self-determination, as well as the causal

⁶⁷ My discussion draws here on Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, ch. 2.

⁶⁸ Raz, *Morality of Freedom*, p. 391.

⁶⁹ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 262.

interdependence between self-determination and self-governance.⁷⁰ It is this phenomenon that Wollstonecraft diagnoses in her acerbic remarks throughout *Vindication* about women of the leisured classes. She understood that in social contexts characterized by oppression and domination, the problem is not just that restricted freedom and opportunities constrain self-determination, but also that the internalization of these constraints shapes individuals' sense of who they are, and what they can be and do. This is why, in her view, independence as socio-relational equality and independence of mind are causally interrelated.

4.3 Self-Governance

To be self-governing is to exercise capacities for competent and authentic critical self-reflection. The notion of self-governance thus identifies conditions for autonomy, specifically competence and authenticity, which are in some sense internal to the person, whereas the self-determination axis identifies external, structural conditions. Before outlining these conditions, it should be emphasized that the distinction between internal and external conditions is complicated, as Wollstonecraft understood very well. If persons are socially constituted, then external conditions—our social relations with others, social norms and practices, and institutional and political structures—shape both who we are—the *self* of self-governance—and the development of the skills and competences required for *governing* the self. In contexts of social oppression, as is shown by the phenomenon of adaptive preference formation, constraints on freedom or limited opportunity can deform the process of identity formation and impair the development and exercise of autonomy competence.

Competence conditions specify the range of competences or skills a person must possess, to some degree at least, in order to be capable of self-governance. These include cognitive skills, ranging from minimally specified capacities to understand and process information, to more complex capacities for critical reflection, judgement, and reasons-responsiveness, as well as volitional skills such as self-control and decisiveness. While concurring that these kinds of competences are important for self-governance, relational autonomy theorists have extended the philosophical discussion of competence conditions in two main ways.

⁷⁰ For the classic statement of the phenomenon of adaptive preferences, see John Elster (1983), *Sour Grapes: Studies in the Subversion of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). For a recent discussion of the relevance of the notion of adaptive preferences to relational theories of autonomy, see Natalie Stoljar (2014), "Autonomy and Adaptive Preference Formation", in Piper and Veltman (eds), *Autonomy, Oppression and Gender*, pp. 227–52.

First, relational theorists argue that philosophers have overly rationalized the competences required for critical reflection, while neglecting an array of other skills and competences necessary for social interaction and self-knowledge.⁷¹ These include emotional skills, such as capacities to interpret and regulate one's own emotions and to be emotionally responsive to others; and imaginative skills, which are necessary for empathizing with others' situations, engaging in moral self-transformation, understanding the implications of one's decisions, and envisaging alternative possibilities. Although Wollstonecraft stressed the importance of rational competence and virtue for self-governance, I argued in the previous section that she also emphasized the importance of passion, imagination, and sympathetic responsiveness in forming the character and enlarging the understanding. In this respect, her understanding of the competences required for independence of mind anticipates the views of relational theorists.

Wollstonecraft also anticipates these views in emphasizing the importance of social interaction for developing capacities for judgement and self-knowledge. She comments:

The world cannot be seen by an unmoved spectator; we must mix in the throng and feel as men feel, before we can judge of their feelings . . . we must attain knowledge of others at the same time that we become acquainted with ourselves. Knowledge acquired any other way only hardens the heart, and perplexes the understanding.⁷²

Likewise, relational theorists argue that the skills and competences required for self-governance are relationally and socially constituted and that the self-knowledge required for self-governance is not developed primarily through introspection. This is not only because we are not motivationally self-transparent, but also because self-knowledge, indeed the self itself on this view, is constituted through ongoing social and dialogical interaction.⁷³

Second, relational theorists have pointed out that if the competences required for critical reflection and independent judgement are socially constituted, in oppressive social contexts the very competences needed to reflect critically on and transform oppressive social norms, relationships, and values may be

⁷¹ Among relational autonomy theorists, Meyers and Mackenzie draw attention to the importance of emotional and imaginative competences. See Meyers, *Self, Society and Personal Choice*; Mackenzie (2000), "Imagining Oneself Otherwise", in Mackenzie and Stoljar (eds), *Relational Autonomy*, pp. 124–50; and Mackenzie (2002), "Critical Reflection, Self-Knowledge, and the Emotions", *Philosophical Explorations* 5 (2): 186–206.

⁷² Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 215.

⁷³ Here relational autonomy theorists echo Charles Taylor's dialogical conception of the self. See Taylor (1989), *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

impaired, thus perpetuating patterns of oppression.⁷⁴ This problem is connected to the phenomenon of adaptive preference formation and points to the challenges of developing and exercising the capacities required for self-governance in oppressive social contexts, a challenge which Wollstonecraft described as “a herculean task”.⁷⁵ As Coffee argues, Wollstonecraft understood that one of the reasons “patterns of domination become entrenched and difficult to dislodge” is that “prejudice . . . ‘clouds’ people’s ability to reason and skews debate in favour of dominant powers, thereby entrenching patterns of subjection”.⁷⁶ The corrupting effects of prejudice affect both dominant and dominated alike, undermining the reasoning and reflective capacities required for virtue and independence of mind. However, it is not just individual virtue that is corrupted by prejudice and social domination, but also civic virtue and the norms that shape public deliberation.⁷⁷ By exposing this kind of cultural corruption, Coffee argues, Wollstonecraft raises a serious challenge for the republican ideal of public reason and debate as a bulwark against arbitrary power and domination.⁷⁸

Deliberation takes place against a background of accepted norms and de facto institutional practices, in which current structures of power and ways of life are taken as the neutral order of things. When outside voices challenge the values and received opinions of the baseline, their arguments are typically judged not according to the ‘best reasons’ objectively conceived, but by the (arbitrary) strength of prevailing public opinion. Questions of whose testimony is credible, which facts are relevant, and which normative considerations apply are determined from the perspective of the dominant social groups.⁷⁹

This problem of credibility is dramatized in *The Wrongs of Woman* by the story of Maria, whose testimony against her husband is discounted by the judicial system.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ See for example, Paul Benson (1991), “Autonomy and Oppressive Socialization”, *Social Theory and Practice* 17: 385–408, on norms of feminine beauty; Natalie Stoljar (2000), “Autonomy and the Feminist Intuition”, in Mackenzie and Stoljar (eds), *Relational Autonomy*, pp. 94–111, on norms of female sexuality; and Anita Superson (2005), “Deformed Desires and Informed Desire Tests” *Hypatia* 20 (4): 109–26, on “deformed desires”.

⁷⁵ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 257.

⁷⁶ Coffee, “Freedom and Social Domination”, p. 116.

⁷⁷ Coffee’s contribution to this volume addresses in detail the connection between Wollstonecraft’s views on collective virtue and independence.

⁷⁸ Coffee, “Freedom and Social Domination”, p. 126.

⁷⁹ Coffee, “Freedom and Social Domination”, p. 127.

⁸⁰ In finding against Maria, who is pleading for a divorce, the judge states that he has “always determined to oppose all innovation, and the new-fangled notions which incroached on the good old rules of conduct . . . What virtuous woman thought of her feelings?—It was her duty to love and obey the man chosen by her parents and relations, who were qualified by their experience to judge better for her, than she could herself”. Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p. 199.

Authenticity conditions specify what it means to be self-governing with respect to one's motivational structure; that is, what it means for a choice, value, commitment, or reason to be one's own. Many autonomy theorists hold that an aspect of one's motivational structure is authentic if it is endorsed via processes of critical reflection. However, there is considerable debate amongst relational theorists about whether procedural criteria are sufficient for critical reflection to count as authentic and hence autonomous, or whether more substantive criteria are required; for example that reflection must be guided by good reasons, or by norms or values that enable the agent to critically appraise and reject false social norms that perpetuate oppression.⁸¹ It is beyond the scope of my argument in this chapter to adjudicate this debate. It is worth noting though that Wollstonecraft's conception of independence of mind is more aligned with substantive than with procedural views. As we have seen, for Wollstonecraft independence of mind requires critical appraisal and rejection of unjust laws and false social norms, customs, and prejudices that perpetuate domination and oppression. It also requires acting on the basis of one's own judgement, guided by right reason and moral conscience: "For it is the right use of reason alone which makes us independent of everything—excepting the unclouded reason—'Whose service is perfect freedom'".⁸² As Halldenius remarks, this equation of self-governance and freedom with being guided by right reason echoes Kant's conception of autonomy as being governed by reason and the moral law.⁸³

4.4 Self-Authorization

A theme that runs throughout Wollstonecraft's writings is that dependence and social inequality, by undermining the conditions for virtue, thereby undermine the conditions for self-respect and other self-affective attitudes, such as trust in one's own judgement, that are crucial for independence of mind. Dependence on the arbitrary will of another, she argues, degrades the character, making those who are dependent fearful, obsequious, and fawning, or cunning and duplicitous, so undermining their dignity and self-respect. For Wollstonecraft,

⁸¹ For an overview of the difference between "procedural" and "substantive" approaches, see Mackenzie and Stoljar, "Autonomy Refigured". For an influential procedural view, see Christman, *Politics of Persons*. For different variants of substantive views, see for example, Benson, "Autonomy and Oppressive Socialization"; Stoljar, "Autonomy and Feminist Intuition"; and Superson, "Deformed Desires".

⁸² Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 226.

⁸³ Halldenius, "Primacy of Right", p. 79. In the contemporary literature, the view that freedom and autonomy consist in being guided by the dictates of reason is associated with the views of Susan Wolf. See Wolf (1990), *Freedom Within Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press).

self-respect is conceptually intertwined with socio-relational liberty and equality, and independence of mind. Self-respect arises from the exercise of reason and from a sense of one's dignity as a rational agent.⁸⁴ One of the wrongs of women's oppression is that by denying women the liberty to exercise their reason and to act according to the dictates of their conscience it deprives them of this sense of dignity and self-respect. Women, she says, would be "led to respect themselves, if political and moral subjects were open to them", if they were educated and free to exercise their minds, rather than being distracted by the "littlenesses" that "degrade their character", such as the pursuit of pleasure, or the desire for baubles and trinkets.⁸⁵

Self-respect, for Wollstonecraft, is constitutively social, in the sense that it is based on reciprocal respect for others' humanity and requires social relations of equality. It is only in such contexts of socio-relational equality and respect that genuine friendship and affection are possible. The connection between self-respect and reciprocal respect and affection is a central theme in *Vindication*, and is expressed in Wollstonecraft's ideals of genuine friendship and virtuous marriage, in her views on education and parental authority, and in her remarks on citizenship and public virtue. She remarks:

Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers—in a word, better citizens. We should then love them with true affection, because we should learn to respect ourselves.⁸⁶

In *The Wrongs of Woman* the connection between self-respect and affection is a central theme in the stories of Jemima and Maria. Commenting on the effects of lack of affection on her life and character, Jemima says: "I had no one to love me; or to make me respected, to enable me to acquire respect".⁸⁷ In the story of Maria's marriage, a further element is added to this theme: that lack of respect and affection can undermine trust in one's own judgement. Maria says of Venables: "To such a degree, in fact did his cold, reserved manner affect me, that, after spending some days with him alone, I have imagined myself the most stupid creature in the world, till the abilities of some casual visitor convinced me that I had some dormant animation, and sentiments above the dust in which I had been grovelling."⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, pp. 120–1.

⁸⁵ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 288.

⁸⁶ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 263.

⁸⁷ Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p. 106.

⁸⁸ Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p. 145. The erosion of Maria's sense of self-worth and trust in her own judgement echoes Paul Benson's discussion of the 1944 thriller film *Gaslight* in Benson, "Free Agency".

The notion of *self-authorization*, as I understand it, is underpinned by a conception of persons as moral equals who ought to be treated by others as respect-worthy, or dignified beings. Self-authorization involves regarding oneself, and being regarded by others, as authorized to exercise *de jure* and *de facto* practical control over one's life (to be self-determining), and to act on the basis of one's own judgement, values, and commitments (to be self-governing). Whereas the self-determination axis identifies structural social and political conditions for autonomy, and the self-governance axis identifies internal competence and authenticity conditions, the self-authorization axis identifies conditions related to agents' self-evaluative attitudes and social relations of recognition.

Self-authorization is therefore constitutively social and involves three connected conditions: that the person regards herself as the kind of agent who can be held accountable and answerable to others for her reasons—call this the *accountability* condition; that the person holds certain self-affective attitudes, in particular attitudes of self-respect, self-trust, and self-esteem—call this the *self-evaluative attitudes* condition; and that such attitudes in turn presuppose that the person is regarded by others as having the social standing of an autonomous agent—call this the *social recognition* condition.

Self-authorization involves, firstly, regarding oneself as responsible to oneself, and as answerable and accountable to others, for one's beliefs, values, commitments and reasons.⁸⁹ The central idea is that as social agents we are subject to others' demands that we account for our decisions, explain the reasons for them, and take responsibility for those decisions. To be self-authorizing, a person must not only be capable of understanding and responding to this social demand, but must also regard herself as a valid source of self-authorizing claims. This idea is central to Wollstonecraft's conception of independence. To be independent is to regard oneself as morally accountable to God, to other human beings, and as a citizen.⁹⁰ Dependency is corrupting and undermines virtue, friendship, and citizenship because it corrodes this sense of oneself as responsible and accountable.

⁸⁹ Charles Taylor's notion of autonomy as involving responsibility for self articulates this kind of accountability condition, as does Stephen Darwall's second-person standpoint: Charles Taylor (1985), "What Is Human Agency?", in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Stephen Darwall (2006), *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). In the recent literature on relational autonomy its most eloquent exponents are Paul Benson (2005), "Taking Ownership: Authority and Voice in Autonomous Agency", in Christman and Anderson (eds), *Autonomy and the Challenges to Liberalism*, pp. 106–26; and Andrea Westlund (2009), "Rethinking Relational Autonomy", *Hypatia* 24 (4): 26–49.

⁹⁰ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 257.

Regarding oneself as accountable involves having a sense of one's epistemic and normative authority. This in turn requires that a person have certain self-evaluative attitudes, in particular attitudes of appropriate self-respect (regarding oneself as the moral equal of others), self-trust (trust in one's own judgement), and self-esteem (regarding one's life as meaningful, worthwhile, and valuable).⁹¹ I have argued above that these self-evaluative attitudes are central to Wollstonecraft's conception of independence. It is always possible to find examples of heroic persons who maintain these attitudes even in situations where they are despised and humiliated by others. However, psychologically these self-evaluative attitudes are typically constituted intersubjectively and within normative structures and practices of *social recognition*. Hence, they are vulnerable to others' failures or refusals to grant a person appropriate recognition in a range of different spheres: in her interpersonal relations; at work and in the institutions of civil society; and as a citizen. Such failures of recognition are quite typical in social relations involving domination, or inequalities of power, authority, or social and economic status, especially when these are inflected by gender, race, ethnicity, or disability.

This theme is central to Wollstonecraft's analysis of women's oppression. The revolution that she called for required that women be granted not just equal political and civil liberty, property rights, and education, but also that the norms, structures and practices that entrench social relations of inequality and misrecognition be transformed. This is why she thought it might take generations for the effects of social and internalized oppression to be overcome. Two hundred years later, these effects are still powerful in the varied forms of gender oppression that women continue to experience in contemporary liberal democratic societies, despite access to education, property rights, and civil and political liberty.

4.5 Conclusion

My aim in this chapter has been to articulate important points of connection between Wollstonecraft's conception of independence and contemporary relational theories of autonomy, using my multidimensional analysis of autonomy as a guiding theoretical framework. I have argued that Wollstonecraft's account of independence can be understood as structured around three intertwined prongs: independence as freedom from domination, or socio-relational liberty

⁹¹ My analysis of self-respect, self-trust, and self-esteem draws on Anderson and Honneth, "Autonomy, Vulnerability, Recognition, and Justice".

and equality; independence of mind, or rational and moral self-governance; and independence as self-respect, or regarding oneself as a self-authorizing and accountable moral agent. My analysis of Wollstonecraft's conception of independence has also identified salient points of connection between relational conceptions of autonomy and republican conceptions of freedom. Inevitably, since my argument covers a great deal of conceptual territory, the analysis is broad brush and overlooks many important aspects of Wollstonecraft's thought. It also skates over complex debates both within republican theory and among relational theorists of autonomy. Nevertheless, by drawing attention to these connections, I hope at least to have highlighted the complex and visionary nature of Wollstonecraft's ideal of women's independence.

5

Mary Wollstonecraft, Children's Human Rights, and Animal Ethics

Eileen Hunt Botting

Over the course of her *oeuvre*, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–97) developed a theory of the human rights of children that had no philosophical precedent. It was original not only in the content and scope of rights she imagined for children, but also in the justification she provided for understanding children as rights-bearing subjects alongside adults. As for the content and scope of children's rights, she theorized children's possession of the same rights as adult humans, minus the right to full citizenship. While full citizenship (including equal access to public goods such as property, careers, voting, and office-holding) would only be granted at the age of majority to either sex, the state's provision of the right to free primary and secondary education would enable girls' and boys' development into full citizens capable of participation in a modern representative republic.¹ Public education would then function as a kind of school for citizenship.²

In a radical move that distanced her from even the most progressive theorists of family life in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Wollstonecraft also specified the fundamental right of children to be free from physical or psychological abuse by their parents or elders, which derived from the perfect, universal, and fundamental obligation of adults to not abuse minors.³ The experience of

¹ Mary Wollstonecraft (1989 [1792]), *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, in *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, eds Marilyn Butler and Janet Todd (New York: New York University Press), vol. 5, pp. 217–18 (hereafter cited as *Works*, vols 1–7).

² Amy Gutmann (1999), *Democratic Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), p. 49.

³ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, in *Works*, vol. 5, p. 14; Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, pp. 221–2.

such abuse, on her account, nullified the perfect yet special duty of adult children to care for their parents in their old age.⁴ If they were given care and a rational education at home rather than abuse, children might also experience the family as a school for citizenship like the local schools they attended during the day.⁵ In addition, they would freely and reciprocally care for their parents in their old age. If the state failed to guarantee their right to be free from domestic abuse, children could still find at school an expansive space for the free and full development of their capabilities as human beings through the exercise of their rights to physical, moral, and intellectual education.⁶ If both the state and the family failed them, adult children at least had the right to extricate themselves from any further obligation toward their abusive parents.⁷

Wollstonecraft's justification for these children's rights was rooted in her metaphysical/ethical conception of the human being. Inspired by her mentor, the Reverend Richard Price, Wollstonecraft had a Dissenting Christian theological view of humans as creatures of God made in His rational image.⁸ Like Price, she drew a sharp line between humans and "brutes" (or non-human animals): the former were rational and sentient, and the latter merely sentient.⁹ Unlike non-human animals, children had a need for the development of their rational capabilities in order to fully realize their potential as moral beings. According to her deontological and correlative theory of human rights, all rights

⁴ Here and throughout I apply Onora O'Neill's typology of obligations, which has become essential to contemporary theories of children's human rights, and thus helps to elucidate the similarities and differences between Wollstonecraft's views and the contemporary work on the topic. Onora O'Neill (1988), "Children's Rights and Children's Lives", *Ethics* 98 (3): 445–63.

⁵ Elizabeth Frazer (2011), "Mary Wollstonecraft and Catharine Macaulay on education", *Oxford Review of Education* 37 (5): 603–17, p. 613.

⁶ Alan Richardson (2002), "Mary Wollstonecraft on Education", in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Claudia Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 24–41.

⁷ Carol H. Poston speculated that Wollstonecraft was speaking from the perspective of an adult survivor of child abuse, "not necessarily sexual...but emotional and physical": Poston (1996), "Wollstonecraft and 'The Body Politic'", in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Maria J. Falco (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press), p. 87. Biographers have disagreed about the extent of Wollstonecraft's experience of neglect or abuse as a child, but at least agree that she witnessed her father's domestic violence against her mother. See Lyndall Gordon (2005), *Vindication: A Life of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York: HarperCollins), p. 9.

⁸ My extended treatment of Wollstonecraft's theological foundations for her moral and political philosophy is found in Eileen Hunt Botting (2006), *Family Feuds: Wollstonecraft, Burke, and Rousseau on the Transformation of the Family* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press), pp. 131–88. For the importance of Price to Wollstonecraft's republicanism, see Susan James, this volume. For an alternative secular reading of Wollstonecraft's theory of rights in the context of her republicanism yet independent of her theological commitments, see Alan Coffee, this volume.

⁹ Richard Price (1991), *Political Writings*, ed. D. O. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 23.

derived from duties, but not all duties entailed rights.¹⁰ While humans had a duty to respect sentient life, animals did not have a corresponding right to be free from abuse by humans. On the other hand, human children had a right to be free from abuse, because humans in general had a duty to respect each other as “moral beings” capable of rational self-governance.¹¹

Although Wollstonecraft’s theory of children’s rights does not apply to non-human animals, she developed a related account of animal ethics. A perfect, universal, and fundamental duty to refrain from cruelty to non-human animals arises from the obligation to respect sentient life in general. Performance of this duty can be reinforced through education, especially in the primary school years. For this reason, Wollstonecraft advocated that children be taught from an early age to at least respect if not actively care for animals and insects, not abuse or torture them. She even envisioned a state-mandated policy of animal ethics as part of the core curriculum of her ideal public co-educational day school system.

For Wollstonecraft, the ethical treatment of animals was a duty of humans at each stage of their lives, not a right of animals. Although children and “brutes” shared sentience and a vulnerability to abuse by adult humans, the human capability for reason made children rights-bearing subjects rather than mere objects of dutiful care. Wollstonecraft’s theory of children’s rights was friendly to the basic respect and even active care of non-human animals but ultimately valued human life more highly than other forms of sentient life due to its rational nature. Indeed, animals and insects figure primarily as instruments for the development of morality in children, across Wollstonecraft’s *oeuvre*. She never went so far as to advocate for vegetarianism, despite the fact that it was an emergent school of thought in the post-revolutionary era.¹² Her failure to extend her argument to vegetarianism was likely due to her distinction between “domestic brutes” (pets) and other animals, and her metaphysical/ethical view of the human being as a “creature above the brutes” (both pets and non-pets). Contra

¹⁰ Onora O’Neill (1980), “Kantian Approaches to some Famine Problems,” in Tom Regan (ed.), *Matters of Life and Death: New Introductory Essays in Moral Philosophy* (New York: McGraw Hill), pp. 258–70; Onora O’Neill (1989), *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant’s Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 75–7, 188.

¹¹ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, pp. 94, 101, 108, 114.

¹² In the same year as Wollstonecraft composed her *Rights of Woman*, John Oswald published a vegetarian tract: Oswald (1791), *The Cry of Nature; or, An Appeal to Mercy and to Justice, on Behalf of the Persecuted Animals* (London: Printed for J. Johnson). Extending her philosophy of animal ethics to include the nascent vegetarian cause, Percy Shelley (1813), published *A Vindication of Natural Diet* (London: Printed for J. Callow by Smith & Davy) in which he modeled his vegetarian arguments after those of the *Rights of Woman*. See Carol J. Adams (2010), *The Sexual Politics of Meat (20th Anniversary Edition): A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York: A&C Black), pp. 120, 152, 193.

Rousseau, she posited that humans by nature were both “rational” and “carnivorous” animals, capable of improvement through their benevolent treatment of animals, but not obliged to refrain from eating those not kept as “domestic brutes”.¹³ For these reasons, theorists of animal rights will not find in Wollstonecraft as robust a source for their arguments as will theorists of the rights of children. Nevertheless, animal rights advocates might draw lessons from her analysis of the indivisibility of children’s and other human rights (as moral rights) and the resultant necessity for their holistic and overlapping implementation (as legal rights). By drawing attention to the gap between what rights ought to be (ideal theory) and what rights are (non-ideal practice), Wollstonecraft modeled how to use a radically utopian ideal of rights to push for a richer and creative realization of rights in hostile or unreceptive legal systems.¹⁴

5.1 Wollstonecraft’s Radical Account of the Fundamental and Universal Human Rights of Children

Wollstonecraft read deeply in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophy of education, particularly John Locke, James Burgh, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Catharine Macaulay, and Charles Maurice Talleyrand-Périgord, but ultimately moved far beyond these thinkers on the question of children’s rights. Beyond Locke, and even more briefly Rousseau, none of these writers had applied the concept of rights to children, although they typically followed Locke’s *Some Thoughts on Education* (1693) in advocating for children’s physical, intellectual, and moral freedom from parental and especially paternal tyranny. Wollstonecraft built on but moved beyond all of these theorists in developing her extended philosophical argument for the fundamental human rights of children: from Locke, Burgh, and Rousseau she took a general interest in the physical education, health care, physical freedom, and outdoor exercise of children; from Rousseau a special concern with the physical and moral benefits of maternal breastfeeding for infants and families; and from Macaulay and Talleyrand the inspiration to apply Lockean and Rousseauian arguments on the best form of early education equally to girls and boys.

The immediate context of Wollstonecraft’s concern for children’s human rights was the radical politics of late eighteenth-century England, especially

¹³ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, pp. 83, 83 fn 1, 234.

¹⁴ Amartya Sen (2000a), “Consequentialist Evaluation and Practical Reason”, *Journal of Philosophy* 97 (9): 477–502, p. 497; Pablo Gilabert (2011), “Humanist and Political Perspectives on Human Rights”, *Political Theory* 39 (4): 439–67, p. 441.

amid its Dissenting Christian community. Under the theological tutelage of Richard Price at the Newington Green church in London in the late 1780s, she learned the theory and rhetoric of the abolitionist cause. According to Price, a country that tolerated slavery in any form was “a spot where he enjoys no right, and is disposed of by owners as if he was a beast”.¹⁵ The logic of abolition was simple and elegant: chattel slaves—or people bought and sold into forced labor—were human (not beasts), and therefore deserved the same rights as other humans, including the fundamental right not to be enslaved. Humans had a right not to be enslaved because under slavery they were denied the conditions of freedom necessary for rational agency and self-development. In short, slavery denied humans the capacity to develop their humanity, because it denied their very humanity. Slavery was thus the ultimate form of domination—extinguishing the very possibility of freedom through the totalizing and oppressive use of force—as Rousseau had argued powerfully in the opening lines of his *Social Contract* (1762).

Many late eighteenth-century thinkers had followed Rousseau in applying the abolitionist argument against chattel slavery to other domains of human social and political life. For example, Thomas Paine, in his *Rights of Man, Part the Second* (1792), contended that the “hereditary system” of aristocratic and monarchical politics was a kind of “slavery” and violation of “human rights” because it suppressed the freedom of most people.¹⁶ Wollstonecraft has been most renowned for applying the abolitionist argument to women. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), she wrote that women as humans deserve to be liberated from “the slavery of marriage”.¹⁷ This analogy between patriarchal marriage and slavery was an old one, however, as Mary Astell, Macaulay, and other early feminists had regularly appealed to it.¹⁸ Wollstonecraft’s philosophical innovation was to apply the abolitionist argument to children in order to contend for their rights as humans.

As early as her 1788 collection of children’s tales, *Original Stories from Real Life*, Wollstonecraft compared children to chattel slaves: “why then do we suffer children to be bound with fetters, which their half-formed faculties cannot break?”¹⁹ While she certainly echoed book one of Rousseau’s *Emile* in this

¹⁵ Price, *Political Writings*, p. 147.

¹⁶ Thomas Paine (2000), *Political Writings*, ed. Bruce Kuklick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 176, 198.

¹⁷ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 226.

¹⁸ Mary Astell (1706), *Reflections upon marriage. The third edition. To which is added a preface, in answer to some objections* (London: R. Wilkin) preface; Catharine Macaulay (1790), *Letters on education. With observations on religious and metaphysical subjects* (London), p. 210.

¹⁹ Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories from Real Life*, in *Works*, vol. 4, p. 359.

passage from the preface, the rationalist pedagogy of *Original Stories* pushed beyond Rousseau's primary concern with the physical freedom of children to focus on the need to liberate children from irrational modes of education that were both intellectually and morally damaging. Wollstonecraft went still further in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790). Here, in her first political treatise and the first published response to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), she argued that "there are rights which men inherit at their birth, as rational creatures". These rights were not received, as Burke would have it, from their "forefathers", but rather from "God". God made humans different from "the brute creation" in that humans had "improvable faculties".²⁰ In order to improve their human faculties, such as reason, children had to exercise certain fundamental rights. Wollstonecraft thus established that rights are grounded in the moral status of humans as rational creatures of God, who raised them above the brute creation through their improvable faculties. This implies that humans have rights but not animals, and reason (and antecedently, God's endowment of humans with reason) accounts for this difference in moral status.

In the *Rights of Men*, Wollstonecraft specified two fundamental children's rights and strongly implied their correlative parental duties:

It is necessary emphatically to repeat, that there are rights which men inherit at their birth, as rational creatures, who were raised above the brute creation by their improvable faculties; and that, in receiving these, not from their forefathers but, from God, prescription can never undermine natural rights. A father may dissipate his property without his child having any right to complain;—but should he attempt to sell him for a slave, or fetter him with laws contrary to reason; nature, in enabling him to discern good from evil, teaches him to break the ignoble chain, and not to believe that bread becomes flesh, and wine blood, because his parents swallowed the Eucharist with this blind persuasion.²¹

Children have a "right to complain" when their "fathers" (1) try to sell them into "slavery", or (2) "fetter" them with irrational laws, such as religious rules or beliefs that are rationally unjustifiable.²² She strongly implies that these two rights are derived from a fundamental set of parental obligations: Duty 1 is to not abuse children in general, and Duty 2 is to provide basic care and education to their own children that allows for their rational development as humans.²³

²⁰ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Men*, p. 14.

²¹ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Men*, p. 14.

²² Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Men*, p. 14.

²³ By "own children" I mean children under the direct parental supervision and care of a particular set of adults. In contemporary terms, this could mean biological, adoptive, foster, step-, or institutional (e.g., orphanage-based) parenting. Although the terms were in some cases different, Wollstonecraft was familiar with these various forms of parenting and indeed practiced foster parenting of her ward Ann before she practiced biological parenting of her daughters Fanny and

As we shall see, Wollstonecraft more fully develops her definition and justification of Duty 1 and Duty 2 in chapters ten and eleven of the *Rights of Woman*.

According to Onora O'Neill's typology of obligations, the first of these duties is perfect, universal, and fundamental, in the sense that the parents must refrain from abuse of children in general, not solely their own children. Duty 1 therefore begets a perfect, universal, and fundamental right to be free from abuse for each and every child, which obtains independently of the particular social situation of any child. On the other hand, the second of these obligations is perfect but not universal and fundamental, in the sense that only parents have the duty to provide a rational education to their own children. Duty 2 would seem to beget a special—not universal and fundamental—children's right to parental care and education, which is dependent on a particular set of family relationships.²⁴

In contrast to O'Neill's narrow interpretation of Duty 2 as begetting a special, not universal and fundamental, right of children, Wollstonecraft theorized Duty 2 as begetting a universal and fundamental right to parental care and education. It is universal in the sense that all children are entitled to care and education from their parents or parental figures, even though not all adults are responsible for providing these rights to children in any given context. It is fundamental in the sense that this right obtains independently of children's particular social contexts. Because of the differences in development between children and adults, and the fundamental dependency of children on parental figures (biological, adoptive, step-, foster, or institutional), there cannot be a neat symmetry between the scope of parental duties and children's rights in the way we typically conceptualize the correlative rights and duties of adults. Parental duties to their own children are by definition narrower and deeper than the general human duty to refrain from abuse of children, whereas children's rights to parental care and education have the same universal reach and fundamental basis as children's rights to be free from abuse. However, the asymmetrical scope of parental duties and children's rights does not mean that children's special rights to parental care and education are not fundamental in theory with respect to their humanity, even as they are specific in practice to particular parent-child relationship(s).

Hence Wollstonecraft established in her *Rights of Men* two categories of universal and fundamental rights for children—the *generic right* to be free from abuse (begot from perfect Duty 1) and the *specific right* to be cared for and educated by parents or parental figures (begot from perfect Duty 2)—because she

Mary. See Wollstonecraft, "To George Blood, 6 October 1791", in *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft* (2003), ed. Janet Todd (New York: Columbia University Press), pp. 188–90.

²⁴ O'Neill, "Children's Rights and Children's Lives", pp. 447–8.

had justified children's absolute possession of these rights on the basis of their moral status as rational creatures of God. Wollstonecraft's metaphysical/ethical conception of the human being thus emerges as an essential feature of her expansive theory of children's rights. Although O'Neill shares Wollstonecraft's deontological, duty-based approach to justifying rights for children, the former is not able to defend as broad a scope of rights for children as the latter as a result of taking a constructivist, non-metaphysical, non-foundationalist approach to ethics. Children's right to parental care and education cannot be fundamental for a constructivist like O'Neill because it is the duty of specific parents to specific children, understood as constructed within their relationship in a particular social context. For Wollstonecraft, children's right to care and education is fundamental because it is justified by way of her metaphysical conception of the human being first and foremost, and secondarily in relation to particular relationships of dependency. Because all adults were once children dependent on adult care for their rational development as humans, children's rights—whether generic or specific—are implicitly for Wollstonecraft the most basic type of human rights.

In her second political treatise, the *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft built on the *Rights of Men*'s commitment to defending the universal human rights of the poor, oppressed, and enslaved, but placed even greater emphasis on the human rights of girls and women as a group oppressed by patriarchy. She again compared children to slaves, claiming "a slavish bondage to parents cramps every faculty of the mind", but underscored that "Females . . . in all countries are too much under the dominion of their parents".²⁵ She also elaborated her earlier theory of the fundamental and universal rights of children that derived from the particular duty of parents to care for and educate them (Duty 2). Aware of the problem of sexual discrimination within families when primogeniture governed the passage of property to the eldest son at the expense of the other children, Wollstonecraft proposed an alternative, egalitarian model of the rights of children with respect to siblings. Children in the same family have an "equal right to" (1) a rational education that enables them to become independent adults, and (2) their parents' provision of their material needs during the time of their dependency on them.²⁶ Parents have a special and perfect obligation to supply these rights equally to their children because their children are humans made in God's rational image who each need their educational and material needs met for their development as humans. Boys are not more deserving of education or

²⁵ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 226.

²⁶ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 134.

development than girls, because their rational capabilities are roughly the same. Eldest sons, by the same argument, do not deserve preferential treatment but rather ought to be treated the same as their siblings with respect to these two family-related yet fundamental and universal rights to equal parental provision of education (Duty 2a) and material needs for development (Duty 2b).²⁷

In an extended case study unveiled in chapter 4 of the *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft dramatizes the injustices that arise from the differential parental treatment of girls and boys with regard to these fundamental and universal rights to education and material means of development.²⁸ Girls who are denied a rational education do not grow up to be independent, and often find themselves dependent on both the reason and the property of their older brothers. When the brother marries, the wife often forces her sister-in-law out of the house due to jealousy. Wollstonecraft makes the insightful point that these two women are more similar than different in terms of their moral psychology. Neither woman has learned to respect herself or others through the exercise of reason. If the wife had done so, she would have the moral capability to love her husband for his virtues, including his generosity toward his sister. If the sister had done so, she would have the moral capability to be independent, thus rendering unnecessary either expulsion or support.

Such consequentialist arguments in favor of extending equal rights to siblings of the same families do not override her deontological justification for equal human rights. Rather, these consequentialist arguments supplement and reinforce her basic deontological and metaphysical argument for human rights as derived from duties grounded in the rational moral law of God. If parents do not fulfill their duties by providing equal rights to their children, she warns us, there will be bad consequences for society. But those bad consequences are not the reason why children have rights in the first place. Children have rights because they are rational creatures of God. Wollstonecraft's metaphysical/ethical conception of the human being is the normative standard or orientation point by which children's rights are justified in an absolute sense. From this moral standpoint, the bad consequences of children's lack of provision of basic and equal rights within the family are merely symptoms of the deeper problem of parental failure to fulfill their perfect obligations.

²⁷ Although she does not discuss the case of children in an orphanage here, Wollstonecraft's argument for Duties 2a and 2b would apply in the same way to institutional parenting as they do to biological and other forms of parenting. Equality of provision of care to children is what matters most, not the particular type of childrearing environment.

²⁸ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, pp. 134–5.

5.2 Whose Rights? Which Duties? Wollstonecraft's Parsing of the Duties and Rights of Adults, Parents, and Children

In her typology of obligations, O'Neill went on to distinguish between perfect and imperfect obligations. Perfect obligations are those such as the *Rights of Men's* definition of Duty 1 (to not enslave or otherwise abuse children) and Duty 2 (to parental provision of care and rational education): they specify "completely or perfectly not merely who is bound by the obligation but to whom the obligation is owed."²⁹ Conversely, O'Neill defined imperfect obligations as those that do not specify to whom they ought to be fulfilled, even though the obligation is fundamental. Her example was the duty of adults to care for children in general, regardless of family relationship. This non-parental duty to care for children is generic without being universal; while one person in practice cannot possibly owe it to all children, the obligation is nonetheless binding to each and every adult. Because it is generic, it cannot be owed merely to particular children either. In the abstract, the question of how to perform such a duty is ambiguous at best. Because the imperfect obligation cannot be discharged outside the directives of a particular social context, it cannot beget a right without the aid of positive law or institutions. In other words, it is difficult if not impossible to know how to fulfill successfully one's obligation to care for children in general, without the prescription of law or other institutions. O'Neill goes still further in concluding provocatively that children do not have a universal and fundamental right to care from adults in general. This conclusion poses a moral dilemma: if adults have an imperfect duty to care for children in general, without children having a corresponding right to such care, then why should adults discharge this duty without some internal or external compulsion? This imperfect obligation appears to be so weak as to be contingent on either one's personality or prescribed norms. It seems unlikely that it would ever be discharged without the artifice of society and law imposing it on us. In this light, the ambiguity and contingency of the imperfect obligation of non-parental care for children seems to undermine the very possibility of theorizing children's rights as universal moral absolutes.

Wollstonecraft's philosophy of children's rights is instructive for resolving this dilemma born of O'Neill's distinction between perfect and imperfect obligations toward children. According to both O'Neill's and Wollstonecraft's deontological ethics, all rights derive from duties, but not all duties entail rights.

²⁹ O'Neill, "Children's Rights and Children's Lives", p. 447.

Wollstonecraft's metaphysical approach, however, allows her to avoid making such a strong distinction between perfect and imperfect obligations as does the constructivist O'Neill. From Wollstonecraft's metaphysical/ethical standpoint, the imperfect obligation of adults to care for children applies to all children in the abstract, even if in practice it is difficult if not impossible for the duty to have this sort of reach. As conceived from the God's-eye point of view, generalized yet imperfect duties apply universally and may eventually be applied in law in a general way. This is the key difference between Wollstonecraft and O'Neill, as well as between Wollstonecraft and Kant: Wollstonecraft conceives of generalized yet imperfect duties to children as universally applicable to adults (and therefore generating fundamental and universal human rights for children), when such imperfect duties are considered from the God's-eye point of view. Neither Kant nor O'Neill assumes this theologically informed metaphysical/ethical perspective due to their commitments to different forms of constructivism. Because of his constructivist account of how the human mind shapes its rational understanding of reality and morality without reference to the noumenal realm (which includes the fundamentally incomprehensible God's-eye point of view), Kant's strong distinction between perfect duties (those that must be performed and admit of no exception) and imperfect duties (those that admit of exception and whose performance must be judged case by case) is actually far closer to O'Neill than to Wollstonecraft, despite his other similarities with his philosophical contemporary.³⁰

Because her capacious metaphysical perspective accommodates it, Wollstonecraft conceptualizes the imperfect duties of adults as begetting fundamental and universal rights for children. In addition, all children's rights—even if imperfectly specified or implemented—have a fundamental (not secondary or contingent) moral status despite being derived from duties, because these concepts of right and wrong are ultimately rooted in a metaphysical/ethical conception of the human being. In other words, her conception of children's rights is ultimately grounded in her conception of the moral status of children as humans.

In chapter 11 of the *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft further elaborates her conception of Duty 2 (parental care and education) by looking at its long-term implications for the parent-child relationship. She argues that there is a "reciprocal duty" of parents and children to care for one another in their respective stages of dependency.³¹ Like Locke, she claims that minors have an obligation to

³⁰ O'Neill, "Children's Rights and Children's Lives", pp. 446–7. Immanuel Kant (1785), *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (2002), ed. Allen W. Wood (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), pp. 38, 41, 47–8, 128, 155.

³¹ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 224.

respect and honour their parents if and only if their parents have cared for them and educated them in their dependency. Like Locke, she believes adults forfeit their status as parents, and the legitimate authority associated with it, when they fail to provide such care for their children. Unlike Locke, she absolves adult children of the obligation to respect and honour their parents merely because they gave life-sustaining care and education to them, for “to subjugate a rational being to the mere will of another, after he is of age to answer to society for his own conduct, is a most undue stretch of power”. Moving far beyond Locke, she calls attention to the problem of parental abuse of children and subsequently absolves victims of any residual duty to respect, honour, obey, or care for the perpetrators even if they had once received care or education from them.³²

Reiterating a claim made in the *Rights of Men*, Wollstonecraft contends it is both cruel and unjust to subject a child to irrational rules (such as unjustifiable religious teachings) as a means for establishing parental authority. Such exercise of parental tyranny is “injurious to morality as those religious systems which do not allow right and wrong to have any existence, but in the Divine will”.³³ For Wollstonecraft, reason is the basis for morality, not human or Divine will. Against voluntarists who posited God’s will as the basis of morality, she understands God as following His rational nature in dictating the content of morality and obeying those moral rules Himself. By analogy, the mere will of parents to be served by their children is not a justification for their parental authority or their use of irrational religious ideas to garner such authority. Authoritarian parents of this sort use “parental affection” as a “pretext to tyrannize”. For Wollstonecraft, such oppressive parental relationships with children are by definition “brutal” and abusive and therefore as illegitimate as chattel slavery.³⁴ By contrast, a justified parental authority—one that is benevolent, limited, and temporary—can only be achieved by following the rational moral law in fulfilling their children’s rights.

Rather than defend Locke’s (residually absolutist) notion of a persistent duty of children to give “respect, honour, gratitude, assistance, and support” to their parents even into adulthood, Wollstonecraft instead theorizes an egalitarian “reciprocal duty” for mutual care, shared to different degrees between parents and children over the course of their overlapping life cycles.³⁵ Initially, children

³² John Locke (1690), *Second Treatise of Government*, in *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration* (2003), ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), pp. 124, 176.

³³ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 224.

³⁴ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, pp. 221–2.

³⁵ Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, p. 176. Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 224.

Table 5.1. The Wollstonecraftian Cascade of Duties and Rights concerning Children

Wollstonecraft's rank-ordered derivation of duties and rights	Fundamental duty	Correlative right
Duty 1	Not to abuse children in general	Not to be abused by adults
Duty 2	To care for and rationally educate your own children	To receive care and rational education from parents
Duty 2a	To equally care for and rationally educate your own children, without discrimination among siblings	To receive equal care and rational education from your parents as do your siblings
Duty 2b	To equally provide the material means of development among your own children, without discrimination among siblings	To receive equal means of development from your parents as do your siblings
Duty 3	To care for your elderly parents if they cared for you when you were dependent on them	To enjoy friendship with your adult children and be freely cared for by them in your old age

have no responsibility for care because they are incapable of it in their “helpless infancy”; but once they have grown up, and their parents are needy of care in the “feebleness of age”, then the adult child has an obligation to provide “the same attention”. Moreover, Wollstonecraft conceptualizes this obligation as begetting a parental “right” to elder care by the children they had nurtured. Thus, she theorizes an intergenerational cascade of duties as producing a correspondent series of rights: first, Duty 1 begets the correlative right of children to not be abused, the primary condition for the practice of other duties toward children and their corresponding rights; second, Duty 2 begets the correlative right of children for parental care and education; third, the fulfillment of Duty 2 entails the second-generation duty of adult children to care for their elderly parents (Duty 3); finally, Duty 3 begets the correlative right of parents for elder care by their adult children (see Table 5.1).³⁶

Later in chapter 11 of the *Rights of Woman*, she distinguishes between “the natural and the accidental duty due to parents”. On the one hand, children’s

³⁶ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 224.

“instinctive natural affection” for parents can generate a sense of obligation toward them in their old age. On the other hand, this obligation is far stronger if the bond between parent and child is due to the rational education provided by the parent. Wollstonecraft calls such an education an expression of “the parental affection of humanity”, which “leaves instinctive natural affection far behind”. Thus she counter-intuitively reframes “natural” affection as weak and merely instinctive and “accidental” affection as strong, deliberate, and truly humane. Similarly to her discussion of the generation of the right of parents to elder care, she proceeds to argue that the “accidental duty due to parents” (Duty 3) begets “all the rights of the most sacred friendship” for the parents with their adult children. Unlike Locke who would have adult children “respect” and “honour” their parents simply on the basis of their antecedent provision of “life and education” by them, Wollstonecraft drops the adult duty to *honour* parents and instead gives the enduring duty of *respect* for parents both a narrower construction and a deeper foundation.³⁷ On her model, an adult child has a duty to take “advice” from a parent under “serious consideration” only when a “sacred friendship” born of “the parental affection of humanity” abides between them.³⁸ Again, a cascade of duties toward children creates a series of parental rights: the provision of rational care and education for one’s children (Duties 2, 2a, 2b) ultimately begets “all the rights of the most sacred friendship”, which include having one’s parental advice taken seriously even in one’s old age and dependency (see Table 5.1). Interestingly, Wollstonecraft’s theory of children’s rights to care, education, and provision of basic means for development leads her to theorize a new set of parents’ rights. Rather than irrationally asserting a right to tyrannize their offspring, parents rationally earn a right to be genuine friends with their grown children.

5.3 The Indivisibility of (Children’s) Human Rights and its Implications for their Legal Institutionalization as Civil and Political Rights

Contemporary international children’s human rights law conceptualizes children’s rights in particular and human rights in general as indivisible. The 1989 United Nations’ *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) is the immediate political source for this concept of indivisibility. By indivisible, it meant the overlapping, interdependent, and mutually reinforcing relationships between

³⁷ Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, p. 176.

³⁸ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 225.

the numerous rights of children it legislated for member nations.³⁹ Because of these relationships, any particular rights of children cannot be effectively guaranteed unless they are protected and encouraged as a set. Moreover, children's rights must be treated as a subset of universal human rights. Because all adults were once children, the failure to secure their rights as children has pernicious effects on the protection and realization of human rights over the whole life cycle and across generations.

As Tristan McCowan has argued, education is a paradigmatic illustration of the indivisible nature of children's (and other human) rights. If children are denied education at any stage of youth, then they may fail to develop their basic human capabilities (or what Wollstonecraft called "improvable faculties"). This lack of education can lead to other deprivations: lack of skills for either personal independence or familial support, lack of economic opportunity, lack of access to necessary health care and medical knowledge for sustaining oneself and one's family, and lack of political participation and influence. In his *Development as Freedom* (1999), Amartya Sen gave a powerful empirical example of how the denial of the right to education even to a single group can have exponentially negative effects on broader populations. When girls in his native India were denied education, they were more likely to marry at a young age and have increased fertility, thereby causing population pressure, exacerbating poverty, disease, and premature death, and reinforcing dangerous gender norms that discriminated against girls' right to education in the first place.⁴⁰ The indivisibility of children's (human) rights thus requires that their implementation in law and policy be as even and as interconnected as possible.

About two centuries earlier than the CRC, Wollstonecraft's theory of the legal implementation of children's rights began with this premise of indivisibility. She also highlighted the central place of education in securing other human rights. Similarly to McCowan and other contemporary philosophers of education, she conceptualized education not only as a fundamental and universal right of children but also as a "conduit" for other rights.⁴¹ In particular, she theorized that if the moral right to education was institutionalized as a civil right for all children, then it would more effectively serve as a "conduit" for the realization of other vital citizenship rights. Most importantly, education would enable adult citizens to develop their "improvable faculties" such that they were capable of

³⁹ Tristan McCowan (2012), "Human Rights within Education: Assessing the Justifications", *Cambridge Journal of Education* 42 (1): 67–81, p. 73.

⁴⁰ Amartya Sen (2000), *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor), pp. 195–9.

⁴¹ McCowan, "Human Rights within Education", p. 170.

exercising civil and political rights to public speech, civic association, voting, and office-holding in modern republican (representative democratic) governments. Moreover, the formative experience of receiving an “equal right” to education not only in the family but also in state-run schools would acculturate people to respecting the equal rights of citizens in other spheres of society and politics. These egalitarian conditions within formal education enabled egalitarian citizenship beyond it.

Some contemporary democratic theorists of children's rights, such as Andrew Rehfeld, have argued that children ought to have a legal right to vote as early as it is practical for them to formally participate in politics. Rehfeld's proposal is to gradually and fractionally increase the voting power of children from the age of twelve through the legal age of majority. This gradual progression to full voting influence would teach adolescents the rules of formal participation in politics, instill in them a sense of the value of participation even when one's say in any given vote is small, and most crucially, make the political system more democratic overall.⁴² Wollstonecraft, by contrast, never advocated for children's inclusion in full citizenship rights because she saw the right to education as a conduit for the later yet complete enjoyment of the full slate of civil and political rights in modern democracies. A striking philosophical predecessor to Amy Gutmann, Wollstonecraft envisioned state-run schools as sites for sustained democratic and egalitarian value formation. In her ideal classroom, the Socratic method would be used to encourage children to participate in vigorous discussion with their teachers and peers, on civic-oriented subjects such as history and politics. While children could not vote, they could deliberate rationally on political issues in school and gain valuable skills for formal political participation, broadly understood. The co-educational, free, mandatory format of her ideal day school also meant that children would be raised to appreciate the equal capabilities of the different sexes, races, and classes at least in school if not at home. The moral and social comprehensiveness of this schooling for citizenship would enable children's complete adoption of citizenship rights at the age of majority, without any formal or gradual introduction to such rights as adolescents. From Rehfeld's perspective, this political system would be less formally democratic than one with his fractional voting scheme for adolescents. However, it could be potentially more informally democratic in the sense that children and adolescents would be encouraged to actively practice the values of egalitarian citizenship and to

⁴² Andrew Rehfeld (2011), “The Child as Democratic Citizen”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* vol. 633 (January), *The Child as Citizen*: 141–66.

understand the right to publically sponsored schooling as the most fundamental of their civil rights.

While Wollstonecraft theorized the causal relationship between children's civil right to publicly funded education and their later practice of full and equal citizenship rights as adults, she conversely theorized the causal relationship between adults' equal access to civil rights (especially child custody, property ownership, and divorce) and the realization of the full slate of children's rights in law and policy. In her last major work, the unfinished novel *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* (1798), she depicted Maria as fleeing her abusive husband. Her husband's attorney threatens to seize her property, which she had inherited from an uncle, and worse, assert paternal custody over their infant child.⁴³ Under coverture, married women were "reduced to a mere cypher" in the eyes of the law, because they had no independent legal identity separate from their husbands.⁴⁴ In the case of a marital separation such as Maria's, the wife found herself in an absurdly powerless position: she could not effectively defend her rights or those of her children, because the court assumed her husband represented both her interests and those of the whole family. When Maria goes to court, she claims before the judge that an equal right to divorce is necessary for women to fulfill their duties toward their children. Maria's courtroom speech was unrealistic in terms of late eighteenth-century British legal protocols, but it underscored Wollstonecraft's political reason for writing one of the first feminist novels. In the case of a bad marriage such as Maria's, a wife often had to abandon her property (losing her material means of caring for her children) as well as forfeit custody over her children (losing at least her role as caregiver and, in extreme cases of paternal neglect, losing the assurance of care for her children altogether). Maria dramatically pleads for a right to divorce from a violent and adulterous drunk for the sake of ensuring her provision of her child's fundamental rights to parental care and rational education: "If I am unfortunately united to an unprincipled man, am I for ever to be shut out from fulfilling the duties of a wife and mother?"⁴⁵ The indivisibility of women's rights and children's rights becomes clear through Maria's tragically realistic story of estrangement from her child, which sadly reflected the actual lives of many of the women Wollstonecraft knew. The trials of these women and children teach us that human rights must be treated as an interdependent and intergenerational set in order for the moral rights of vulnerable or disadvantaged groups to be fully realized as legal rights.

⁴³ Wollstonecraft, *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*, in *Works*, vol. 1, p. 168.

⁴⁴ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 215.

⁴⁵ Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p. 180.

5.4 Why Wollstonecraft Theorized Rights for Children but not for Non-Human Animals

Analogies between young human and non-human animals were not uncommon in Wollstonecraft's writings. In the concluding chapter of the *Rights of Woman*, she had compared young horses and children. To break horses violently was like sending children to boarding school to correct the wild behavior caused by a poor early education at home. For Wollstonecraft, both of these practices were abusive and therefore wrong, as well as unnecessary for the proper education of young creatures, human or not.⁴⁶

Despite these analogies, Wollstonecraft did not proceed to argue for the rights of animals to be free from abuse by humans as she argued for the fundamental and universal human right of children to be free from abuse by adults. Rather, she emphasized the duties of all humans—children and adults—toward non-human animals, especially to refrain from cruelty toward them. The latter negative obligation, as we shall see, was not only derivative of the self-regarding human duty to strive for moral perfection by following God's moral law, but also was grounded in the sentience of animals and their ability to feel pain.

In chapter 12 of the *Rights of Woman*, she drew a connection between parental permission of children's "barbarity to brutes" and the perpetuation of "domestic tyranny over wives, children, and servants". Children cannot be expected to learn or be motivated by "Justice, or even benevolence" unless taught to extend such benevolence and justice toward "the whole creation", beginning with non-human animals. If children are allowed to torture animals for fun, they will grow up to be perpetrators of violence and abuse toward the defenseless in their own households. She forcefully concluded: "I believe that it may be delivered as an axiom, that those who can see pain, unmoved, will soon learn to inflict it".⁴⁷ To let children hurt animals was to encourage them to learn to like to abuse the "whole creation" without conscience.

If cruelty was a learned behavior, so were benevolence and justice. Thus chapter 12 of the *Rights of Woman*, "On National Education", proposed a general rule against cruelty toward animals as an essential curricular feature of Wollstonecraft's ideal national school system: "Humanity to animals should be particularly inculcated as a part of national education, for it is not at present one of our national virtues."⁴⁸ The enforcement of this rule across a system of

⁴⁶ Wollstonecraft, *Wrongs of Woman*, p. 262.

⁴⁷ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 244.

⁴⁸ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 243.

free mandatory co-educational primary day schools would help prevent the hitherto “easy” transition from childhood’s “barbarity to brutes” to adulthood’s “domestic tyranny”.

Although Wollstonecraft conceptualizes children’s right to education as requiring and involving the right of children to be free from exposure to cruelty to sentient life in the context of both home and school, it does not translate into a right of animals to be free from cruelty. From her earliest educational writings, Wollstonecraft was consistent in arguing that animals are “brutes” without reason like humans. Animals are thus objects of care by humans, not subjects of duties and rights like humans. Her first book and educational treatise, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787), suggests that children should be told benevolent stories about animals because the animals are the first “objects” to catch their attention. These “little stories” will “amuse and instruct” them, but more importantly, prevent the “vice” that arises from the tolerance of children’s “cruelty to animals”.⁴⁹ “Stories of insects and animals” easily arouse the “childish passions”; thus benevolent tales concerning animals can motivate children to “exercise humanity” toward the whole sentient creation. By listening to stories about the ethical treatment of animals and insects, children will learn to “rise to man, from him, to his Maker”.⁵⁰ According to Wollstonecraft’s theological and metaphysical/ethical view of the hierarchy of God’s creation, children’s education into benevolent treatment of animals brings them closer to God and further away from animals. Children’s self-conception of their moral status as humans, or rational creatures of God, is cemented by their learning how to practice the virtue of benevolence toward non-human animals.

Her *Original Stories from Real Life* (1788) put into meta-literary practice this theory of the relationship between children’s education through storytelling about animals and the ethical treatment of animals. Chapter 2 of this collection of children’s tales portrays the governess Mrs Mason teaching her young charges Mary and Caroline why they should not be cruel to animals. Striving to understand why she and her sister have been chided for torturing insects, Mary asks, “if insects and animals were not inferior to men?” Mrs Mason replies, “Certainly . . . and men are inferior to angels”. Mrs Mason continues with a theological story about how humans are closer to angels than to animals in the cosmic hierarchy: “we fit ourselves to be angels hereafter when we have acquired human virtues, we

⁴⁹ Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, in *Works*, vol. 4, p. 10.

⁵⁰ Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, in *Works*, vol. 4, p. 44.

shall have a nobler employment in our Father's kingdom. But between angels and men a much greater resemblance subsists, than between men and the brute creation; the two former seem capable of improvement".⁵¹ Here Wollstonecraft sounds like Immanuel Kant, whose rational moral philosophy has been compared to that of her theological mentor Richard Price.⁵² In his late eighteenth-century university lectures on ethics, Kant argued that the ethical treatment of animals is morally required of rational beings not because it improves the condition of animals but because it fulfills an indirect duty to oneself as a rational being to be morally upright.⁵³ Wollstonecraft put an explicitly theological twist on this Kantian view, however, by emphasizing how the ethical treatment of animals enables children to develop their humanity and grasp of morality and thus become closer to angels and God. Mrs Mason uses a personal anecdote to explain the moral implications of this theological point to her pupils in terms that they can understand:

It is only to animals that children *can* do good; men are their superiors. When I was a child, added their tender friend, I always made it my study and delight to feed all the dumb family that surrounded our house; and when I could be of use to any one of them I was happy. This employment humanized my heart, while, like wax, it took every impression; and Providence has since made me an instrument of good.⁵⁴

While adults have the capability to do good toward the whole sentient creation, children's lesser capabilities mean that they can only do good toward creatures lesser than them. Animal benevolence thus figures as a crucial, if not primary, way for children to learn how to be benevolent at all.

Opposite to Kant and Wollstonecraft, Rousseau in his *Second Discourse* (1755) had argued that although animals lacked the rational capability to grasp the natural law, their status as sentient beings made them "partake of the benefit of the natural law" in the sense that humans had an obligation to follow the natural law in treating animals benevolently. He strongly implied that non-human and human animals alike had a natural right not to suffer, derived from a

⁵¹ Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories*, pp. 371–2.

⁵² For a comparison of Price's moral philosophy with Kant's, see M. B. Smith (2010), "Does Humanity Share a Common Moral Faculty?", *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 7 (1): 37–53. Sylvania Tomaselli (1995) noted that Wollstonecraft cited Kant in her unpublished *Hints* for a sequel to the *Rights of Woman*, and that she was indirectly referencing Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790). See Mary Wollstonecraft (1995), *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Sylvania Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 298, 301.

⁵³ Immanuel Kant (1997), *Lectures on Ethics*, eds Peter Heath and J. B. Schneewind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 212.

⁵⁴ Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories*, pp. 372–3.

fundamental human obligation “not to injure” other sentient beings.⁵⁵ In his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Jeremy Bentham (1789) made a similar argument for the ethical treatment of animals on the basis of their sentience and capability for suffering, but he also explicitly called for the legal extension of “rights” to “the rest of the animal creation” which “never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny”.⁵⁶ As Josephine Donovan has argued, these sentience-based arguments for animal ethics and animal rights have the advantage of dispensing with the Kantian (and, I will add, Wollstonecraftian) “higher-intelligence criterion” for assigning duties of benevolence to humans toward animals.⁵⁷ Dispensing with the higher-intelligence criterion in favor of the sentience criterion means that young children, whose mental development puts them initially closer to animals than to either adults or angels, can still be assigned a duty to not abuse animals due to their common status as sentient beings, independently of the state of their rational capability. In this way, sentience-based arguments for animal ethics and animal rights offer a stronger basis for the fundamental and universal duty to at least refrain from abuse of sentient life from the earliest time that one could possibly enact harm on it. Like Wollstonecraft, Bentham neither advocated nor practiced vegetarianism as part of his philosophy of animal ethics, but his sentience-based arguments allow for the institutionalization of rights for animals that might prevent their cruel treatment in slaughterhouses. His classical utilitarianism also allows for the comparative assessment of projected outcomes such that the happiness that would be gained by legislation of the pain-free death of animals for the sake of enriching human dietary sources and health might be judged to outweigh the happiness that non-human animals would have gained from an absolute legal prohibition on meat-eating.⁵⁸

Following Rousseau and Bentham’s concern with the feelings of non-human animals, however, Wollstonecraft moved beyond the strictly deontological Kantian justification of the ethical treatment of animals. Her rational theology allowed for and even encouraged consideration of how animals benefited from their benevolent treatment by humans. In *Original Stories*, Mrs Mason emphasized how the ethical treatment of animals made children moral, but she

⁵⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau (2002), *The Social Contract and the First and Second Discourses*, ed. Susan Dunn (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), pp. 84–5.

⁵⁶ Jeremy Bentham (1789), *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (London: T. Paine), p. cccix.

⁵⁷ Josephine Donovan (1990), “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory”, *Signs* 15 (2): 350–75, p. 355.

⁵⁸ Emilie Dardenne, “From Jeremy Bentham to Peter Singer”, *Revue d’études benthamiennes* [En ligne], 7 | 2010, mis en ligne le 13 septembre 2010, consulté le 28 juillet 2014. <<http://etudes-benthamiennes.revues.org/204>>.

also taught her charges that it was both right and good to be “useful” to one’s “fellow-creatures”. Mrs Mason’s lifelong care for the whole sentient creation (she “never wantonly trod on an insect” or disregarded the “plaint of a speechless beast”) enabled her to become a charitable and giving adult devoted to serving the needs of the poor, sick, hungry, and young. Beyond making her moral, her care for animals made these creatures happier. She explained to her charges that while humans “grow humbler and wiser” through suffering, animals do not gain any virtues from suffering because they lack the necessary improvable faculties for the achievement of such virtue. From this metaphysical/ethical perspective on the different experiences of suffering by humans and animals, animal suffering should not only be avoided but also actively relieved whenever possible. Moving beyond the basic and negative duty not to abuse animals, Mrs Mason concludes that humans have a more robust obligation to “not prevent their enjoying all the happiness of which they are capable”.⁵⁹ Wollstonecraft’s outward-directed moral concern with preserving the happiness of animals sets her apart from the total objectification of animals found in Kant’s ethics and closer to Bentham’s cosmopolitan concern with increasing happiness among all sentient beings. Her appeal to the good consequences of animal benevolence is consistent with her overall moral theology in the sense that the rational and benevolent plan of God’s providence allows and accounts for right actions to generate good consequences and, eventually, rational political progress on issues such as animal cruelty. Because Wollstonecraft is not interested in justifying moral rights or institutionalizing legal rights for animals, but simply justifying and encouraging human duties toward animals, she leaves open the question of how to legally institutionalize animal benevolence beyond her visionary prescription of a national rule against animal cruelty in public (especially primary) schools. Animals rights advocates might nonetheless learn from her political theory of the legal implementation of children’s rights, in order to develop creative strategies for giving animals the rights in law that, as Bentham put it, have only been denied them by “the hand of tyranny”.

5.5 Wollstonecraft’s Political Lesson for Advocates of Children’s and Animal Rights

Although Wollstonecraft never argued for the moral or legal rights of non-human animals, her concept of the indivisibility of (children’s) human rights

⁵⁹ Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories*, p. 373.

and her holistic approach to their legal realization is relevant for theorizing and advocating for the rights of animals in law. The central place of animal benevolence in the moral formation and education of equal citizens makes the ethical treatment of animals a vital area of legal regulation for modern democracies. Now, the law could stop short of assigning rights to animals, as Wollstonecraft did, but it could also take her argument a step further, once the latter was stripped of its theological assumptions. After all, contemporary liberal and democratic theory has typically dispensed with metaphysical/ethical foundations of the sort found in Wollstonecraft's political theory. A theorist of rights, especially a legal constructivist such as Charles Beitz, need not be limited by Wollstonecraft's theologically driven concern to draw a sharp line between human and animal life. With the institutionalization of human rights since the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and its related covenants and instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), theorists of rights have the relative luxury of proceeding from the established norms of an international legal practice rather than naturalistic and therefore contestable foundations such as metaphysical/ethical conceptions of the human being.⁶⁰

From a contemporary international legal standpoint, much of Wollstonecraft's political argument still pertains. The indivisibility of (children's) human rights bears on other aspects of ethics and political justice, including the well-being of animals in relation to human society. Realizing children's rights to care and education requires and involves the protection of the well-being of animals through the law, such as rules against animal cruelty in publicly funded schools. Children cannot learn how to be equal citizens who are respectful of each other's rights if they are allowed to abuse vulnerable and dependent creatures as part of their educations. Such abusive behavior will only spiral into other domains of life, reinforcing both domestic and political tyranny on both the national and international levels.⁶¹

The indivisibility of (children's) human rights also bears on the question of the status of animals in law. When the law treated children as mere objects of adult charity, children had no rights, not even to protect their bodily integrity. As philosophers, legislators, and jurists began to conceptualize children as rights-bearing subjects over the course of the past two centuries, domestic and international laws came to prescribe a range of children's rights for modern

⁶⁰ Charles R. Beitz (2009), *The Idea of Human Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 128, 209–12.

⁶¹ Carol J. Adams (1994), "Bringing Peace Home: A Feminist Philosophical Perspective on the Abuse of Women, Children, and Pet Animals", *Hypatia* 9 (2), *Feminism and Peace*: 63–84, pp. 78–80.

democracies, such as a right not to be abused by adults (CRC, section 19), a right to primary education (CRC, article 28), and a right not to be forced into labor or slavery (CRC, article 35).⁶² By analogy, if the law treats animals as mere objects of human charity, not as subjects of feeling (let alone rights), then the law will have a limited role in protecting their well-being. But if the well-being of animals is treated as indivisible with the fundamental human rights of children to care and rational education, then the assignment of rights to animals in law might be justified as a corollary of children's rights law. At the very least, an animal's right to not be abused might be understood in law as running parallel to the child's right to the same freedom from tyranny, with both kinds of rights justified by way of a fundamental human duty to refrain from mistreatment of sentient, vulnerable, dependent beings.

While Wollstonecraft's theory of (children's) human rights is built on the metaphysical/ethical assumption that the status of humans and animals is fundamentally different, there is room for pragmatically adapting her interrelated theories of children's rights and animal ethics for the political cause of animal rights in the context of the international legal system. While this might sound preposterous or politically foolish to skeptics of the idea of rights let alone animal rights, it behooves us to recall the title of an early satire of Wollstonecraft's and Paine's theories of rights: *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes* (1792). Peter Singer noted that this parody written by a Cambridge Platonist philosopher unintentionally set forth a basic and effective framework for animal rights argumentation.⁶³ While animal welfare conventions may be more politically palatable than the various declarations of the rights of animals that have circulated without formal legal adoption since the twentieth century, there is nonetheless a political value in alleging a right for an oppressed group (human or not) long before they can possibly enjoy any such rights.⁶⁴ By explicitly including slaves, children, and women in her arguments for the "rights of humanity", Wollstonecraft established an aspirational and fully universal model of human rights advocacy, which boldly claimed rights for people who did not yet enjoy

⁶² The United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), <<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>>, accessed 15 July 2014.

⁶³ Thomas Taylor (1792), *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes* (London: Printed for Edward Jeffrey, Pall Mall); Peter Singer (1989), "All Animals are Equal", in *Animal Rights and Human Obligations*, eds Tom Regan and Peter Singer (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall), <<http://www2.webster.edu/~corbetre/philosophy/animals/singer-text.html>>, accessed 15 July 2014.

⁶⁴ See the *European Convention on the Protection of Pet Animals* (1987), <<http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/Treaties/Html/125.htm>>, accessed 16 July 2014. See the *Universal Declaration of the Rights of Animals* (1977), <http://www.jainworld.com/jainbooks/images/20/The_Myth_About_Milk.htm>, accessed 16 July 2014.

them in practice or even have means of their provision.⁶⁵ Her joint political lesson for (children's) human rights and animal rights advocates is to have the courage and creative vision to demand for future generations what seems to be impractical or unjustifiable in the present.

⁶⁵ Sen, "Consequentialist Evaluation and Practical Reason", p. 497; Gilibert, "Humanist and Political Perspectives on Human Rights", p. 441.

6

Wollstonecraft and the Properties of (Anti-) Slavery

Laura Brace

This chapter explores the relationship between slavery and property in Wollstonecraft's work by thinking about what might be called the social imaginary of anti-slavery as it was developing in the 1790s. Anti-slavery arguments of the 1790s presented slavery as a state of war, a usurpation, and an illegitimate exercise of arbitrary power. Freedom in these accounts was also intrinsically connected to owning a property in the person, and the anti-slavery writers adapted ideas from Locke about natural law, natural rights, and equality to argue that there was no rational basis for excluding black Africans from the category of the human, or for treating them as inferior. They argued that slavery was unnatural and founded on injustice. Writing within a political discourse that centred around the "preservation of the rights of free-born Englishmen from encroaching executive despotism or arbitrary power",¹ the arguments of the abolitionists show how difficult it is to separate out the political slavery from personal slavery within the discourse of "anti-tyrannicism" where enslavement "seeks to dishonor and disenfranchise citizens who are meant to be 'free'".² The injustice of political enslavement then lies in "the attempt to enslave those who patently ought not to be enslaved".³

Ideas, practices, expectations, habits, hopes, and fears about slavery in the late eighteenth century were about separating out those who were eligible for freedom from those who ought to be enslaved. This process of determining who was meant to be free was inseparable from discourses of colonialism and race, and the

¹ Mark Philp (1998), "English Republicanism in the 1790s", *Journal of Political Philosophy* 6 (3): 235–62, p. 253; Mary Nyquist (2013), *Arbitrary Rule: Slavery, Tyranny and the Power of Life and Death* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press), p. 3.

² Nyquist (2013), *Arbitrary Rule*, p. 3.

³ Nyquist (2013), *Arbitrary Rule*, p. 23.

construction of a cultural code that drew on British orientalist discourse, within which the objectionable aspects of life in the West were presented as Eastern and as a corruption of Western values, an attempt to enslave those who were meant to be free.⁴ The English husband who acted like a tyrant in his little harem was more guilty than “the Turk” because he went against the grain of his race and culture.⁵ Wollstonecraft’s understanding of “gendered despotism” was part of this discussion of the dishonour and disenfranchisement of those who were meant to be free, and this informs her understanding of the relationship between women and slaves, and between personal and political slavery.

By locating Wollstonecraft’s ideas about slavery and property in the context of this anti-tyrannicism and related anti-slavery arguments about improvement, property in the person, humanity, barbarity, and degradation, this chapter draws out the implications of her arguments for the development of the public sphere and a sense of belonging to civil society in the late eighteenth century. Her recasting of republicanism as an emotional condition,⁶ and her focus on the internal structure of the mind⁷ were contributions to a wider discourse about the making of a coherent bourgeois identity, and in particular about how to integrate property into the social imaginary of the new moral order.⁸ Wollstonecraft’s arguments against slavery oppose the ways in which private property was taking over people’s imaginations and insinuating itself into different sorts of social relations.⁹ She argues against what James Penner has termed a fetishized conception of property which ignores the central importance of the recognition of others and of associations that reflect our common nature.¹⁰ Wollstonecraft’s account of slavery is about how the values of recognition, self-respect, dignity, and participation with others in the human project are distorted by power relations based on private property. Wollstonecraft’s persistent attention to women’s political and civil slavery, to their loss of rational autonomy, and their

⁴ Joyce Zonana (1993), “The Sultan and the Slave: Feminist Orientalism and the Structure of Jane Eyre”, *Signs* 18 (3): 592–617, p. 600.

⁵ Wollstonecraft participates in this discourse when she uses images that link any abuse of power with “Eastern” or “Mahometan” ways, and accepts the tropes of the excessive sexuality of the harem, with its luxury, indolence, and enforced confinement. See Zonana (1993), “Sultan and Slave”, p. 600.

⁶ Elizabeth Wingrove (2005), “Getting Intimate with Wollstonecraft in the Republic of Letters”, *Political Theory* 33 (3): 344–69.

⁷ Rajani Sudan (2002), *Fair Exotics: Xenophobic Subjects in English Literature, 1720–1850* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press).

⁸ Charles Taylor (2003), *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).

⁹ James Penner (2009), “Property, Community, and the Problem of Distributive Justice”, *Theoretical Inquiries in Law* 10: 193–216, p. 195.

¹⁰ Penner (2009), “Property, Community”, p. 203.

reliance on illicit power allows her to explore the multiple and unstable meanings of slavery as both political and personal, and its slippery connections with the claim of personal proprietorship and the limits of moral responsibility, and so with private property itself. Women are slaves because they cannot be citizens, because they are not ethically incorporated into the polis, and because they only imperfectly possess themselves. This chapter examines the explicitly moralized appeal to the dignity of freedom in Wollstonecraft, the idea that a woman's "ultimate responsibility is to attend to her own moral development as a rational being capable of autonomy in every sphere of life" in the context of the development of commercial humanism and of the fragility of private property as the basis of our social relations.¹¹

6.1 The Link That Unites Man With Brutes

The question of the relationship between slavery and humanity was hugely contested in the slavery debates of the 1790s. There were arguments over whose humanity was damaged by the institution of slavery, and over who deserved to be counted as fully human. It is important to remember that the slavery debates had not been won in the 1790s, and abolition of the slave trade, let alone of slavery, was not a foregone conclusion. Those who argued in favour of the retention of slavery were not yet pariahs or outliers, but engaged in a dynamic set of debates about colonialism, forced labour, inferiority, and freedom. Slavery was widely regarded as the appropriate mode of production for some crops and climates. Opponents of slavery still had something to prove about the equality of humankind and about who was eligible for freedom. Wollstonecraft's argument was that improvement must be mutual and universal, "or the injustice which one half of the human race are obliged to submit to, retorting on their oppressors, the virtue of man will be worm-eaten by the insect whom he keeps under his feet".¹² The damage done by slavery comes, at least in part, from within as well as from without, and is inseparable not only from physical violence, but from radical misrecognition and injustice. Where there is not improvement, there is depravation and degradation. Virtue is only sustainable reciprocally. Once women shared the rights of men, they would emulate their virtues and grow more perfect as they were emancipated and claimed their inherent rights.

¹¹ Eileen Hunt Botting (2006), "Mary Wollstonecraft's Enlightenment Legacy: the 'Modern Social Imaginary' of the Egalitarian Family", *American Behavioral Scientist* 49 (5): 687–701, p. 691.

¹² Mary Wollstonecraft (1995), *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Sylvana Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 72.

Throughout the slavery debates and in Wollstonecraft's writing, there is a constant sense of being unworthy of freedom, of lacking in virtue and being vain, indolent, and weak. Women's "luxuriant innocence" means that they do not labour and yet are provided for, so that they are in an unnatural state, enfeebled by false refinement, and so either static or decaying.¹³ In the pro-slavery narratives, slaves were presented as unable to see beyond their own immediate wants; they were idle and listless, and incapable of supporting themselves and their families. They relied on their masters for protection and subsistence, and were looked after in old age and ill health.¹⁴ The slave in these accounts was unable to recognize and understand the value of freedom because, like the women in Wollstonecraft's analysis, they were provided with food and raiment and acquired nothing through their own exertions. The pro-slavery discourse gave the slaves in the West Indies particular characteristics, which closely mirror the vices attributed to women in the *Vindications*: "Their predominant propensities seem to be indolence, cunning, intemperance, vanity, and superstition".¹⁵ Like aristocratic women, they had submitted to their chains.

Anti-slavery writers often saw natural liberty as damaged or corrupted by living in a state of barbarity and ignorance.¹⁶ Pro-slavery writers argued that this meant "Negroes" were unfit for power in their present savage state, where their lives were fundamentally insecure and they were subjected to the absolute power and tyranny of their rulers.¹⁷ The implication was that enslaved black Africans lacked a conception of freedom, and submitted themselves to slavery in order to protect their persons and property. They trapped themselves in a constant war of all against all, and rendered themselves unfit for freedom because they could not be trusted to judge for themselves. In the "torrid zone", the mass of mankind lived "without religion, without morality, without agriculture, manufactures, arts

¹³ Samantha George (2005), "The Cultivation of the Female Mind: Enlightened Growth, Luxuriant Decay and Botanical Analogy in Eighteenth-Century Texts", *History of European Ideas* 31 (2): 209–23, p. 219.

¹⁴ Robert Nisbet (1792), *Slavery not Forbidden by Scripture: or, a Defence of the West-India Planters* (Philadelphia: Printed by John Sparhawk); Jesse Foot (1772), "A Defence of the Planters of the West-Indies" (London: J. Debrett).

¹⁵ J. M. Adair (1790), *Unanswerable Arguments against the Abolition of the Slave Trade. With a Defence of the Proprietors of the British Sugar Colonies* (London: J. P. Bateman), p. 155.

¹⁶ Thomas Gisborne (1792), *On Slavery and the Slave Trade* (London: Sold by J. Stockdale, J. Debrett, and J. Phillips), p. 16.

¹⁷ See Adair (1790), *Unanswerable Arguments*; Nisbet (1792), *Slavery not Forbidden*; and Nisbet (1792), *Observations on Slavery, and the Consumption of the Produce of the West India Islands: together with an Abstract of the Evidence Given before the Committee of Privy Council and the Select Committee of the House of Commons, Respecting the Treatment of Slaves in the West Indies* (London: T. Bossey).

and sciences".¹⁸ Their "barbarity" proved that they were unfit to be entrusted with power or to judge for themselves. Freedom of action for men in the depths of ignorance was "only a power of doing mischief" without the recognition that security and happiness required the surrender of individual rights.¹⁹ It required an enlightened mind and improved understanding "to fit men for the enjoyment of rational freedom".²⁰ Like the women confined to their cages, slaves were unable to assert their birthright, to make the exchange of rights for security, and instead "quietly lick the dust", living in the present, and failing to enlarge their minds.²¹

The anti-slavery writers, in both their republican and their religious modes, engaged with these arguments about fitness for freedom and self-government, and found themselves on the slippery ground of cultural relativism. The slaves, like the women in Wollstonecraft's account became objects of either pity or contempt.²² They were kept in a state of childhood, rendered "gentle, domestic brutes" by their slavish dependence.²³ Susan Gubar points out that Wollstonecraft emphasizes the powerful impact of culture on subjectivity and envisages a thoroughgoing revolution in manners and morals that would transform culture and open up the possibility of radical democratic citizenship. In the process, she focuses on a woman as a "hated subject" and "illuminates how such animosity can spill over into antipathy of those human beings most constrained by that construction".²⁴ Wollstonecraft could not stand wholly outside the contemporary constructions of femininity that surrounded her, and she and the anti-slavery writers could not separate themselves from the constructions of "race", savagery, and civilization in which the slavery debates were steeped.

The arguments against degradation that the abolition discourse employed to combat the slave trade radically destabilized the category of the human and the egalitarian potential of arguments from nature. Wollstonecraft focused on women's cramped and uncultivated understandings. They were, she says, entirely dependent on their senses for employment and amusement, with nothing to curb their emotions, and "no noble pursuit sets them above the little vanities of

¹⁸ William Innes (1792), *A Letter to the Members of Parliament who have Presented Petitions to the Honourable House of Commons for the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (London: Sold by J. Sewell, Cornhill; J. Murray Fleet Street; and J. Debrett), pp. 12–13.

¹⁹ Nisbet (1792), *Observations on Slavery*, p. 14.

²⁰ Nisbet (1792), *Observations on Slavery*, p. 15.

²¹ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 126.

²² Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 76.

²³ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, pp. 87–8.

²⁴ Susan Gubar (1994), "Feminist misogyny: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Paradox of 'It Takes One to Know One'", *Feminist Studies* 20 (3): 452–73, p. 457.

the day”.²⁵ In the same way, the abolitionists depicted the powers of the slaves’ minds as limited to a few objects,²⁶ with “every obstacle...placed in the way of their improvement”.²⁷ Africans were constructed as savage, unfortunate, and wretched, and as lacking in industry. The slave trade caused the “unfortunate Africans” to be treated in a low and despicable light, and as a result, their minds were depressed, their faculties numbed, and their sparks of genius were prevented from bursting forth until slavery “gave them the appearance of being endued with inferiour capacities than the rest of mankind”.²⁸ From there, it was easy to mistake appearance for reality, to think that nature, rather than a love of power, had made the difference.

For Wollstonecraft, women were created to be “the toy of man, his rattle”, made for his purposes and amusement rather than their own.²⁹ Like the slaves as living tools in Aristotle’s account, women in Wollstonecraft’s narrative “appear to be suspended by destiny” between heaven and earth, not quite reduced to livestock, but not enlightened by reason or given the opportunity to struggle against the world, unfold their faculties, or acquire the dignity of conscious virtue. They “have neither the unerring instinct of brutes, nor are allowed to fix the eye of reason on a perfect model”.³⁰ In Clarkson’s anti-slavery argument, Africans have been left without hope of riches, power, honours, or fame, and so have no incitement to genius, no expectations in life to awaken their abilities. Their minds are in a continual state of depression, and “we cannot be surprised if a sullen gloomy stupidity should be the leading mark of their character; or if they should appear inferiour to those, who do not only enjoy the invaluable blessings of freedom, but have every prospect before their eyes, that can allure them to exert their faculties”.³¹ The greed and cruelty of the slave traders “reduced men, who had once the power of reason, to an equality with the brute creation”.³² Meanwhile in Wollstonecraft’s account, man had sunk woman almost below the standard of rational creatures, until she appeared to be “the link which unites man with brutes”.³³

This sense of being caught between non-human animals and full humanity, between earth and heaven was central to what it meant to be defined as a slave,

²⁵ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 98.

²⁶ Thomas Clarkson (1786), *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (London: J. Phillips).

²⁷ Clarkson (1786), *Essay*, p. 167.

²⁸ Clarkson (1786), *Essay*, p. 22.

²⁹ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 104.

³⁰ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 104.

³¹ Clarkson (1786), *Essay*, pp. 166–7.

³² Clarkson (1786), *Essay*, p. 216.

³³ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 105.

with a liminal status. It was, as Cynthia Willett argues, a situation fraught with paradoxes around dependence and domination, and much more complicated than the straightforward exclusion of the outcast. In his analysis of slavery, Patterson discusses the liminal social status of the slave, where the slave is “marginal, neither human nor inhuman, neither man nor beast, neither dead nor alive, the enemy within who was neither member nor true alien”.³⁴ The focus of the anti-slavery discourse tended to be on the ways in which appearance and reality, the show and the substance, were entangled in the lives of the subordinate. Without a clear set of morals and principles, women became passive and indolent, and bore the marks of inferiority.³⁵ Their sparks of genius had been prevented from bursting forth and their minds were depressed, meaning that, like the slaves, they failed to exert themselves. Slaves and women were understood to have been stripped of their virtue and native dignity, and left to cultivate a fondness for dress, a concern for the frippery and triviality that weakened the mind. Wollstonecraft excoriates the insipid conversation of English women who spent their time making caps, bonnets, and trimmings, and in shopping and bargain-hunting. It was, she argued, “the decent, prudent women, who are most degraded by these practices; for their motive is simply vanity”.³⁶

Slaves on the West Indian plantations were characterized by the pro-slavery lobby as obsessed by gaudy trappings, and “excessively fond of expensive and splendid funerals”.³⁷ Women and slaves were cunning and manipulative, and united by a love of finery. They viewed everything through a false medium, and were made to stalk in masquerade, draped in factitious sentiments, without access to the core of native dignity. “Their clothes were their riches”, as Ferguson points out.³⁸ Wollstonecraft saw the fondness for dress as contagious and common to weak women, but also noted that a “strong inclination for external ornaments ever appears in barbarous states, only the men not the women adorn themselves”.³⁹ Attention to dress was natural to mankind, and not just to women as Dr Gregory argued, but Wollstonecraft coded it as a preoccupation of “unmeditative people”, whose minds were not sufficiently opened to take pleasure in reflection, and who instead were slaves to their bodies, adorning

³⁴ Orlando Patterson (1982), *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press), p. 48.

³⁵ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 105.

³⁶ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 154.

³⁷ Adair (1790), *Unanswerable arguments*, p. 174.

³⁸ Moira Ferguson (1992), “Mary Wollstonecraft and the Problematic of Slavery”, *Feminist Review* 42: 82–102, p. 92.

³⁹ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 285.

themselves with “sedulous care” with tattoos and painting.⁴⁰ Slaves would spend their hard-earned savings on “a little tawdry finery” in order to satisfy their savage desire for admiration.⁴¹ “An immoderate fondness for dress, for pleasure, and for sway”, she argued, “are the passions of savages”⁴² who have not cultivated their minds. Slaves as well as despots and slave owners were infected by false ambition, by the contagious, savage love of dress. The dominated degraded themselves by engaging in the masquerade of external property.

6.2 Unhumanizing Men

The ideas of improvement and degradation were part of a wider debate about the boundary between humanity and non-human animals that infused the politics of anti-slavery. The rhetoric of the inhumanity of the slave trade railed against its treatment of human creatures “as if they were mere *brutes*, made to be taken and sold, enslaved and destroyed”.⁴³ In anti-slavery writings, the slaves were often referred to as being treated like beasts of burden, being forced to do work that should have been carried out by oxen. In making distinctions between brutes and men, the abolitionists and Wollstonecraft relied on what Lynn Festa has called “enumerative definitions of the human”.⁴⁴ The abolitionist Peter Packard made a list that included the power of laughter from nature, not being feathered, having two feet, and possessing rationality.⁴⁵ Festa highlights the difficulties of deciding what is essential and what may be a variation, leaving us with what she calls “a disturbingly supple definition of ‘man’”,⁴⁶ and the possibility that our definitions can “unhumanize at least nine tenths of the inhabitants of this world”.⁴⁷ In the abolitionist discourse, Black Africans shared with Europeans the spirit of liberty, a sense of shame, and the contemplative power of reason. They could not, Clarkson insisted, have been given these mental qualities and powers by God “for the sole purpose of being used as *beasts*, or *instruments* of labour”.⁴⁸ Wollstonecraft asked: “In what respect are we superior to the brute creation, if

⁴⁰ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 285.

⁴¹ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 285.

⁴² Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 286.

⁴³ Abraham Booth (1792), *Commerce in the Human Species, and the Enslaving of Innocent Persons, Inimical to the Laws of Moses and the Gospel of Christ* (London: printed; Philadelphia: reprinted and sold by Daniel Lawrence), p. 17.

⁴⁴ Lynn Festa (2010), “Humanity without Feathers”, *Humanity* 1 (1): 3–27, p. 4.

⁴⁵ Peter Packard (1788), *Am I Not a Man and a Brother? With all Humility Addressed to the British Legislature* (Cambridge: T. Payne and Son), p. 11.

⁴⁶ Festa (2010), “Humanity without Feathers”, p. 41.

⁴⁷ Packard (1788), *Am I Not a Man?*, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Clarkson (1786), *Essay*, p. 215.

intellect is not allowed to be the guide of passion? Brutes hope and fear, love and hate; but, without a capacity to improve, a power of turning these passions to good or evil, they neither acquire virtue nor wisdom".⁴⁹ The humanizing capacity of humans was for improvement.

The suppleness of the definition of man and the possibility of unhumanizing some of the inhabitants of the world disrupted stable categories of savagery and civilization, and allowed the anti-slavery thinkers to question the humanity of those who traded in human flesh. The abolitionist narrative against the inhuman commerce of the slave trade was about critiquing the insatiable desire for gain that motivated the slavers, and condemning the traffic in men as "unjust and cruel . . . barbarous and savage".⁵⁰ It violated the basic rules of mutual regard, the principles of civilization and undid the possibility of righteous property and improvement. The inhumanity and injustice of slavery was located not only in the exercise of arbitrary power, but also in the "immorality of the traffic *itself*".⁵¹ Anti-slavery writings often wrote the slave traders into wider debates about the nature of trade, manners, and consumption, making distinctions between "moral and illicit forms of prosperity".⁵² Within this narrative, they tricked the Africans with "gaudy trappings", excited their curiosity, and "completely intoxicated their senses with luxuries",⁵³ until Africans became the "seduced consumers" of toxic stolen goods that poisoned civilized society.⁵⁴ Slave traders were plunderers and pirates, attempting to live off the spoils of other men, trading in the liberties of mankind.

Women in Wollstonecraft's account suffer the same fate as the deceived Africans, stripped of the virtues that should clothe humanity and decked out instead in artificial graces, they "must ever languish like exotics, and be reckoned beautiful flaws in nature".⁵⁵ They, too, were "dissolved in luxury" with the truth hidden from them, and their thoughts constantly directed to the most insignificant part of themselves.⁵⁶ Wollstonecraft's project was the cultivation of the female mind so that "enlightened maturity will supplant luxuriant decay".⁵⁷

⁴⁹ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Men*, p. 31.

⁵⁰ Booth (1792), *Commerce in the Human Species*, p. 13.

⁵¹ John Beatson (1789), *Compassion the Duty and Dignity of Man; and Cruelty the Disgrace of his Nature. A Sermon Occasioned by that Branch of British Commerce which Extends to the Human Species. Preached to a Congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Hull*, p. 3.

⁵² Philip Gould (2003), *Barbaric Traffic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), p. 14.

⁵³ Clarkson (1786), *Essay*, pp. 44–5. ⁵⁴ Philip Gould (2003), *Barbaric Traffic*, p. 29.

⁵⁵ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 107.

⁵⁶ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 116.

⁵⁷ George (2005), "The Cultivation of the Female Mind", p. 223.

This understanding of slavery as the opposite of improvement is an important part of Wollstonecraft's Protestant and dissenting analysis of slavery as moral corruption,⁵⁸ and of an attitude towards European planters and Creoles "that derives from social and political principles about cruelty in slavery but also from an antipathy toward the vulgarity of colonial wealth".⁵⁹

For Wollstonecraft, there was a clear connection between a lack of improvement and the exercise of arbitrary power. Husbanding the earth and husbanding the self were impulses that together helped to forge an authentic identity and a civilized civil society. The Caribbean plantation was a key site of contestation over improvement and despotism, centred around limitless desires, unnatural appetites, and unrefined civil society. The West Indies were constructed by the abolitionists as a space where commerce operated outside the restraints of morality, and planters failed to improve their lands on the outside or themselves on the inside. In the contests over the abolition of the slave trade in the 1790s, one of the leading subjects for debate was the status of the West Indian planters' property in their estates, in their slaves, and in themselves. Their claim to own the property in the person of another human being was deemed illegitimate, and they were stigmatized as vulgar, cruel, and degenerate. The demon of property authorized slavery by law "to fasten her fangs on human flesh, and the iron eat into the very soul".⁶⁰ Wollstonecraft's point was that once the principle of universal dignity was lost, there were no firm anchors to hold back the rage to own, and the claim to own a property in another person would infect the soul.

In response, the planters tried to present themselves as improving landlords and good husbandmen, and as important contributors to the wealth of the empire. The West Indian planters were a powerful and influential political lobby, and they sought to establish their credentials as astute but merciful men of business and common sense. Richard Nisbet declared of the British West Indies that "there are few, or no lands, better cultivated any where".⁶¹ The little island of St Kitts was only eighty miles square and yet its annual produce amounted to half a million sterling, "which is not, perhaps, to be equalled in the whole universe".⁶² For the defenders of slavery, the planters were improving

⁵⁸ Carol Howard (2004), "Wollstonecraft's Thoughts on Slavery and Corruption", *The Eighteenth Century* 45 (1): 61–96, p. 65.

⁵⁹ Howard (2004), "Wollstonecraft's Thoughts", p. 68.

⁶⁰ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Men*, p. 32.

⁶¹ Nisbet (1773), *Slavery not Forbidden*, p. 11.

⁶² Nisbet (1773), *Slavery not Forbidden*, p. 11.

the lands of the West Indies and sustaining the British empire, aggrandizing the state through commerce. Slavery must be allowed to continue so that Britain was not “undone by losing her commerce”.⁶³

Wollstonecraft’s response, and that of other abolitionists, was to criticize the limited views of politicians who tried to claim that the abolition of the slave trade would infringe the laws of property while ignoring the claims of justice, universal dignity, and human fellowship: “But is it not consonant with justice, with the common principles of humanity, not to mention Christianity”, she asked, “to abolish this abominable mischief?”.⁶⁴ The natural feelings of humanity ought to silence timidity and wipe off “this stigma on our nature”.⁶⁵ For the abolitionist movement it was crucial to be able to separate out this stigma from other forms of commerce, to distinguish the human from the inhuman, legitimate from illegitimate capitalist transactions.⁶⁶ In the process, the West Indian planters were constructed as cruel and vulgar, irresponsible and unable to restrain or contain themselves. They embodied “imperial irresponsibility”⁶⁷ and a view of power as total domination over the powerless that may have produced obedience, but entailed the loss of “his heart of flesh who can see a fellow-creature humbled before him”.⁶⁸

Abolitionist discourse revolved around anti-aristocratic stereotypes of immorality and personal violence, and they worked to stigmatize the plantocracy as archetypally aristocratic, and as cruel and unrestrained in their punishments. The anti-abolitionist and the abolitionist texts, as well as Wollstonecraft, were “aware that the currency circulating in the republic of letters [was] the affective impact of prose”.⁶⁹ While the planters were prepared to concede that there may have been a few instances of cruelty in the West Indies, they protested against the anti-slavery attempt to “stigmatize every West Indian, with the name of murderer and monster, and represent him as dead to every kind of feeling”.⁷⁰ The abolitionists focused on the suffering of the “degraded and mangled victim writhing and groaning under the infliction” of flogging in Jamaica and the inhuman

⁶³ Nisbet (1773), *Slavery not Forbidden*, p. 15.

⁶⁴ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Men*, p. 53.

⁶⁵ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Men*, p. 53.

⁶⁶ See Laura Brace (2013), “Inhuman Commerce: Antislavery and the Ownership of Freedom”, *European Journal of Political Theory* 12 (4): 447–65; and Gould (2003), *Barbaric Traffic*.

⁶⁷ Carol Howard (2004), “Wollstonecraft’s Thought”, p. 69.

⁶⁸ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Men*, p. 60.

⁶⁹ Elizabeth Wingrove (2005), “Getting Intimate with Wollstonecraft”, p. 352.

⁷⁰ Nisbet (1773), *Slavery not Forbidden*, p. 16.

cruelty of those who punished them.⁷¹ As Sander Gilman's work on Hegel has shown, colonial discourse made deep connections between "self-abandon, Africa, sex, and madness", and the loss of control of the planters and their subordinates was coded as a regression into the dark past.⁷²

Wollstonecraft related this lack of moral restraint to the erosion of native dignity, the dangers of relying on manners at the expense of morals, and feelings at the expense of reason and enlightened self-respect. Even goodness of heart, Wollstonecraft argued, was not always enough to secure us from inconsistency: "Where is the dignity, the infallibility of sensibility, in the fair ladies, whom, if the voice of rumour is to be credited, the captive negroes curse in all the agony of bodily pain, for the unheard of tortures they invent?"⁷³ Women who relied on instinctive responses and artificial feelings could be as volatile in their desires and passions as men.⁷⁴ The planters were constructed as dependent on their unreliable agents, Europeans who were apt to be carried away in their behaviour towards slaves because "slavery puts one man more in the power of another, than any ordinary degree of virtue or benevolence in the master can keep him from abusing".⁷⁵ In the West Indies, the category of "European" was itself rendered unstable by the savagery of the disposition and conduct of the slave owner, a disturbing and disruptive figure who posed a constant internal threat to the category of civilization.⁷⁶ As Wollstonecraft argues about those who have no fixed rules to square their conduct, they act on the whim of the moment and "we ought not to wonder if sometimes, galled by their heavy yoke, they take a malignant pleasure in resting it on weaker shoulders".⁷⁷

As I have argued elsewhere, in the eighteenth century the subject of racial difference was framed by the more fluid categories of savagery, civilization, commerce, and manners which were themselves caught up with ideas about property and freedom.⁷⁸ The abolitionists worked hard to distinguish between savagery and civilization, the past and modernity, and to deal with the instability

⁷¹ Henry Whiteley (1833), *Three Months in Jamaica in 1832: Comprising a Residence of Seven Weeks on a Sugar Plantation* (London: J. Hatchard and Son), p. 4.

⁷² Jennifer Gilchrist (2012), "Women, slavery and the problem of slavery in *Wide Sargasso Sea*", *Twentieth Century Literature* 58 (3): 462–94, p. 477.

⁷³ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Men*, p. 46.

⁷⁴ Daniel O'Neill (2007), *The Burke-Wollstonecraft Debate: Savagery, Civilization and Democracy* (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press).

⁷⁵ James Ramsay (1787), *A Letter to James Tobin, Esq. Late Member of His Majesty's Council in the Island of Nevis* (London: Printed and sold by J. Phillips), p. 20.

⁷⁶ Laura Brace (2013), "Inhuman Commerce: Antislavery and the Ownership of Freedom", *European Journal of Political Theory* 12 (4): 447–65.

⁷⁷ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 120.

⁷⁸ See Brace (2013), "Inhuman Commerce" and Gould (2003) *Barbaric Traffic*.

and unpredictability that underpinned the slave owners' property. In the process, they constructed British identity as founded on the restraint of appetites, and on self-discipline, carefully drawn against the wanton cruelty of the West Indian planters. As Srividhya Swaminathan has argued, the rhetorical battlefield was the concept of a shared British national character, which became central to both abolition and anti-abolition.⁷⁹ By the end of the debates, "a synthesis of characteristics had occurred that produced an image of the globally aware and morally superior Briton".⁸⁰ In Wollstonecraft's writings, this belief in Britain's moral superiority from the improvement narrative that assumes that Turkey is unfruitful because of its despotism,⁸¹ and from her sense of the contingency of history, that "we should not forget how much we owe to chance that our inheritance was not Mahometism; and that the iron hand of destiny, in the shape of deeply rooted authority, has not suspended the sword of destruction over our heads".⁸²

6.3 Liberty, Livestock, and the Critique of Property

Underpinning this approach to stigmatizing planter cruelty and vulgarity was the idea that they were acting on unnatural appetites, outside the bounds of a moral market, and from within an unrefined civil society. They were effectively trading in stolen goods and persevering in actions they knew to be wrong.⁸³ They could never know whether the people they bought and sold had justly forfeited their liberty⁸⁴ and so were acting in bad faith. The slaves were victims of avarice and treachery, and the trade was unjust. This strand of abolitionist argument opened up the possibility that if the slaves had forfeited their liberty, then slavery could be just. Natural justice, said Thomas Gisborne, permits a man to be deprived in certain cases of his limbs or his life, and so cannot universally forbid the exaction of his labour.⁸⁵ A buyer could purchase a slave he believed had been deservedly condemned to slavery, and he would not be unjustly exacting his labour during the term for which he was condemned, even if that term was life. Not every act of possession or sale or transfer was a usurpation or an exercise in arbitrary power. The principles of punishment and the legitimate transfer of rights between master and servant meant that one man should be able to sell his

⁷⁹ Srividhya Swaminathan (2009), *Debating the Slave Trade, 1753–1815: Rhetoric of British National Identity* (Farnham: Ashgate), p. 5.

⁸⁰ Swaminathan (2009), *Debating the Slave Trade*, p. 9.

⁸¹ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 116.

⁸² Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Men*, p. 19.

⁸³ Joseph Woods (1784), *Thoughts on the Slavery of the Negroes* (London: James Phillip), pp. 23, 29.

⁸⁴ Gisborne (1792), *On Slavery and the Slave Trade*, p. 13.

⁸⁵ Gisborne (1792), *On Slavery and the Slave Trade*, p. 12.

perpetual service to another, as long as there was a contract in force. In the abolitionist account of the slave trade as inhuman commerce, there was space for permanent bondage.

It is here that Wollstonecraft's arguments need separating out and distinguishing from those of the less radical abolitionists, many of whom were focused on the evils and injustice of the slave trade, rather than the wrongs of slavery. Thomas Clarkson, for example, saw nothing inequitable about coerced labour or debt bondage. As Lena Halldenius argues, Wollstonecraft offers a radical critique of property that distances her from Locke's defence of property as a natural right.⁸⁶ Her critique of property needs to be located within the wider process of moralizing the market and giving it an ethical dimension. Without the certainties of land and service, the world needed a new cultural context for managing the "terribly fragile" foundations of commerce and the fictitious value of money.⁸⁷ Wollstonecraft's affective republicanism can be read as a response to the decline of land as the basis of civic humanism, a recognition that property in land had been "disembedded"⁸⁸ from the ideals of public service and citizenship, and that "all property now had the potential separability and autonomy that come with the circulation and exchange of substantive things as insubstantial commodities".⁸⁹ Slaves, the slave trade, and slavery were at the heart of this terrible fragility. Slave ownership was part of a modern banking system that had taught the British "to value the existence of imaginary things" through the practice of insurance and the idea of slaves as human collateral against the payment of debt.⁹⁰ At the same time, slaves were treated as part of a landed estate, as capital. Property in slaves was both landed and mobile, solid and fragile, and that meant that it was caught up with the discourse of commercial humanism in complicated and unpredictable ways. Wollstonecraft's *Vindications* are a contribution to the contest over the meaning of property and to the developing meanings of owning a property in the person in the context of moralizing the market. She is arguing about how to come to terms with the riskiness and instability of property, and about whether it is possible to make it virtuous, reasonable, and improving, and remove its stigma.

⁸⁶ Lena Halldenius (2014), "Mary Wollstonecraft's Feminist Critique of Property: on Becoming a Thief from Principle", *Hypatia* 29 (4): 942–57.

⁸⁷ J. G. A. Pocock (1975), *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), p. 441.

⁸⁸ Michael McKeon (2005), *The Secret History of Domesticity* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press).

⁸⁹ McKeon (2005), *Secret History*, p. 26.

⁹⁰ Ian Baucom (2005), *Specters of the Atlantic* (Durham and London: Duke University Press), p. 94.

Wollstonecraft begins from the proposition that inherited wealth is illegitimate and always corrupting, undermining the basis of the social contract that guarantees that everyone has a degree of liberty compatible with the liberty of every other individual. Such liberty has never been established because “the demon of property has ever been at hand to encroach on the sacred rights of men”.⁹¹ For Wollstonecraft, the progress of civilization had been stopped by hereditary property. The demon of property distorts man into “an artificial monster by the station in which he was born”.⁹² This artificiality and monstrosity competes against “the native dignity of man”, and the rights that we each hold at birth as rational creatures who are capable of improvement.⁹³ Burke’s defence of tradition made him, Wollstonecraft argues, “the champion of property, the adorer of the golden image which power has set up”.⁹⁴ This golden image was associated with permanent, secure landed property, figured as anchoring people in the world, giving them a sense of place, and a solid base for living their lives well and governing themselves effectively. Autonomy, liberty, and virtue were understood to grow out of property in land that was real, inheritable, fixed, and permanent. Wollstonecraft’s response was to point out that hereditary property was itself an expression of arbitrary power, bolstered by reverence for antiquity, and attention to self-interest that work together to guarantee the security of property. “But softly”, she went on, “—it is only the property of the rich that is secure; the man who lives by the sweat of his brow has no asylum from oppression; the strong man may enter—when was the castle of the poor sacred?”.⁹⁵

Here Wollstonecraft was contributing to a wider radical debate about the security of property and expectation, and about the morality of the market. The Waltham Black Acts of 1723, made permanent in 1758, added at least fifty new capital offences to the penal code, so that people could be sentenced to death for theft and poaching, or for cutting and burning trees.⁹⁶ The Black Acts were enforced to meet the demands of the rich for deer parks and allowed the deer to stray into the corn and crops of farmers who were not allowed to build hedges or fences to keep them out. They reflected the vestiges of the aristocratic monopoly of moral values and of cultural prestige,⁹⁷ which relied on the power of rank and

⁹¹ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Men*, p. 7.

⁹² Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Men*, p. 9.

⁹³ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Men*, p. 13.

⁹⁴ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Men*, p. 12.

⁹⁵ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Men*, p. 13.

⁹⁶ Laura Brace (2004), *The Politics of Property* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), p. 46.

⁹⁷ Anna Bryson (1998), *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 66.

in particular what Erin Mackie calls “peerless privilege”.⁹⁸ E. P. Thompson argues that the Black Acts were about the rich enlarging and reviving essentially feudal claims to forest land use, “using the deer as a screen behind which to advance their own interests”.⁹⁹ The Acts epitomized the ways in which the property of the rich relied on encroaching on the property rights of the poor, and on the exercise of arbitrary power. The game laws, Wollstonecraft argued, devoured the fruits of the poor man’s labour, but would sentence him to death if he killed a deer, so that “the reward of his industry [is] laid waste by unfeeling luxury”, and his children’s bread is given to dogs.¹⁰⁰ The Black Acts, Thompson argues, were only possible in a world where men had formed habits of mental distance and moral levity towards human life.¹⁰¹

Both Wollstonecraft and Godwin raged against a world in which respect for rank had swallowed up the common feelings of humanity and the poor were treated “as only the live stock of an estate, the feather of hereditary nobility”.¹⁰² For Godwin the vassal was regarded as “a sort of live stock upon the earth, and knew no appeal from the arbitrary fiat of his lord”, and would “scarcely venture to suspect that he was of the same species”.¹⁰³ This echo in their language is about their shared understanding of the dangers of private property and the ways in which it undermines independence and judgement, allowing the rich to engross the wealth of nations and purchase the submission of the poor. The deer parks symbolized the injustice of accumulated property and the irrationality of the rage to own. The rich turned their right to property and their power into a spectacle of indolence and ease that could only be sustained by undermining the right of the poor to the fruits of their own labour and industry. In doing so, they oppressed the native dignity of the poor man and dehumanized him, turning him into livestock. The rich and powerful distanced themselves from poverty by regarding poor people as insubstantial and abstract, so separate from them that the different classes became different species, and “a *gentleman* of lively imagination must borrow some drapery from fancy before he can love or pity a *man*”.¹⁰⁴ This was part of the aristocratic legacy, the idea that dignity was comparative and

⁹⁸ Erin Mackie (2009), *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 43.

⁹⁹ E. P. Thompson (1990), *Whigs and Hunters* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books), p. 99.

¹⁰⁰ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Men*, p. 16.

¹⁰¹ Thompson (1990), *Whigs and Hunters*, p. 197.

¹⁰² Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Men*, p. 16.

¹⁰³ William Godwin ([1798] 1971), *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 26.

¹⁰⁴ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Men*, p. 14.

relational, and inseparable from rank and status.¹⁰⁵ Private property, and not just planter property in slaves, needed to be understood as oppressive and dehumanizing, as an unequal power relationship. In Wollstonecraft's account, property itself has slavish effects, and she goes further than many of the abolitionists in arguing that all forms of commerce are to some degree inhuman and damaging.

Rather than striving to improve themselves, the middle classes degraded themselves through unmanly servility and playing on the follies of the rich, making themselves vulnerable to patronage and to relations of power that were opportunistic and corrupt.¹⁰⁶ They had lost sight of the core of property, its moral and reasonable basis in labour and industriousness, and instead paid attention to the show, the masquerade put on by the rich. This meant that they bought into a particular vision of aristocratic dignity where elite peerage benefits the lucky few with inherited status and wealth, and exposes all others to indignity.¹⁰⁷ In this sense, private property was itself no more than "drapery from fancy", hung up to cover the exercise of illegitimate and arbitrary power. For Wollstonecraft, the morality of enlightened self-respect that could lead humans towards humanity, and women and slaves towards rational autonomy, could not be built on existing unequal property relations. Consent to contracts that allowed for permanent bondage and perpetual service could not undo the fundamental relations of dependence and slavery behind the iron hand of property. While women remained suspended by destiny and sunk below the standards of rational creatures, contractual relations were not the same as emancipation. The "deadly grasp" of slavery still had women in its grip.¹⁰⁸

6.4 Conclusion

Property history was built on artificial feelings and the new, more mobile forms of property relied on reputation and credit, culture and display, and so, for Wollstonecraft, risked being all about the show and the tawdry finery rather than the substance. The making of a coherent bourgeois identity relied on overcoming the dependence, degradation, and false ambition that was fostered by hereditary property. By foregrounding improvement, women's economic independence and the native dignity of individuals as the core of humanity,

¹⁰⁵ Josiah Ober (2012), "Democracy's Dignity", *American Political Science Review* 106 (4): 827–46.

¹⁰⁶ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Men*, p. 23.

¹⁰⁷ Ober (2012), "Democracy's Dignity".

¹⁰⁸ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 117.

Wollstonecraft moved beyond the idea that as soon as compact enters, slavery ceases. Contracts that cemented relations of domination and oppression were part of the drapery, a thin veil pulled across the system that ground the poor to pamper the rich.¹⁰⁹ Her vision of slavery as morally corrupting, and her understanding of women as both despots and slaves allowed her to look beyond slavery as a relation of total powerlessness on one side and total power on the other, and to open up the space for complicated questions of complicity, resistance, and agency. In her account, women as slaves were more than victims and more than a mass of silent suffering. They could even become tyrants themselves. It was wrong to turn them into objects either of pity or contempt, risking “unhumanising” them by putting them into a liminal category between humans and animals on the grounds of their improper possession of themselves. They had the potential to act as agents, to do more than lick the dust, and a duty to pursue their own rational autonomy and enlightened self-respect. Citizens require dignity if they are to govern themselves, and to count as fully human, women needed to be able to “labour by reforming themselves to reform the world”.¹¹⁰ Wollstonecraft makes clear that emancipation requires civil, legal, and political existence in the state and the public sphere. Freedom and dignity are about this kind of ethical incorporation, about belonging within civil society and the public sphere, as well as about the “sharp invigorating” freedom of economic independence, and so need to be understood in terms of finding countenance with our fellow creatures and taking responsibility for our own moral development.¹¹¹ We need to take up her challenge and develop her arguments by putting private property in its place, and by recognizing that we need to stop using concepts of improvement and degradation, and reactions of pity and contempt, to try to distinguish those who are eligible for freedom from those who are not.¹¹² We need to enlarge the circle of those who ought not to be enslaved to include the whole of humanity.

¹⁰⁹ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 233.

¹¹⁰ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 117.

¹¹¹ Wollstonecraft (1995), *Rights of Woman*, p. 107.

¹¹² Penner (2009), “Property, Community”.

7

Republican Elements in the Thought of Mary Wollstonecraft

Philip Pettit

Like all trail-blazing works, Mary Wollstonecraft's 1792 book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, does not belong to any single tradition of thought or doctrine.¹ It combines a myriad of elements in an innovative, improvising manner designed to arrest readers and bring them to focus on the core, enduring message that women count equally with men and command the same legal and political recognition. But among the materials that she works with in constructing her argument many belong clearly to the commonwealth or republican tradition of thinking, well represented by the likes of Richard Price, her English friend and mentor.² This chapter, which is offered by way of background to the deeper studies in the volume, is an attempt to provide a sketch of those materials and to set them in historical context.

The chapter is in five sections. In Section 7.1, I look at the sort of republican theory that dominated the English-speaking world in Wollstonecraft's lifetime. In Section 7.2, I use Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* to raise the question of whether a woman who lives under the power of her husband can count as a free person. In the third (Section 7.3) I sketch two established, non-republican views of freedom under which she can. In Section 7.4, I sketch and make a case in defense of the republican way of thinking about freedom as an alternative to those views. And then in the final Section 7.5, I look at the answer to the freedom question that that view of freedom would support.

¹ Mary Wollstonecraft (1982), *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (New York: Whitston).

² She seems to have been less influenced by the French version of republican thought which was deeply influenced by Jean Jacques Rousseau. Her republicanism has an Italian-Atlantic character, as we might say, rather than a Continental one. See Philip Pettit (2014), *Just Freedom: A Moral Compass for a Complex World* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co.), ch. 1.

7.1 Republicanism in Wollstonecraft's Time

On my reading of the republican tradition, there are three distinct ideals that prevailed among almost all its recognized, often self-described adherents, albeit under different weightings and interpretations. They are, the personal ideal of freedom as non-domination; the constitutional ideal of a mixed, effectively democratic regime; and the civic ideal of vigilance and contestation. The primary ideal among the three was freedom as non-domination, which will bulk large in what follows. The constitutional ideal identified the political arrangements best suited to providing for people's freedom as non-domination. And the civic ideal identified a precondition that citizens had to satisfy if that constitutional ideal was to be realized and freedom as non-domination secured.

Wollstonecraft was fully versed in these republican ideals, which guided politics in the eighteenth-century English-speaking world, down to the time of the American and French revolutions. The ideals were of ancient origin, deriving from the Roman Republic via medieval and Renaissance Italy. The main authors associated with the tradition would have included Polybius, Cicero, and Livy, at the Roman end, and at the English, seventeenth-century writers such as James Harrington, Algernon Sydney, and John Locke: he had not yet been recast as a liberal, in an expression that only came into use in the nineteenth century.

Italian-Atlantic ideals of the commonwealth or republic—the free state—were present amongst most parties in eighteenth-century British and American politics, down to the War of Independence. In 1748 the Baron de Montesquieu, in an unmistakable reference to Britain, had described it as a place where “the republic hides under the form of a monarchy”.³ Unsurprisingly, then, adherents of commonwealth ideas were mostly happy to endorse the British, constitutional style of monarchy, although not the sort present in France at the time. But despite endorsing constitutional monarchy, these thinkers varied greatly in other respects, with some adopting a more or less conservative reading, others a more radical interpretation, of the ideals they shared. These two sides came apart, in particular, on the issue of how far the commonwealth or republic should be shaped by its members as a whole.

The more conservative thinkers would have said that while republican benefits such as the freedom-related benefit of equality before the law should be available to all—or at least to all adult males—the more or less universal accessibility of those benefits did not depend on universal participation in politics. Not only was it more feasible to have votes and offices confined to an elite of propertied males,

³ Baron de Montesquieu (1989), *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 70.

according to this line of thought; it was absolutely fine to organize the commonwealth on that basis, with the many being virtually represented by the few.⁴

The more radical side in this division stressed the likelihood of corruption under elite rule, drawing on the old republican belief that all human beings are corruptible and all power corruptive. And they insisted ever more vehemently as the century went on that political participation should not be confined to any privileged minority: the franchise should be extended at least to all male subjects. An early example of radical writing is *Cato's Letters*, an anonymous series of pamphlets published in the 1720s.⁵

One of the more radical of the English Commonwealthmen, as these thinkers were often called, was the preacher and mathematician Richard Price, who was a friend and mentor to Wollstonecraft. She would have imbibed the core republican ideals, in particular the ideal of freedom, in her exchanges with him. And she would have learned that in the radical version of those ideals, they were there to be enjoyed by all human beings on the basis of “a natural and unalienable title”.⁶ They had the status of what it became popular to describe in fashionable jurisprudential language as natural and inalienable rights.

In maintaining this radical vision of republican ideals, Price was upholding a vision already present in more extreme, republican circles at the time of the English Revolution of the 1640s. One of the figures of that period, John Lilburne, had written for example that “the freeman’s freedom” requires all citizens to be “equal and alike in power, dignity, authority, and majesty—none of them having (by nature) any authority, dominion or magisterial power, one over or above another”.⁷

The radicalism of Price’s approach to republican ideals opened up a possibility that many traditional republican thinkers, particularly in the Renaissance and Early Modern period, would have contemplated with horror. This was the possibility of extending the enjoyment of those ideals to more and more people: ultimately, the possibility of ensuring their universal enjoyment.

The universalizing imperative led an Irish member of the radical movement, Theobald Wolfe Tone, to argue in the early 1790s that Catholics too—despite their apparent subordination to the decidedly unrepublican power of the Pope—should be given full citizenship in Ireland, with that country enjoying considerable

⁴ John Philip Reid (1988), *The Concept of Liberty in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press).

⁵ John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon (1971), *Cato's Letters* (New York: Da Capo).

⁶ Richard Price (1991), *Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁷ John Lilburne (1646), *The Legal Fundamental Liberties of the People of England, Asserted, Revived, and Vindicated* (London), in Andrew Sharp (1998), *The English Levellers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 31–2.

independence from Westminster. While he, like others, took “the genius of their religion” to make Protestants and Dissenters characteristically fit to live up to republican ideals, he did not hesitate to argue with Catholics in mind that nowhere should we hold “fellow creatures and fellow subjects, in degradation and infamy and contempt, or, to sum up all in one word, in slavery”.⁸

It was one thing to argue in this universalizing drive that Catholics should be incorporated as full citizens in a republican commonwealth. It was quite another to maintain that women should be incorporated on more or less the same terms as men. And that is where Wollstonecraft made her signal contribution. She took the republican ideals, in particular the republican ideal of freedom, and drew on her combination of argumentative and rhetorical skills to make a powerful case for extending those ideals to women as well as men. Her *Vindication* established the case that on republican principles, there was nothing that could be said for restricting the enjoyment of those ideals to men.

7.2 The Freedom Question

The domestic context of husband and wife lay inevitably at the center of Wollstonecraft’s concerns, given the subordination of women in marriage. And the question raised by those concerns is straightforward. What would it be for a wife to enjoy freedom in relation to her husband, as presumably he enjoys freedom in relation to her? What would enable her to count in traditional terms as a free person?

To make this question concrete and vivid, imagine the situation of the protagonists in Henrik Ibsen’s late nineteenth-century play, *A Doll’s House*. The husband is a young, moderately successful banker, Torvald, and his wife is Nora. Under the family law prevailing in Scandinavia at the time, Torvald enjoys great power over Nora, having the cultural and legal right to determine what she wears, who she meets, how she runs the household, and so on. But that is not a problem, so it appears. For Torvald worships the ground Nora walks on and gives her *carte blanche* on matters in that range. True, he objects to her eating macaroons. But even that raises no issue, since Nora finds that she can easily conceal them in her skirts.

No matter how freedom is understood, the question of whether or not someone is a free person turns crucially on whether they enjoy freedom in that sense within the range of the basic or fundamental liberties, as they have been long described.⁹ On the best interpretation, these are choices such that

⁸ Theobald Wolfe Tone (1998), *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763–98*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 298, 125.

⁹ See John Lilburne (1646).

among relevant members or citizens—ideally, these will include all adult, able-minded, more or less permanent residents—it is possible for each to exercise and enjoy those choices at the same time as others.¹⁰

The basic liberties will naturally include choices about what to say, who to associate with, where to live, what employment to seek and accept, how to use your property, as established under local conventions, and so on. But they will exclude choices involving the imposition of harm on others or choices where one person's success makes it likely or inevitable that others will fail. Being a free person cannot require being free to assault or steal from another, for example, nor can it require being free to win out—as distinct, perhaps, from trying to win out—in a competition for resources. Determining the basic liberties that ought to be honored in any society is a job for the local law and culture, although the optimum under any ideal of freedom is that they should be as comprehensive as possible.

Returning now to Nora, let us assume that Torvald allows her *carte blanche* within the range of the basic liberties that were identified—let us assume, in a more or less optimal fashion—within the local legal system. Within that range, she can choose just as she wills without any hindrance from Torvald or anyone else. No one prevents her from choosing any option she prefers in such a choice or penalizes her choice of any option, whether overtly or covertly; and no one misrepresents the options available to her or manipulates her understanding of them. She enjoys the absence of any such hindrance in the exercise of those choices. So the question is: does she count as a free person?

7.3 Two Non-Republican Answers to the Freedom Question

Nora certainly does count as a free person under two common, decidedly non-republican views. According to the first, you enjoy freedom in the basic liberties, and count as a free person, insofar as the options you prefer are open doors: no one hinders you in any way from taking them. According to the second view, which is more demanding, you enjoy freedom in the basic liberties insofar as all the options in those choices, and not just the options you prefer to take, are open doors.

The first view is often defended amongst economists, although not among the more philosophically oriented.¹¹ It effectively identifies being free in a choice with getting what you want: satisfying your actual preference. Something close to

¹⁰ Pettit (2014), *Just Freedom*.

¹¹ Amartya Sen (1983), "Liberty and Social Choice", *Journal of Philosophy* 80: 18–20; Robert Sugden (1998), "The Metric of Opportunity", *Economics and Philosophy* 14: 307–37.

this view was supported in the seventeenth century by that great opponent of republican ideas, Thomas Hobbes.¹² In *Leviathan*, published in 1651, he argues that in relevant choices—for the record, he does not identify these with the basic liberties—“a freeman is he that . . . is not hindered to do what he has a will to”.¹³ On this conception, you are deprived of your freedom in a choice just insofar as you are not hindered from satisfying your preference: that is, from doing what you have a will to do.

According to this first way of thinking, being free is equivalent to non-frustration: that is, to having your actual preference satisfied. To be free in a choice it is necessary that you should not be frustrated, then; and to be free it is sufficient that you should not be frustrated. What’s important is not that every option in the choice should be an open door but that the door you push on should be open. Is Nora free on this account of freedom? Yes, she clearly is. Torvald does not shut any of the options she chooses—the doors she pushes on—within the range of the basic liberties. Her non-frustration is sufficient and indeed necessary to ensure that she is free.

An alternative to freedom as non-frustration is the ideal of freedom as non-interference, as that is understood by Isaiah Berlin.¹⁴ Since we often associate freedom with getting your own way and escaping the frustration of your preferences, Hobbes’s view has a certain appeal. But as a general account of what freedom in choice—and so freedom in the basic liberties—demands, Berlin thinks it is manifestly deficient and needs to be replaced by his own more demanding ideal.

Suppose that someone imposes restrictions on you that frustrate your preferences; suppose, for example, that you are in prison but desperately want to live in the outside world. And now imagine that, seeking non-frustration, you work at adapting your preferences. You focus on all the good things about prison life: the regular hours, the reliable shelter, the chance to read and think and perhaps to improve yourself. In time you come to like being in prison, preferring a stretch behind bars to living in the uncertain world outside. Well then, if freedom comes with non-frustration, you will thereby have made yourself free. Between the option of staying in prison and the option of living outside, you get what you now have come to prefer.

Berlin maintains, plausibly, that it is absurd to think that merely by adapting your preferences in this way you could liberate yourself in a choice like the one

¹² Quentin (2008), *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

¹³ What are the relevant options for Hobbes? In his own words: “those things which by his strength and wit he is able to do”, Thomas Hobbes (1994), *Leviathan* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett), ch. 21.

¹⁴ Isaiah Berlin (1969), “Introduction” in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

between life behind bars and life on the street. Liberation of the kind required needs an alteration in the situation under which you live; it cannot come about merely by an alteration in attitude. As Berlin says, “to teach a man that, if he cannot get what he wants, he must learn to want only what he can get may contribute to his happiness or his security; but it will not increase his civil or political freedom”.¹⁵

Berlin himself defends the second view mentioned earlier: that being free in any choice like one of the basic liberties means, not just escaping the frustration of your actual preference over the options, but escaping the frustration of any preference you might have had over those options. It consists, not just in the fact that the door you actually push on is open, but that any of the doors you might have pushed on would have been open, had your preference gone that way.¹⁶ As the earlier view makes non-frustration necessary and sufficient for freedom, Berlin argues that if the absurdity he describes is to be avoided, then something richer is necessary and indeed sufficient for freedom. This consists in non-interference, where that is taken to mean the non-frustration of any options, preferred or not.

On this second view, as on the first, Nora remains a free person, unhindered in the exercise of the basic liberties. Not only does Torvald not frustrate the options she actually prefers to take in the exercise of those liberties, he is disposed not to interfere with any of the options, no matter what she happens to prefer. He does not intrude on her actual choices about how to spend her time, what opinions to express, who to meet with, or where to shop. And he would not intrude on the choices she might have made but doesn't. He frustrates neither her actual nor her counterfactual preferences over the options in the basic liberties. He gives her the gift of non-interference and not just non-frustration.

7.4 Republican Freedom

Where the two views discussed equate freedom in a choice with non-frustration and non-interference respectively, the republican view equates it with non-domination. ‘Domination’ is a direct translation of the Latin *dominatio*, which described the relation between a master and a slave.¹⁷ I dominate you in the sense

¹⁵ Berlin (1969), *Four Essays*, p. xxxix.

¹⁶ It is worth noting, as a matter of philosophical precision, that the requirement does not mean that there are no current obstacles to any option, only that if you were to choose an option, there would then be no obstacles—perhaps as a result of your choice—to your implementing it. On background issues see Robert K. Shope (1978), “The Conditional Fallacy in Contemporary Philosophy”, *Journal of Philosophy* 75: 397–413.

¹⁷ Frank Lovett (2010), “Appendix”, in *A General Theory of Domination and Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

envisaged to the extent that I have an arbitrary power of interference in your choices: as we may assume, your basic liberties. And the power of interference I possess will be arbitrary to the extent that I can exercise it as I will—or, if I am someone's agent, to the extent that my principal can get me to exercise it as they will. It will be arbitrary, in effect, to the extent that I or my principal have the ability to interfere at will and you have no control over my doing so: neither you personally, nor anyone answerable to you, can interfere with my interference.

By this account, non-domination is both necessary and sufficient for freedom. On the necessity side, the account entails that if you are dominated by me or by anyone else in exercising your basic liberties, then that makes you unfree; the non-domination that is necessary for freedom is absent. Thus the fact that I have an arbitrary power of interference in your choices means that you are unfree, even if I do not actually exercise that power: even if I leave you to your own devices. On the sufficiency side, the account entails that if you are not dominated by me or by anyone else in exercising your basic liberties, then you are free; the presence of the non-domination is enough to ensure your freedom. Thus interference without domination—in effect, interference that is subject to control by you or by someone answerable to you—does not make you unfree.

This is all rather schematic and perhaps the best way to introduce the idea is by reverting to the doors metaphor introduced by Berlin. What freedom as non-domination requires is not just that the doors you push on should be open, and not just that any door you might choose to push on should be open, but that there should be no doorkeeper present who can decide, more or less at will—or perhaps at the will of a principal—to close a door in your face. Domination without interference makes you unfree, since this means that there is an uncontrolled doorkeeper present, albeit one who chooses for whatever reason not to shut any door against you. Interference without domination does not make you unfree, however, since this arises only in the case where the doorkeeper is subject to your control: only in the case where the doorkeeper is really a janitor you have appointed, as in appointing an agent to take certain decisions in your name.

The basic liberties are types of choice which you, like everyone else, are going to face time and time again. The choice or liberty may be between speaking your mind or holding your peace, espousing some religion or none, continuing a relationship or breaking it off, and so on. Assume that you have the resources needed for being able to exercise such types of choice. The question, then, is whether it is natural to treat non-domination as necessary and sufficient for enjoying freedom in any such type of choice: whether in that sense the republican ideal is appealing.

Is non-domination necessary for freedom? Well, suppose that I do not interfere with you but I do have an arbitrary power of interference in your choices, so

that I do dominate you. Does that in itself mean that you are unfree to exercise types of choice like the basic liberties? Intuitively, yes. Whatever you do in a situation where I have the arbitrary power of interfering with your choices, you do in effect by my leave or permission: *cum permissu*, in an old republican phrase. And that means that it is my will that is in control, not yours.

The intuition that non-domination is necessary for freedom served in the republican tradition to emphasize that being the subject of someone else—at the limit, being their slave—meant that you were unfree, even if your master was gentle and kind. The adherents of the tradition emphasized in Algernon Sidney's words, that "he is a slave who serves the best and gentlest man in the world, as well as he who serves the worst".¹⁸ They maintained a claim boldly stated by Richard Price: "Individuals in private life, while held under the power of masters, cannot be denominated free, however equitably and kindly they may be treated".¹⁹

Turning to the second question, is non-domination sufficient for freedom? Well, suppose that I interfere with you but only in a manner that you control in some measure, so that I do not dominate you, or at least not in the full sense. You may be able to cancel the arrangement at any point, which would give you absolute control over me; or you may enjoy relative control over how I behave: you may be able to invoke suitable protections against me, for example, perhaps under a system run jointly with others. Intuitively I do not take away your freedom by non-dominating interference of this kind. I interfere on your terms, more or less, so that my will is not in control; it is your will, at least your will in activating protections, that is in charge.

The intuition that non-domination is sufficient for freedom served in the republican tradition as a basis for arguing that while the law inevitably interferes with you, as it does with everyone, it is not dominating so long as that interference is conducted on terms that you and your fellow citizens impose.²⁰ This is the theme celebrated in James Harrington's argument that in a commonwealth proper—an "empire of laws, and not of men"—the law is "framed by every private man unto no other end (or they may thank themselves) than to protect the liberty of every man" and that in such a commonwealth people will enjoy freedom "by the law".²¹ The theme reappears in John Locke for whom it is the case, as it was for Harrington, that

¹⁸ Algernon Sidney (1990), *Discourses Concerning Government* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Classics), p. 441.

¹⁹ Price (1991), *Political Writings*, pp. 77–8.

²⁰ Philip Pettit (2012), *On the People's Terms*. For a different perspective on the sufficiency issue see Skinner (1998), *Liberty before Liberalism*; and for a response see Pettit (2002), "Keeping Republican Freedom Simple: On a Difference with Quentin Skinner", *Political Theory* 30: 339–56.

²¹ James Harrington (1992), *The Commonwealth of Oceana and A System of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 8, 20.

“where there is no law there is no freedom”.²² Richard Price repeats the claim in the eighteenth century, arguing that “just government”—democratically organized, as he would have it— “does not infringe liberty, but establishes it”.²³ His idea is that it is only under such a “free government” that people can enjoy the security—in effect, the non-domination—that freedom requires: it is only under such government that “there exists no power that can take it away”.

Republicans saw freedom threatened on two sides. On a first front, your freedom is threatened by private domination and here, by all accounts, the only way for you to be rid of the threat is by virtue of the protection of a government and law that secures you and other members of the commonwealth in the enjoyment of the basic liberties. But the very existence of government opens up another threat, which is that it should practice public domination, imposing an alien will on you. And here the only protection is that the law should be framed under the equally shared control of you and other members.

The requirement, by the general consensus in the tradition, is that the law should be framed under the constitutional and civic ideals invoked earlier. The constitutional ideal requires an arrangement where governing power is divided between many hands and represents different sectors of the population, as in the mixed constitution. And the civic ideal requires an arrangement where ordinary people are able and ready to contest government in monitoring and challenging what it does; the price of liberty, in a common eighteenth-century refrain, is eternal vigilance.

These observations are meant to introduce the republican way of thinking about freedom and to provide some evidence of its presence in a range of authors. They show that the approach is backed by powerful intuitions but whether it represents the best way of thinking about freedom is to be determined by how well it serves as the basis for political philosophy overall: how well it satisfies John Rawls’s test of reflective equilibrium, supporting our considered, perhaps somewhat adjusted judgments about how the state ought to be organized and what it ought to do.²⁴

But we can add one further observation in support of the republican view, particularly in support of it as an improved alternative to the open-doors approach that Berlin espoused. As Berlin argues against the Hobbesian view that it would allow you to gain your freedom by adjusting your preferences—surely a counter-intuitive result—so we might argue against the Berlinian view that it would allow you to gain your freedom, again counterintuitively, by ingratiating yourself with

²² John Locke (1960), *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), II, Section 57.

²³ Price (1991), *Political Writings*, p. 81.

²⁴ John Rawls (1971), *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). See Pettit (2014), *Just Freedom*.

the powerful in your life.²⁵ Suppose that I dominate you and indeed that I actually interfere in certain of your basic liberties, say by not allowing you to voice your religious or political views. And now imagine that you cozy up to me, flattering and fawning in a degree that wins my indulgence and persuades me to let you say your piece. We might think that in a given instance of choice you could be said to have won your freedom to speak out by means of such ingratiating. But could we say that in general you enjoy freedom of speech—freedom in that type of choice—when you depend on my indulgence—an “accidental mildness”, in Richard Price’s phrase—for being able to do so?²⁶

Not certainly, by traditional republican perception. In the words of *Cato’s Letters*, “Liberty is, to live upon one’s own terms; slavery is, to live at the mere mercy of another”.²⁷ To be able to say what you think but only so long as someone else allows it would not be to enjoy that sort of freedom in the domain of speech. But neither would this ability count as freedom of speech under contemporary intuitions. Even Berlin implies as much when he says that in order to be free there must be “room within which I am legally accountable to no one”.²⁸ I would be accountable to another for what I chose to say, if I depended on keeping them sweet in order to be able to say it.

How to avoid the absurd consequence of the Berlinian view that you might be said to achieve your freedom as a person—your freedom in the exercise of a basic liberty like that of speech—by means of ingratiating? The only escape route, it would seem, is to embrace the republican view that freedom in such a type of choice requires that you be able to say your piece regardless not only of what you yourself want to say, but also of what I or any other wishes you to say. You must have freedom as non-domination in the choice, not just freedom as non-interference. Not only must all the options be open doors—not only must it be possible for you to say what you think; it must also be the case that there is no doorkeeper on whom you depend for leaving them open.

7.5 The Republican Answer

With these observations in place, we may turn to the answer that republican theory would offer to the question we raised about Nora in her relation to Torvald. Is Nora a free person according to this view? Clearly, she is not. What she does in exercising her basic liberties she does by Torvald’s permission. And

²⁵ Pettit (2014), *Just Freedom*. ²⁶ Price (1991), *Political Writings*, p. 26.

²⁷ Trenchard and Gordon (1971), *Cato’s Letters*, vol. 2, pp. 249–50.

²⁸ Berlin (1969), *Four Essays*, p. 155.

so it is his will rather than hers that is in charge. She enjoys considerable latitude of choice but this does not amount to liberty; it does not give her control or sovereignty in how she chooses to exercise the basic liberties.

The situation, viewed in republican terms, is actually quite tragic. Nora's subordination to Torvald is not something that he can change, even if he wants to. It is because of the local culture and law that he has dominating power in her life. So whether he likes it or not, the fact remains that should he turn indifferent or hostile to her, there would be nothing to stop him interfering in her choices. She depends on his goodwill for continuing to have the latitude of choice he currently gives her. He is the master in her life and she lives under his will.

It is hard to imagine that a woman might live under this domination by a husband, even a doting husband, without that showing up in her behavior. And it is worth recalling in this connection that by traditional republican accounts, to be subject to someone else's will is strongly associated with being a servile person, anxious to please the master. In the rich vocabulary that sprang up around this theme, it is to be disposed to curry favor from your betters, to fawn and toady, to kowtow, and bend the knee, and tug the forelock.

To be free in the republican image was by contrast to be someone who could look others in the eye without reason for fear or deference: to be able to walk tall, conscious of its being a matter of common awareness that you could not be pushed around with impunity; you were in that respect the equal of the best. In a "free commonwealth", as John Milton wrote, "they who are greatest . . . are not elevated above their brethren; live soberly in their families, walk the streets as other men, may be spoken to freely, familiarly, friendly, without adoration".²⁹

What might give Nora the ability in this sense to look Torvald in the eye without fear or deference? It would have to be the case that the law under which they lived gave her protection in the exercise of the basic liberties, thereby guarding her against the private domination of her husband. And equally of course it would have to be the case that she shared equally with others in her society in exercising control over the shape that that law took, so that the government that made the law did so on their terms and did not represent a form of public domination. Only under such conditions would she be able to attain the status of a free person and walk tall among her fellow citizens.

Only under such conditions, plausibly, could she come into her own and, acting from a position of strength, be able to display the trust and develop the virtue of an independent agent. And here we reach an ethical theme where Wollstonecraft,

²⁹ John Milton (1953–82), *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, vols 1–8 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), vol. 8, pp. 424–5.

writing in terms more suited to her times than ours, is particularly vehement. “It is vain to expect virtue from women till they are, in some degree, independent of man; nay, it is vain to expect that strength of natural affection, which would make them good wives and mothers. Whilst they are absolutely dependent on their husbands they will be cunning, mean, and selfish”.³⁰

³⁰ Mary Wollstonecraft (1982), *Vindication*, p. 299.

I draw heavily on the recent revival of republican thought throughout this chapter. An up-to-date list of English works in this revival should include these books: Philip Pettit (1997), *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Quentin Skinner (1998), *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); William Brugger (1999), *Republican Theory in Political Thought: Virtuous or Virtual* (New York: Macmillan); Lena Halldenius (2001), *Liberty Revisited* (Lund: Sweden, Bokbox Publications); Iseult Honohan (2002), *Civic Republicanism* (London: Routledge); Maurizio Viroli (2002), *Republicanism* (New York: Hill and Wang); John Maynor (2003), *Republicanism in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity Press); Quentin Skinner (2008), *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Frank Lovett (2010), *Justice as Non-domination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); José Luis Martí and Philip Pettit (2010), *A Political Philosophy in Public Life: Civic Republicanism in Zapatero’s Spain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press); Eric MacGilvray (2011), *The Invention of Market Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Philip Pettit (2012), *On the People’s Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Philip Pettit (2014), *Just Freedom. A Moral Compass for a Complex World* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co.). An up-to-date collection of papers in this revival should include: Martin Van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (2002), *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Daniel Weinstock and Christian Nadeau (2004), *Republicanism: History, Theory and Practice* (London: Frank Cass); Iseult Honohan and Jeremy Jennings (2006), *Republicanism in Theory and Practice* (London, Routledge); Cécile Laborde and John Maynor (2008), *Republicanism and Political Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell); Samantha Besson and Jose Luis Martí (2008), *Law and Republicanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Andreas Niederberger and Philipp Schink (2012), *Republican Democracy: Liberty, Law and Politics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press). Also included are a number of studies that deploy the conception of freedom as non-domination, broadly understood: John Braithwaite and Philip Pettit (1990), *Not Just Deserts: A Republican Theory of Criminal Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Henry Richardson (2002), *Democratic Autonomy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Steven Slaughter (2005), *Liberty beyond Neo-Liberalism: A Republican Critique of Liberal Government in a Globalising Age* (London: Macmillan Palgrave); Richard Bellamy (2007), *Political Constitutionalism: A Republican Defense of the Constitutionality of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); James Bohman (2007), *Democracy Across Borders: From Demos to Demoi* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press). Cécile Laborde (2008), *Critical Republicanism: The Hijab Controversy and Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Stuart White and Dan Leighton (2008), *Building a Citizen Society: The Emerging Politics of Republican Democracy* (London: Lawrence and Wishart); John Braithwaite, Hilary Charlesworth, and Adérito Soares (2012), *Networked Governance of Freedom and Tyranny: Peace in East Timor* (Canberra: ANU Press). For a recent review of work in the tradition see Frank Lovett and Philip Pettit (2009), “Neo-Republicanism: A Normative and Institutional Research Program”, *Annual Review of Political Science* 12: 18–29.

8

Mary Wollstonecraft's Conception of Rights

Susan James

Mary Wollstonecraft published two books that are explicitly concerned with rights. The first, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, appeared in 1790 and was provoked by Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. It lambasted him both for what Wollstonecraft saw as his complacent acceptance of ancient injustices, and for what she regarded as his unfair attack on her friend Richard Price, who had written enthusiastically about the early stages of the revolution.¹ Wollstonecraft defends the central importance of rights, contending 'for the rights of men and the liberty of reason', and for a right to 'such a degree of liberty, civil and religious, as is compatible with the liberty of every other individual with whom he is united in a social compact'.² Two years later she went into print again, this time with *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and since her title evokes the several resounding defences of rights with which it is coeval,³ one might expect rights to be central to its argument. However, as a number of commentators have pointed out, they play a curiously marginal role. Wollstonecraft's Introduction describes the book as a treatise 'on female rights and manners'⁴, and in her dedicatory letter to Talleyrand she argues that

¹ Mary Wollstonecraft (1994), 'A Vindication of the Rights of Men', in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 15–19 (henceforth *VRM*).

² Wollstonecraft, *VRM*, p. 7.

³ It was published, for example, three years after the French *Declaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, and one year after both Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* and Olympe de Gouge's *Declaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne*.

⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft (1994), 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman', in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 71 (henceforth *VRW*).

excluding women from civil and political rights will damage society. 'If women are not permitted to enjoy legitimate rights', she warns, 'they will render both men and themselves vicious, to obtain illicit privileges.'⁵ But in the long discussion of the plight of middle-class women that makes up the body of the book, the term 'right' appears surprisingly rarely.⁶

This has led some interpreters to argue that *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is not about rights at all. According to Virginia Sapiro, for example, it is really about virtue.⁷ It is certainly true that Wollstonecraft regards virtue as the overarching end of individual and collective life, and argues that in order to live virtuously one must cultivate reason. 'The perfection of our nature and capability of happiness', she claims, 'must be estimated by the degree of reason, virtue and knowledge that distinguish the individual and direct the laws which bind society.'⁸ Nevertheless, I think it would be too quick to infer that this concern eclipses, or is incompatible with, her emphasis on the importance of securing rights for women. Rather than setting rights aside, we need to see how Wollstonecraft connects the notions of right and virtue, and what conception of rights this commits her to. What, in her view, is a right? When she demands rights for women, what exactly is she asking for?

If we assume that Wollstonecraft is not a systematic theorist, these may seem inept or even quixotic questions to press. However, I hope to show that she is quite systematic enough to make them worth pursuing, and that doing so can help us to understand the political character of her magnum opus. To grasp the notion of a right to which she appeals, we need to situate Wollstonecraft's work at a particular stage in the history of rights discourse, during which a number of European republican theorists aspired to reconcile the advantages of appealing to natural rights, and thus to the legacy of the natural law tradition, with the primacy of their distinctively republican conception of liberty. Wollstonecraft develops her account of the civil rights with which women need to be endowed in the light of her republican notion of freedom, and in standard republican style views freedom as a condition of virtue. Since one cannot live virtuously unless one is free, and cannot be free unless one possesses certain rights, then freedom, rights, and virtue hang together. However, as we shall see, the conception of a right to which her republicanism directs her gives rise to a tension that threatens

⁵ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 68.

⁶ For Wollstonecraft's proviso that she is talking primarily about middle-class women see Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 73.

⁷ Virginia Sapiro (1992), *A Vindication of Political Virtue* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), p. 118.

⁸ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 76.

to undermine her position; and along with other republican authors within her circle, she seeks to resolve it by appealing to a God-given natural right to liberty. This strategy aligns her with a particular strand of republican thinking. However, so I shall suggest, it also gives rise to theoretical strains that contribute in the longer run to the demise of republicanism and the flourishing of liberal political theories grounded on a commitment to natural or human rights.

In developing this argument I am building on recent work by Alan Coffee and Lena Halldenius, who have shown how deeply Wollstonecraft is indebted to a republican conception of freedom.⁹ My aim is to extend their fruitful interpretations of her overall position by suggesting that Wollstonecraft's republican commitments shape her view of what it would be to give women the right to education, legal standing, meaningful work, and financial independence that she advocates in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. The *Vindication* is a passionate attack on the society in which Wollstonecraft lived, in which women were almost entirely denied what she describes as the kind of education that would allow them to attain the character of a human being.¹⁰ Equipped only with a smattering of knowledge of a kind calculated to make them pleasing to men, they are fitted for very few occupations, are unable to enter into satisfying friendships with members of the opposite sex, and are ill-prepared to bring up children.¹¹ Moreover, in these straitened circumstances they become silly, capricious, and temperamental, thus perpetuating the traditional accusation that they are by nature the weaker sex.¹² To ameliorate women's disempowerment, Wollstonecraft suggests, they must be given a range of rights; but since she also

⁹ Lena Halldenius (2013), 'The Political Conditions for Free Agency. The Case of Mary Wollstonecraft', in Quentin Skinner and Martin Van Gelderen (eds), *Freedom and the Construction of Europe*, vol. 2, *Free Persons and Free States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 227–43; Lena Halldenius (2015), *Mary Wollstonecraft and Feminist Republicanism: Independence, Rights and the Experience of Unfreedom* (London: Pickering and Chatto); Alan Coffee (2013), 'Mary Wollstonecraft, Freedom and the Enduring Power of Social Domination', *European Journal of Political Theory* 12 (2): 116–35; Alan Coffee (2014), 'Freedom as Independence: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Grand Blessing of Life', *Hypatia* 29 (4): 908–24.

¹⁰ 'Men have increased the inferiority [of women] till they are almost sunk beneath the standard of rational creatures' (Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 101); 'But I still insist that . . . the knowledge of the two sexes should be the same in nature . . . and that women, considered not only as moral, but as rational creatures, ought to endeavour to acquire human virtues (or perfections) by the same means as men, instead of being educated like a fanciful kind of half being—one of Rousseau's wild chimeras' (Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 107).

¹¹ 'Can they be expected to govern a family with judgment, or take care of the poor babes they bring into the world?' (Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 74). To 'become the friend and not the humble dependent of her husband' a woman must strengthen her body and exercise her mind (Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 95).

¹² 'Why do men expect virtue from a slave, whom the constitution of civil society has rendered weak if not vicious?' (Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 114).

holds that the rights with which she is concerned derive their value from the contribution that they make to a free way of life, we need to begin by considering her analysis of what it is to be free and what it is to be unfree.¹³

8.1 Wollstonecraft and Republican Freedom

Wollstonecraft's diagnosis of the predicament of women draws on a republican tradition that offers a distinctive account of political freedom.¹⁴ Although this venerable view originates in Roman Law, it was faithfully repeated by a long tradition of English republicans, including Richard Price, to whose circle Wollstonecraft belonged, and remained essentially unchanged. An agent is dependent, and hence unfree, if other individuals or groups have the power to interfere with them on an arbitrary basis, regardless of the agent's own desires or interests. Furthermore, the agent remains unfree even if no one actually *exercises* arbitrary power over them. To take a canonical example, a bond slave whose master is completely benign may be able to live as she wants and take care of her interests. No one oppresses or mistreats her and no one coerces her into acting against her will. But because she remains subject to her master's arbitrary power, she is still not free. If, for some reason, he becomes angry and resentful, there may be nothing to stop him from overworking or raping her; and whether or not he actually exercises these powers, he is still in a position to do so. This is what constitutes the slave's dependence, and as long as this condition obtains she lives unfreely.¹⁵

By contrast, an agent is free when they are not dependent on the arbitrary will of anyone else. They may be subject to various constraints, including those

¹³ I presented an initial version of this chapter as the Mary Wollstonecraft Lecture at the University of Hull. My thanks to Kathleen Lennon for inviting me and to the audience for their comments. Since then I have been greatly helped by further discussions at the Dublin meeting of the British and Irish branches of the Society for Women in Philosophy (SWIP), the Philosophy Department of the University of Washington, the Department of Politics at Northwestern University, and the conference at Birkbeck College London from which this volume arose. I am especially grateful to Sandrine Bergès, Alan Coffee, Mary Dietz, Penelope Deutscher, James Farr, Lena Halldenius, Iseult Honohan, Melissa Lane, Martina Reuter, Michael Rosenthal, and Quentin Skinner for suggestions and advice.

¹⁴ For formative recent analyses of this position see Quentin Skinner (1998), *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Philip Pettit (1997), *Republicanism. A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

¹⁵ As Price puts it, 'to be free is to be guided by one's own will; and to be guided by the will of another is the characteristic of servitude' Richard Price (1991). 'Two Tracts', in *Political Writings*, ed. D. O. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 26; and as Wollstonecraft adds, women 'are educated for dependence; that is, to act according to the will of another fallible being, and submit, right or wrong, to power...' (Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 115).

imposed by the law, but as long as these restrictions are not arbitrary and take the desires and interests of each free person into account, they are compatible with liberty. As advocates of republicanism regularly point out, a king who possesses arbitrary powers or prerogatives that he can use as he likes makes his subjects dependent and renders them unfree,¹⁶ but the citizens of a republic who impose the law collectively on themselves are *independent* and possess the status of free persons.¹⁷ The idea here is that citizens who play a part in making the law are not arbitrarily subjected to it. Instead, since they have determined the law for themselves, they act on their own wills when they obey it. Moreover, this condition must be met if we are to live freely. According to Price, for example, it is the only means by which we can make 'our liberty and independency' secure.¹⁸

Dependence therefore takes away freedom, but it also has other objectionable features, including the fact that it is psychologically and morally debilitating. To return to the case of the slave, she knows that she is dependent on her master and that she needs to maintain his favour. She may ingratiate herself with him, censoring her own attitudes and opinions in the process. She may put up with treatment that she privately regards as condescending or demeaning, and she is likely to become cringing, flattering, manipulative, and placatory. However, while she may have excellent prudential reasons for becoming, as we say, slavish, the need to acquire these dispositions will damage her moral character and undermine her capacity to live as a human being should. So much so, Wollstonecraft observes, that she may even come to 'despise the freedom which she has not sufficient virtue to struggle to attain'.¹⁹ Slavery generates a range of vices that only independence can ameliorate, so that freedom is, in Wollstonecraft's phrase, 'the mother of virtue'.²⁰

¹⁶ Price takes it for granted that monarchy and freedom are incompatible: 'Every state in which a body of men representing the people make not an essential part of the legislature, is in slavery' (Price, 'Two Tracts', p. 26). And according to Wollstonecraft, 'Slavery to monarchs and ministers, which the world will be long in freeing itself from . . . is not yet abolished' (Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 112).

¹⁷ 'In every free state every man is his own legislator. All taxes are free gifts for public services. All laws are particular provisions or regulations established by common consent for gaining protection and safety. And all magistrates are trustees or deputies for carrying these regulations into execution' (Price, 'Two Tracts', pp. 23–4).

¹⁸ Richard Price (1991a), 'Britain's Happiness and the Proper Improvement of it', in *Richard Price: Political Writings*, ed. D. O. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 4. As he also puts it, 'A citizen is free when the power of commanding his own conduct and the quiet possession of his life, person, property, and good name are secured to him by being his own legislator' (Price, 'Two Tracts', p. 82).

¹⁹ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 121.

²⁰ 'Liberty is the mother of virtue, and if women be, by their very constitution, slaves, and not allowed to breathe the sharp invigorating air of freedom, they must ever languish like exotics, and be reckoned beautiful flaws in nature' (Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 103).

If the central goals of a republic are to maintain freedom and cultivate virtue, a republican state must of course outlaw bond slavery; but as Wollstonecraft among others emphasizes, there are many less drastic forms of dependence against which it will also have to guard. Hereditary property and privilege, she points out, make a vast range of people dependent and unfree.²¹ The same applies to professions organized around distinctions of rank, such as the army, the navy, and the clergy.²² In addition, however, as Wollstonecraft unusually observes, dependence is a pervasive feature of the relations between the sexes. The women who people her pages are made unfree to the extent that they are subject to the arbitrary power of men. Lacking financial or legal independence and possessing few means to support themselves, they are subject to men's power to determine their fates, regardless of whether or not these powers are exercised.²³ Moreover, their flightiness, vanity, tearfulness, coquettishness, and physical frailty are responses to a dependent condition in which they make the best of the limited powers they possess. As Wollstonecraft sums it up, 'Women, it is true, obtaining power by unjust means, by practising or fostering vice . . . become either abject slaves or capricious tyrants. They lose all simplicity, all dignity of mind, in acquiring power, and act as men are observed to act when they have been exalted by the same means.'²⁴ Unfreedom, then, is not just a political fact. It infiltrates the mind and is written on the body, determining both what one is and what one is perceived to be.

The remedy for this state of affairs is, of course, to create ways of life in which women are not subject to men's arbitrary power and are able to live on their own terms. They must be empowered to make their own judgements and speak their own minds, and thus—within the limits that equal liberty imposes—to act in accordance with their own wills. Only then will it be possible for them to develop strong and virtuous characters, transmit these traits to their children,²⁵ and have a restraining effect on male vice.²⁶ But how is this to be achieved? As Wollstonecraft envisages her programme, the way to create a free way of life

²¹ See for example her sarcastic attack on Burke. 'Security of property! Behold, in a few words the definition of English liberty. And to this selfish principle every nobler one is sacrificed' (Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 13).

²² 'Perhaps there cannot be a more forcible contrast than between the servile gait of a poor curate and the courtly mien of a bishop. And the respect and contempt they inspire cannot but render the discharge of their respective functions useless' (Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 82).

²³ 'Men are not aware of the misery they cause, and the vicious weakness they cherish, by only inciting women to render themselves pleasing' (Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 223).

²⁴ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 113.

²⁵ On the dangers that enslaved mothers pose to their children, see for example, Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, pp. 116–17.

²⁶ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 254.

for women is to equip them with a range of powers that, when taken together, will liberate them from dependence. But if the powers she has in mind are to do the work she requires of them, they must be effective and realizable powers to act. A right to education, for example, will only help women to live freely insofar as they actually possess the power to become educated,²⁷ a right to legal personhood must be an actual power to appear as a plaintiff in court,²⁸ and so on.

Here, then, Wollstonecraft seems to conceive of rights as effective powers to act. They are not merely formal permissions or entitlements endowed by some distant authority, but measures of what women are actually capable of doing and thus of how they are actually able to live. Insofar as Wollstonecraft adopts this view of rights, she is, I think, building on a republican conception of liberty and taking over a recognizably republican position. But to substantiate this claim we need to examine in a little more detail the republican heritage on which she draws.

8.2 Republican Rights as Powers

In early modern political theory we find three distinct strands of republican thinking about free persons and free states, each connected with a different tradition of republican practices and institutions. The first was the product of the Italian city republics of the Renaissance, and may be said to have culminated in Machiavelli's *Discorsi*, completed around 1520.²⁹ One of the most striking facts about this tradition is that it has nothing to say about rights. Machiavelli does not even use the terminology of *diritti*, and concentrates on understanding how certain distributions of powers can generate free ways of life. Assuming that a free or independent life is a good thing, he asks what powers people need to possess in order to achieve it.

This strand of republican theorizing contrasts with modern liberalism and libertarianism in the crucial respect that it does not start from the assumption that individual human beings are the bearers of secure moral claims or rights, but begins instead from the notion of freedom as independence. Setting aside the liberties that the state provides, there is no sense in which one is independently or antecedently *entitled* to live freely, nor is one in a position to claim that a free way of life is *due* to one. To be sure, the members of unfree societies will typically

²⁷ On the need for state-run schools see Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 247.

²⁸ A woman must 'not want, individually the protection of civil laws; she must not be dependent on her husband's bounty for her subsistence during his life or her support after his death—for how can a being be generous who has nothing of her own? Or virtuous who is not free? . . . Take away natural rights and duties become null' (Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 227).

²⁹ Niccolò Machiavelli (1950), *The Discourses of Niccolò Machiavelli*, trans. Leslie J. Walker (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).

strive for greater freedom and regret the lack of it; but it does not follow that they already possess a right to liberty that is being violated. For a Machiavellian republican, then, the primary question is not 'What rights do we have?' but rather, 'If we want to live freely, what powers must we be able to exercise and which of our current powers must we be deprived of?'. The project of generating a free way of life is a matter of devising and realizing an appropriate distribution of powers to act that will enable a group of people to avoid subjection to arbitrary power.

In addition to this first strand of republican thinking, two later lines of thought accompanied the republican movements that arose in England and Holland during the seventeenth century. Unlike Machiavelli, the main theorists of each of these political transitions did employ the language of rights. In the English case, a rights-based form of republicanism is articulated by Algernon Sidney, for whom our powers to live freely are guaranteed by an antecedent moral right to liberty, which is itself backed up by a morally binding law decreed by God. By appealing to a familiar notion of a normative natural right in the light of which our positive rights and duties can be judged, Sidney ensures that, if we again set aside the rights with which our political and social institutions endow us, each of us possesses a divinely ordained entitlement to live freely.³⁰

Sidney's *Discourses on Government* appeared in 1698, but his work partially echoes a far more influential attempt to marry the ideals of republicanism with the natural law tradition: John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, anonymously published in 1689.³¹ According to Locke, the law of nature guaranteed by God and accessible to reason teaches us that all men are equal and independent,³² so that each man has an equal right 'to his natural freedom, without being subjected to the will or authority of any other man'.³³ Moreover, since men are by nature free, the only point of entering civil society is to increase one's freedom by making oneself secure against arbitrary power:

The end of law is . . . to preserve and enlarge freedom. . . . For liberty is to be free from restraint and violence from others which cannot be, where there is no law. . . . [It is] a

³⁰ 'The creature having nothing, and being nothing but what the creator makes him, must owe all to him, and nothing to anyone from whom he has received nothing. Man therefore must be naturally free, unless he be created by another power than we have yet heard of.' Algernon Sidney (1996), 'The Liberty of a People is the Gift of God and Nature', in *Discourses on Government*, ed. Thomas G. West (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund Studies in Political Thought), section 33.

³¹ John Locke (1988), *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

³² 'The state of nature has a law to govern it, which obliged everyone: And Reason, which is that law, teaches all Mankind, who will but consult it, that being equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his Life Health, Liberty or Possessions' (Locke, *Two Treatises*, p. 271).

³³ Locke, *Two Treatises*, p. 304.

liberty to dispose and order as he lists his person, actions and possessions, and his whole property, within the allowance of the laws under which he is; and therein not to be subject to the arbitrary will of another, but freely follow his own.³⁴

Locke clearly shares the republican conviction that freedom is freedom from arbitrary power. (The legislative or supreme authority, he insists, ‘cannot assume to itself a power to rule by extemporary and arbitrary decrees’.³⁵) But he also holds that the moral illegitimacy of arbitrary government, and the corresponding legitimacy of states where the body of the people is sovereign, is grounded on the natural rights that flow from the law of nature. Our fundamental right to freedom is ultimately legitimated by divine laws that will, if followed, promote and protect the common good, and as we shall see, Wollstonecraft in turn makes use of this moral justification for republicanism.

A third strand of republican theorizing, this time originating in Holland, is most clearly exemplified by Spinoza who, in his *Theologico-Political Treatise* of 1670 and his *Tractatus Politicus* of 1677, defines the notion of a right in what is to us a much stranger fashion.³⁶ According to this view, nature puts no normative restrictions on what we can do, and gives us the right to do anything in our power; so whenever we have the power to perform an action we have the power to perform it of right or rightfully. ‘The natural right of each individual extends as far as its power. . . . Everything a man does in accordance with the laws of his nature he does by the sovereign right of nature, and he has as much right against other things in nature as he has power.’³⁷ Following the implications of these claims, we arrive at the startling conclusion that the right of nature ‘only prohibits what no one desires and what no one can do’.³⁸ Here we find Machiavelli’s concerns translated into a different vocabulary. Where Machiavelli is interested in explaining how communities can create non-arbitrary powers that will enhance their freedom, Spinoza addresses the same issue in the language of rights. To have a right to do something, he argues, is simply to possess the power to do it. So the project of creating and distributing powers that generate and sustain free ways of life can equally be described as a matter of creating and distributing rights. Our right to live freely is therefore only as strong as our effective power to live in a condition of independence; and like the more specific rights by which it is

³⁴ Locke, *Two Treatises*, p. 306. ³⁵ Locke, *Two Treatises*, p. 358.

³⁶ Benedict Spinoza (2007), *Theologico-Political Treatise*, ed. Jonathan Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Benedict Spinoza (1958), ‘Tractatus Politicus’, in *The Political Works*, ed. A. G. Wernham (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

³⁷ Spinoza, ‘Tractatus Politicus’, pp. 268–9. ³⁸ Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, p. 197.

constituted, we can only acquire this right within a state that provides us with adequate protection against powers that are arbitrary.

Contemporary feminists who have experienced the gap between the rights formally accorded to women, and the more limited benefits that many of these rights in fact deliver, may find that this Spinozist view of rights has certain attractions. We are all too familiar with the difficulty of devising rights that actually generate the powers they are intended to deliver, as when laws against rape founder because the penalties of testifying against rapists are too burdensome, or when rights to maternity leave have a detrimental effect on women's opportunity to work. As Wollstonecraft appreciates, women are not alone in confronting such obstacles. Although the British people are supposed to have the right or power to choose their monarch via their representatives, she complains, arbitrary privilege reduces it to a merely formal entitlement that they cannot in practice exercise.³⁹ But if this *type* of situation strikes us as unsatisfactory, tracing the history and fortunes of what I am calling the Spinozist strand of republicanism may help us.

We find this conception of right in the work of Richard Price, for whom liberty is fundamentally 'a right or power in every one to act as he likes'. Taking up the same view, Wollstonecraft envisages circumstances in which, relieved from their dependence on men, women will possess rights that effectively empower them and will be able to act freely in accordance with their own wills. To this extent one can see her as drawing on the Spinozist strand of republicanism, according to which rights are simply powers to act. However, just as Price insists that his conception of liberty does not imply that people are free to act without restraint,⁴⁰ so Wollstonecraft is aware that the Spinozist view is vulnerable to a series of powerful objections. How does she address them, and how does this aspect of her argument bear on her conception of rights in its entirety?

8.3 Four Problems and Four Solutions

One worrying implication of Spinoza's claim that our rights are coextensive with our powers is that our rights are extremely unstable. For example, a woman will only have a right to education in circumstances where she has the power to get it, and this power may vary with her health, resourcefulness, and financial situation.

³⁹ As Wollstonecraft points out to Burke, 'You must have discovered that the majority of the House of Commons was often purchased by the Crown, and that the people were oppressed by the influence of their own money, extorted by the venal voice of a packed representation' (Wollstonecraft, *VRM*, p. 20).

⁴⁰ Price, 'Two Tracts', p. 80.

Even if we are willing to grant that many civil and constitutional rights vary with time and place, the suggestion that all our rights are subject to continual fluctuation may seem to undermine their value. After all, what use is a right to education unless it is stable enough to survive changes in our individual powers and to endure attempts to suppress it?

Wollstonecraft is not entirely convinced by this objection, and in her attack on Burke expresses outrage at the all-too-immovable power of the rich to render the poor dependent.⁴¹ In a society dedicated to extending freedom, some rights or powers to act should be less firmly ensconced than they are. Yet, as this line of argument implies, polities also face the task of creating powers that are integral to free ways of life, and need to find out how to generate and sustain them. Confronting this problem, republicans traditionally emphasize the role of the law and argue that, by taking part in the process of legislation, citizens are able to secure the rights they hold most dear. As Wollstonecraft repeatedly emphasizes, however, the capacity to maintain liberty through legislation presupposes a power to discern the nature and benefits of a free society, which is in turn undermined in circumstances of slavery. Men who are, as she puts it, 'educated in slavish dependence and enervated by luxury and sloth', are not well placed to reflect on the problems of creating free societies.⁴² To pursue liberty to its fullest extent, they must exercise the understanding and virtue that both flow from and sustain liberty, capacities that will be vitiated as long as they hold arbitrary power over women. Working out how to stabilize the rights or powers that are essential to freedom therefore presupposes much more than a republican form of government. It also requires a wholesale reform of civil institutions, including those surrounding education and the relations between the sexes.

This ambitious response suggests that the rights or powers that free people will try to stabilize depend on a host of conditions, and here the Spinozist view may seem to pose a further problem. We tend to think of rights as primarily vested in individuals; but if a right is a power to act that in turn depends on the powers or rights of many other agents, so that it is in effect part of a whole network of mutually dependent powers, its location is less clear. How does Wollstonecraft respond to this anxiety? One of the great strengths of her analysis

⁴¹ 'Yes, Sir, the strong gained riches, the few have sacrificed the many to their vices, and to be able to pamper their appetites . . . they have ceased to be men.—Lost to the relish of true pleasure, such beings would indeed deserve compassion, if injustice was not softened by the tyrant's plea—necessity; if prescription was not raised as an immortal boundary against innovation. Their minds, in fact, instead of being cultivated, have been so warped by education, that it may require some ages to bring them back to nature, and enable them to see their true interest, with that degree of conviction which is necessary to influence their conduct' (Wollstonecraft, 1994a, p. 8).

⁴² Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 112.

is her willingness to embrace the implication that one right or power presupposes many others. For instance, if the education of children is usually the responsibility of their mothers, as she supposes, it will fall to these women to ensure that their children receive, and are able to make use of, the kind of education that encourages independence. But where mothers themselves are profoundly dependent, and manifest this condition in qualities such as indecisiveness, depression, and ill health, they will be poorly equipped for their task. Since, as Wollstonecraft holds, 'dependence of body naturally produces dependence of mind',⁴³ a good education must be 'such an exercise of understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and form the heart'.⁴⁴ Where women remain physically weak, their frailty will be reflected in a lack of the mental liveliness and resolution that a good educator needs, and will impede the development of a free way of life.⁴⁵ In short, many children will only have the right or power to receive the kind of education that will enhance their independence if their mothers are in a position to contribute to providing it.

We may be inclined to think that conditions such as these do not bear on the question of whether or not a child has a right to education. They are too hard to pin down and too personal. But if we take the Spinozist conception of a right seriously, this is not an excuse we can fall back on. Endowing individuals with effective powers is an immensely elaborate and always unfinished process, easily scuppered by bodily strengths or weaknesses, by habitual passions or old memories, by ignorance or social prejudice, or by conscious calculation. To be able to educate a girl, for example, an instructor must be able to confront her without contempt or revulsion, and to be effectively taught, the girl must be able to confront her instructor without excessive fear or embarrassment. In her *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft traces the reflexive relationships by which women are kept in a condition of dependence, and shows how patterns of embodied affect serve to prevent them from pursuing independent ways of life; but if women are to be given rights in the sense of effective powers to live more freely, we cannot turn our backs on these phenomena. All the forces and relationships that sustain dependence will have to be identified and addressed.

In sum, the objection that, if rights are construed as powers, they are not securely located in a single human being, is well taken. As Wollstonecraft's line of thought makes clear, we need to learn to see our rights as powers that are created by the institutional and personal relations between many embodied individuals,

⁴³ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 111.

⁴⁴ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 86.

⁴⁵ 'Until women are rationally educated, the progress of human virtue and improvement in knowledge must receive continual checks' (Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 107).

and are manifested in the ability of individuals to perform specific actions. Locating our rights or powers to act in individuals is a sort of shorthand, a convenient way of trying to condense a complex process in which whole networks of rights or powers are created and refined. Moreover, if we want to concentrate rights as far as possible in individual hands, we shall have to work out how to do it. Rather than assuming that this is how they already are, we need to start, as Wollstonecraft does, from the recognition of our mutual dependence.

Turning now to a third implication of the Spinozist view, if rights are powers to act, they must come in degrees. Where the powers or rights of an individual depend on the powers or rights of many other agents, the former may be more or less fully and securely realized. Once again, this is an implication that Wollstonecraft accepts. Creating freedom and the powers on which it depends is a social and historical process, and can only be achieved by stages. Liberty, she admits, is 'a fair idea that has never yet received a form in the various governments that have been established on our beauteous globe'.⁴⁶ However, the fact that a right to liberty is not completely secure does not imply that it does not exist at all. As a set of powers to act, a right as a whole can be stronger or weaker and more or less fully realized.⁴⁷

In the three aspects of Wollstonecraft's position that I have identified, we find her drawing inspiration from, and working with, a conception of rights as powers to act. Taking up one strand of the republican tradition, she addresses in its full complexity the question of what is involved in giving women the powers or rights on which their freedom depends. However, there remains a fourth objection to the Spinozist view that is harder to meet, namely that if rights are simply powers to act, they have no moral content. On the one hand, they include powers that we would normally regard as far too trivial to describe as rights, such as the power to walk down the street or pick up a book. On the other hand, they encompass powers to harm others that we would normally regard as violations of right. According to the Spinozist view, for instance, a man who has a power to rape has a right to do so, but this cannot be where either Wollstonecraft or we want to end up.

People who can take for granted their power to walk down the street may doubt whether there is anything to be gained by describing it as a right. At first glance, it is just one of a multitude of ways in which they are habitually able to act on their own

⁴⁶ Wollstonecraft, *VRM*, p. 7.

⁴⁷ Compare Price: 'There is no country [other than Britain] where liberty is enjoyed in such extent and perfection. The greatest part of the rest of mankind are *slaves*' (Price, 'Britain's Happiness', p. 3).

wills. Nevertheless, awarding this power the status of a right serves to remind us of some of the points we have just explored. The power to walk down the street has to be created and maintained, and is to this extent part of a wider network of powers. It is only as stable as this network makes it, and the network, like the right, comes in degrees. For a woman whose husband forbids her to go out, or a victim of sex slavery, it may not exist at all. The project of separating the powers that we habitually elevate to the status of rights from those that strike us as too trivial to deserve the name is not straightforward, and Wollstonecraft helps us to see that this is so.

The objection that the Spinozist view licenses a right to rape is, however, more challenging. We are on the whole deeply committed to the belief that our most fundamental rights are moral entitlements, matched by obligations or duties. If we conceive of them simply as powers that people may or may not possess, we seem to lose an entrenched and valuable distinction between rights and *mere* powers, around which much of our moral and political discourse revolves. We deprive ourselves of one way of marking the difference between powers we happen to have, and power that we believe we *ought* to have whether we actually possess them or not.

Can we manage without this distinction? Like Machiavelli, Spinoza recognizes that freedom-producing powers possess moral value while slavery-producing powers do not. To block off the unwanted implication of his view that our rights encompass all our powers to act, he appeals to an ideal of equal liberty to validate some powers over others. To return to our problematic example, he allows that a man who has the power to rape does so of right; but he also regards this right as incompatible with freedom. Since men who rape exercise arbitrary power, and since arbitrary power undermines liberty, a society that aims to promote a free way of life must outlaw rape. Moreover, in doing so, it condemns rape as inimical to the overriding value of freedom.

This line of argument is in principle available to Wollstonecraft. However, she remains extremely sensitive to the charge that, by construing rights as powers, her account licenses a view of liberty that allows anyone to do anything they can. In this she shares the anxiety of her friend Richard Price, who had been derided by Burke on exactly these grounds. Defending himself, Price vehemently rejects Burke's interpretation of his position. His republican conception of freedom requires us, he explains, to refrain from acting in ways that contravene the equal liberty of other citizens, and penalizes us when we fail to meet this standard. Liberty, as he conceives it, is therefore as far as possible from granting 'thieves and pickpockets a right to make laws for themselves', and instead demands that we live virtuously.⁴⁸ Wollstonecraft, who shares this view, leaps to Price's defence

⁴⁸ Price, 'Two Tracts', pp. 80–2.

in her *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, where she accuses Burke of defending the very notion of freedom that he had attributed to Price. One of the specific charges she levels against him is that his opposition to revolution has no moral standing because it rests on an equation of right with power.⁴⁹

Wollstonecraft and Price therefore find themselves pulled in two directions. They recognize that, in order to live freely, people have to be equipped with rights or powers they are in a position to exercise, and here they are indebted to the Spinozist strand of republicanism that we have been exploring; but they are also keen to distinguish the possession of a power to act from the possession of a right. They are convinced that the members of a community can only live freely when each possesses an equal power to act in accordance with their own wills; but they also believe that our powers to act only acquire the status of rights when they serve the moral purpose of contributing to a free way of life. In their view, kings may possess arbitrary powers and use them to oppress their subjects, but can never do so of right. By contrast, women act of right when they exercise their power to get educated, because, without education they cannot live according to their own wills and thus live freely.

While this view serves to limit the scope of rights and confines them within familiar normative bounds, we may still wonder what it is grounded on. What persuades Price and Wollstonecraft to adopt this position rather than advocating a Spinozist one? The answer clearly lies in their allegiance to the natural law tradition. Following the strand of English republicanism represented by Locke and Sidney, they turn to, and rely on, the idea of a divinely ordained moral law. According to Price, God has given us a moral right to equal freedom that is violated whenever we are enslaved,⁵⁰ and Wollstonecraft echoes the point in still more forceful terms. 'I should observe, Sir', she writes to Burke, 'that self-preservation is literally speaking the first law of nature; and that the care necessary to support and guard the body is the first step to unfold the mind, and inspire a manly spirit of independence.'⁵¹ Furthermore, 'It is necessary emphatically to repeat that there are rights which men inherit at birth, as rational creatures, who were raised above the brute creation by their improvable faculties:

⁴⁹ '[A]ll your declamations lead so directly to this conclusion that I beseech you to ask your own heart, when you call yourself a friend of liberty, whether it would not be more consistent to style yourself the champion of property, the adorer of the golden image which power has set up?' (Wollstonecraft, *VRM*, pp. 11–12).

⁵⁰ 'The equality of independence of men is one of their essential rights. . . . Mankind came with this right from the hands of their maker. But all governments which are not free are totally inconsistent with it' (Price, 'Two Tracts', p. 86).

⁵¹ Wollstonecraft, *VRM*, p. 15.

and that, in receiving these, not from their forefathers but from God, prescription can never undermine natural rights'.⁵²

Wollstonecraft is therefore one of a group of writers who continues the Lockean project of engineering a rapprochement between republicanism and the legacy of the natural law tradition, and in doing so contributes to what will become the triumph of liberalism over republicanism—the subordination of theories organized around a conception of equal freedom as the overarching value of political life to theories grounded on individual moral rights. For Wollstonecraft, a right to live freely is an inalienable, natural entitlement given to each human being by God, so that the exercise of this power to act is morally guaranteed. Moreover, it in turn gives moral value to the more specific powers or rights by which a free way of life is constituted. As Price indicates, the power of citizens to be bound only by laws to which they have consented acquires the status of a right because it makes a vital contribution to maintaining a free state in which the power of government is not arbitrary.⁵³ And as Wollstonecraft adds, women's education is one of a number of measures that acquire the status of rights, because, without them, women will remain dependent and unfree.

A power to act therefore qualifies as a moral right by virtue of the fact that it makes a contribution to a way of life in which individuals are not subject to arbitrary power. However, there remains plenty of room for debate about the kinds of power that count as arbitrary and thus about the character of a free society. Aiming to moderate what he presumably regarded as the theoretical and political excesses of the most radical forms of Early Modern republicanism, Locke had argued that an agent can only hold arbitrary power over another when they have a power over their life. The subjects of absolute monarchs therefore qualify as slaves,⁵⁴ but the same does not apply to children, servants, or wives, because the powers under which they live fall short of being arbitrary or absolute. Since a paterfamilias 'has no legislative power of life and death' over members of his household,⁵⁵ and since the contracts between husbands and wives are both consensual and limited,⁵⁶ marriage does not enslave women or take away their natural liberty.

By reducing the scope of slavery, Locke correspondingly extends the list of types of individuals who can be said to live in possession of their natural right. As

⁵² Wollstonecraft, *VRM*, pp. 12–13.

⁵³ 'We can have no burdens laid upon us without our own consent, and the laws by which we are governed are not such as a senseless tyrant may please to appoint, but such as we ourselves by our representative concur in making' Price (1991a), pp. 4–5.

⁵⁴ Locke, *Two Treatises*, pp. 326–7.

⁵⁵ Locke, *Two Treatises*, p. 323.

⁵⁶ Locke, *Two Treatises*, pp. 321–2.

long as one is not a bond slave, and as long as one lives in a society where sovereignty rests ultimately on the consent of the people, he claims, one is not subject to arbitrary power and therefore counts as free. This redefinition has the effect of narrowing debate about freedom so that it no longer bears on the institutions of civil society but instead focuses on the political sphere; and it is in her firm opposition to this shift that Wollstonecraft manifests her radicalism. Unmoved by the Lockean picture of marital consensus, and outraged by Rousseau's aspirations for female education, she articulates a sense in which women can properly be described as slaves and thus as deprived of freedom. The divinely ordained right to liberty on which English republicans lay so much stress is a right to live in accordance with one's own will without subjection to arbitrary power, and is thus a right to live in a particular way. But this right can only be realized when citizens have a range of effective powers to act. These have traditionally been conceived as encompassing the powers to be represented, to worship according to one's conscience, and to act on one's moral judgement.⁵⁷ However, as Wollstonecraft now insists, they must also include a range of powers that are currently unavailable to women, including the powers to be educated, to own property, to earn money, and to be acknowledged as a legal person. Until women can effectively exercise all these powers, they will remain deprived of their right to freedom.

8.4 Conclusion

Wollstonecraft's position is founded on a transcendental conception of human rights that imposes ethical limits on the legitimacy of our powers to act. In this respect she is part of a rights-based, natural law tradition. However, her treatment of rights is also shaped by a republican notion of rights as powers to act. A right to freedom, as she conceives of it, is a moral entitlement that individuals possess independently of their social condition. But it can only be exercised or realized—and thus given any practical value—in a community that gives its members a wide range of effective powers to act on their own wills. Endowing people with rights is therefore not merely a theoretical or theological exercise; instead, it is a political one and requires imagination and ingenuity. What distinguishes Wollstonecraft from other republican writers, and makes her contribution to republican thinking so original, is thus her sensitivity to the range of powers or rights that a free way of life for women requires, and to the many kinds of obstacles that have to be overcome if these powers are to be effective. Since,

⁵⁷ Price, 'Two Tracts', pp. 21–3.

as she acknowledges, creating freedom is an ongoing collective undertaking, generating the full gamut of effective powers on which women's freedom depends is an end for which women will have to continue to strive. One moral of her work, so Wollstonecraft insists, is that women should approach this task with optimism. 'Rousseau', she remarks, 'asserts himself to prove that all was right originally; a crowd of authors that all *is* now right; and I that all will *be* right.'⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 79.

9

Representation in Mary Wollstonecraft's Political Philosophy

Lena Halldenius

Mary Wollstonecraft's interventions in philosophical and political debates about society took place against the backdrop of the French Revolution and the constitutional upheavals witnessed by her own times. Her contemporary intellectual context is one of intense theorizing on republican matters, forms of government, executive and legislative powers, the nature and authority of the people, of citizenship, civil rights, and of the nature and purpose of representation. The transformation of the political landscape turned the philosophical question of popular representation into an issue of acute political contention. What is representation, what is being represented, who can be a representative, and on the basis of what?

There is no ready theory of representation to be plucked from Wollstonecraft's writings. She does, however, use the notion of representation frequently and with a resolute purpose. Representation is one of the tools in her critical argument for a normative function of government in unequal conditions. Wollstonecraft is a republican thinker, a crucial implication of which is found in her conception of liberty. Liberty stands for independence in relation to others, in the sense of not being dependent on or vulnerable to the caprice or arbitrary will of another, who by that position of power alone would be a tyrant.¹ She uses "slavery" to signify such a

¹ I analyse Wollstonecraft's political and moral philosophy as a whole in Halldenius (2015), *Mary Wollstonecraft and Feminist Republicanism: Independence, Rights and the Experience of Unfreedom* (London: Pickering and Chatto). In ch. 7, I discuss representation and the role of the people in the context of institutional conditions generally, including property relations and economic reform. See also Halldenius (2007), "The primacy of right. On the triad of liberty, equality and virtue in

position. For Wollstonecraft, freedom has a material aspect that feeds her critique of women's economic dependence on men and their legal inability to act in their own name.² Unfreedom is a denial of the status of one's person and not directly related to what one can actually do or not do. An act that one is factually able to perform is nonetheless performed unfreely if one acts on the mercy of another.

Can a coherent notion of representation be identified in Wollstonecraft's writings on political society and, if so, what would it look like? Answering this question requires that we consider the job that representation is made to do within Wollstonecraft's views on the moral purpose of political society. In Wollstonecraft's philosophy a person's capacity to act morally, freely, is conditioned on the organization, structure, and norms of society, the perspectives and interests of different "classes", and each person's place within this complex. That is why the purpose of political society is a moral one. The dynamic between morality and politics and the tight nest of personal freedom and political conditions are intricately bound up with each other.³ Representation, as we will see, is a requirement of equality in political society taken as it is, not as it should be.

The notion that representation could be a way of conceptualizing limitations on what governments may rightfully do, rather than the authority on which governments act, was a fairly new one. How one thinks about things such as constitutional arrangements and the franchise will vary with one's particular views of representation under this broad concept. The fact that representation did not straightforwardly translate into popular participation—not even in the revolutionary era with which we are presently concerned—is however not as odd as it might appear to a reader today. The represented people will always be in part an abstraction, an idealized picture rather than a reflection of empirical men and

Wollstonecraft's political thought", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 15 (1): 75–99 (on liberty and rights); and on the relation between political and moral freedom, see Halldenius (2013), "The political conditions for free agency. The case of Mary Wollstonecraft", in *Freedom and the Construction of Europe*, vol. 2, eds Q. Skinner and M. van Gelderen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 227–43. On Wollstonecraft and republican freedom, see also Alan Coffee (2013), "Mary Wollstonecraft, freedom and the enduring power of social domination", *European Journal of Political Theory* 12 (2): 116–35, as well as Coffee's and James's contributions to this volume.

² On Wollstonecraft's critique of property, see Halldenius (2014), "Mary Wollstonecraft's Feminist Critique of Property: On Becoming a Thief from Principle", *Hypatia. A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 29 (4): 942–57; and Brace in this volume. Taylor discusses equality and independence in relation to property in Barbara Taylor (2003), *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 165–75. See also Sandrine Bergès (2013), *Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London: Routledge), pp. 149–55.

³ On the socio-relational quality of Wollstonecraft's conception of independence, see Mackenzie in this volume.

women. It is also not obvious that the republican constitution leaves much room for the actual people to resist their actual representatives. How can you object to what the government does if what the government does is supposed to be a representation of what your will would have been had you only been capable of disregarding your private interests?

A theme that runs through Wollstonecraft's thoughts on constitutional issues and on representation generally is that the republican cause is a justified one, but that we need to guard against the temptation to conflate republican ideals with the always less-than-perfect instantiations of them in the new republics, otherwise we risk covering the weakest interests under a false display of unity, republican in name only.

In order to frame my analysis, I will start by laying out some implications of that larger argument—insofar as it is relevant for the matter at hand—and of the way that I read it. The main part of the chapter is devoted to a discussion of Wollstonecraft's uses of representation—read from inside her theory of political society and its moral function—as they appear on two levels of right: constitutional and political.⁴ The notion of representation for Wollstonecraft serves in an argument about the cultivation of an inclusive, rights based, agonistic political culture, making this notion distinct from the more aristocratic Federalist version. Crucial for getting the sense of her argument right is that one recognizes the importance and consequence of what she leaves out of it: the people as an incorporated entity.

9.1 There Is No One Here But Us

In Book IV of *An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution* (published in 1794), Wollstonecraft uses the post-revolutionary situation in France, and its new constitution, for a dual purpose. It is a point of reference for her normative argument concerning the rightful institution of government, but also an illustration of a politically utopian ideal introduced too quickly, without proper forethought and administration, and with unrealistic expectations. Political transformations are often sudden, but even when the result is a new philosophically sound constitution one needs to recognize that deep political change is dependent on the moral improvement of man, which is a gradual and slow affair.

⁴ Wollstonecraft's notion of representation has rarely been discussed as a contribution to republican constitutional and political thought. Sapiro focuses on representation as an aesthetic category of self-representation; see Virginia Sapiro (1992), *A Vindication of Political Virtue. The Political Theory of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), ch. 6. On representation of the person, see also Halldenius (2015), pp. 91–3, on theatricality and role-playing.

Attention to detail and consequence, recognition of the limitations of those who are to administer and live within a newly formed republic, and of the material and cultural circumstances of change are easily lost in the giddiness of revolution. That, Wollstonecraft claims, is what happened in France. On her arrival in Paris 1793 she reflects on the superficiality and destructive dynamic of hasty political change:

when every thing whispers me, that names, not principles, are changed, and when I see that the turn of the tide has left the dregs of the old system to corrupt the new. For the same pride of office, the same desire of power are still visible; with this aggravation, that, fearing to return to obscurity after having but just acquired a relish for distinction, each hero, or philosopher, for all are dubbed with these new titles, endeavours to make hay while the sun shines;⁵

Republican principles are the only ones on which a legitimate government can be formed, on that she is adamant. Moreover, any tyrannical government has a limited time span and will eventually but inevitably be overturned. There is only so much misery that the downtrodden can take and when their endurance wears out, they will retaliate. The more humiliation, poverty, and violence people have been subjected to and, in consequence, the more cunning their circumstances have forced them to become, the more merciless will be their retaliation and, importantly, the less fit they will be to manage political reform. Consequently, the revolution was justified and inevitable, as inevitable as the failure of the rushed changes that followed.

The view that danger lurks when ideas, however good in themselves, are introduced prematurely and without practical prudence gradually became more and more important to Wollstonecraft. Listening to the advice of philosophers—dedicated to perfection as they are—comes with the risk of purchasing “the good of posterity too dearly, by the misery of the present generation”.⁶ The job of the politician is to “attend to the improvement and interest of the time in which he lives”. Politics, then, is characterized by the fact that it always and necessarily takes place in non-ideal circumstances, where justice and freedom are things still to be attained rather than goods to be administered. This also reminds us that the purpose of political society, for Wollstonecraft, is moral in her own particular

⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft (1989 [1793]), “Letter on the Present Character of the French Nation”, in *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, eds J. Todd and M. Butler (London: William Pickering), vol. 6, p. 446. All references to works by Wollstonecraft are to this edition, in seven volumes. References are by volume and page number.

⁶ Mary Wollstonecraft (1989 [1794]), *An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*, vol. 6, p. 154; see also Wollstonecraft (1989 [1796]), *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, vol. 6, p. 346.

sense: morality is not a set of conduct governing musts and must-nots, but an ongoing, progressive, and vulnerable endeavour, guided by principles but conditioned by circumstance and human frailty.

This might look like an undisciplined mix of principles and pragmatism, but there is an important point here that we need to get right, about change and the agents of change.

The moral purpose of political society is, as she puts it, to destroy natural inequality of strength by protecting the weak.⁷ The moral purpose is not to merely cushion the blows against the weak, but to establish society on the principle of equality and to disestablish the principle of “inequality of rank and property”, which secures only subjection and illicit power.⁸ Any reasonable interpretation or reconstruction of what Wollstonecraft has to say about any political matter needs to account for the central importance of this idea for her philosophy of politics and morality.⁹ Nature has made men unequal in strength. Rather than countering this natural inequality, society has reinforced it by benefiting the rich and subordinating the vulnerable even further to the powers and whims of the fortunate. As long as unmerited privilege is framed as *rights*—to property and distinction—any change intent on benefiting the poor will look like a violation of the rich. Thus is justice confused with a “mock respect of selfishness”.¹⁰ Laws that support hierarchy and inequality of wealth and privilege are unjust and unjust laws do not obligate.

The principle of natural equality guides what governments should do and limits what they have a right to do. The same principle guides what people should aim for and limits what they are obligated to endure. But what government officials as well as private members of the state actually *will* do is not likely to be determined by moral principles. People in government are not, as Wollstonecraft points out in a biting rebuke to Burke, elected to sit on “holy nominations”.¹¹ They are ordinary people who have been successful in securing votes, possibly through scheming rather than displays of public virtue. We do well to remember that politics does not take place anywhere else than in the middle of our collected shortcomings. The important point, then, is that we cannot rely on the wisdom or virtue of people in government. This sets a difficult challenge for the formation

⁷ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The French Revolution*, vol. 6, p. 17.

⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft (1989 [1790]), *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, vol. 5, p. 41.

⁹ I strongly disagree with Tomaselli’s claim (in this volume) that Wollstonecraft’s philosophy is not egalitarian.

¹⁰ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Rights of Men*, vol. 5, p. 58.

¹¹ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Rights of Men*, vol. 5, p. 36. Compare Burke on nomination to office as to “an holy function”, Edmund Burke (1968), *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. C. C. O’Brien (London: Penguin Books), p. 192.

and workings of government, a challenge that I will try to articulate through Wollstonecraft's use of the notion of representation.

9.2 How Can There Be Such a Thing as a People?

Wollstonecraft exploits the conventional distinction between natural, political, and civil rights—"the main pillars of all social happiness"¹²—and aligns it with three aspects of the right to liberty.

Natural rights refer to the principle of equality of human persons and translate politically into a critique of hereditary privilege, inequality of civil protection, and other "arbitrary" or "unnatural" distinctions.¹³ Political rights are rights against oppression and refer to the function of political society to counteract the natural fact of inequality on the basis of the natural principle of equality. Civil rights refer to sovereignty and translate into a demand for a constitution as "the pillar of a government, the bond of all social unity and order" and the right of the people to be regarded as sovereign source of authority.¹⁴ We should note that only on this level is the rights bearer referred to as a collective entity—"the people" or "the nation"¹⁵—rather than as an individual or an aggregate of individual persons. Referring to "the people" as an agent, the seat of sovereignty, and the source of all authority is conventional republican parlance. A challenge is to make sense of it here, given that Wollstonecraft's view of political society seems hardly to make room for such a thing as "a people" in a sense sufficiently robust to do all this republican work.

We need to proceed with some care, by first focusing on the idea of the will of the people, and what it has been made to mean by other philosophers, in order to get a clearer picture of what representation for Wollstonecraft is *not*.

Rousseau, who Wollstonecraft admired, had denied that the people's sovereignty could ever be represented. An act of sovereignty, Rousseau maintained, is a declaration of the general will; the general will makes law, which is always general in character. Since the people's sovereignty consists in the exercise of the general will, its sovereignty cannot be represented. Representation is the same as alienation; there is no difference between a represented will and a will given up. The moment a people acts to elect representatives for itself "it is no longer free; it no longer exists".¹⁶ A represented people is nothing but an enslaved multitude;

¹² Wollstonecraft (1989), *The French Revolution*, vol. 6, p. 187.

¹³ Mary Wollstonecraft (1989), *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, vol. 5, p. 135; and Wollstonecraft (1989), *The French Revolution*, vol. 6, p. 16.

¹⁴ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The French Revolution*, vol. 6, p. 186.

¹⁵ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The French Revolution*, vol. 6, p. 162.

¹⁶ Jean Jacques Rousseau (1968), *The Social Contract* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books), Book III, ch. XV; also Book II, ch. I-II. I agree with Douglass that Rousseau's critique of representation is one of

representation, Rousseau claims, is a feudal notion, fit for serfs. The fact that the people's sovereign will—its law-making power—cannot be represented is, however, compatible with the people electing agents to act out its executive power. The difference between representatives and agents seem to be that a representative acts in the place of the represented, exercises their own judgement, and then decides what to do, while an agent is quite simply told what to do. No power, right, or privilege has been conferred onto the agent; as soon as the people congregates, the agent is nothing.

On certain understandings of representation, Rousseau's agents could count as representatives, at least in the formal sense in which a servant or steward acting on his master's instructions can be said to represent the master's orders in carrying out the actual work.¹⁷ We do well to remember that Hobbes's influence on Rousseau was substantial and that Hobbes's theory of representation is likely to have loomed in Rousseau's mind; it is representation in the Hobbesian sense that has to be resisted.

For Hobbes, any artificial body is representative in the sense that it depends for its existence on having been authorized to act. In the act of authorization, the rights and powers of the "author"—the people in this case—is handed over to the "actor"—the ruler or legislator—who by that act of authorization is free to act in the name of the author and to bind the author—the people, in this case—to the consequences of his actions.¹⁸ For Hobbes, the people, in the act of authorization, divest themselves of their natural liberty and subsume their freedom to act under the will of the sovereign legislator.

Rousseau shares with Hobbes the idea that the sovereign, legislative will is indivisible. For Hobbes, indivisibility entails that sovereignty, for the sake of peace and order, has to be alienated completely and assumed in its entirety by whoever is authorized to legislate. Rousseau draws the opposite conclusion: since the sovereign will is indivisible, it cannot be handed over in any part since that would amount to alienating it completely. Representation is an all-or-nothing affair. The people either retains its sovereign power or renounces it, and representation

principle, not pragmatics: Robin Douglass (2013), "Rousseau's Critique of Representative Sovereignty: Principled or Pragmatic?", *American Journal of Political Science* 57 (3): 735–47.

¹⁷ See Hanna Fenichel Pitkin (1967), *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), ch. 6; and Mónica Brito Vieira and David Runciman (2008), *Representation* (Cambridge: Polity Press), ch. 1.

¹⁸ Thomas Hobbes (1996), *Leviathan*, ed. R. Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 111–15; Quentin Skinner (2008), *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 164f, 187). On liberty and artificiality, Halldenius (2012), "Liberty, Law and *Leviathan*: Of Being Free from Impediments by Artifice", *Theoria. A Journal of Social and Political Theory* 59 (131): 1–20.

is to renounce it. In an inversion of the Hobbesian image, in which the multitude turns itself into a people—an artificial body—in the act of authorization where natural liberty is given up, for Rousseau the people ceases to exist by renouncing sovereignty. This Hobbesian backdrop contributes to the urgency in Rousseau's insistence that the constitution of a republic cannot rest on the representation of the will of the people.

For Rousseau the exercise of the general will requires necessarily an act of association, whereby a people with an actual—but general—will of its own is created as an entirely artificial entity. The Hobbesianism of this is, again, evident. The act of association occasions a radical shift in the situation of man, an ontological transformation (which is absent in, for example, Locke's theory of government) from the natural to the civil state. In this transformation man gives up his natural liberty but gains instead a civil liberty; by subsuming one's private will to the general will of all, one gives oneself to no one while giving oneself completely to the totality of the community, thus remaining, in Rousseau's memorable phrase, "as free as before". The artificiality of the republic and the unity of its "single body" *being*—rather than representing—the people entails that resisting the sovereign law-making will is written out as a matter of definition.¹⁹ If my public will as a citizen simply *is* the general will, then there is no gap between me and the law where an act of resistance can make sense; obeying the law is the same thing as following my own public will. The will of the people is a general will with the common good as its end—and rightful because of it—as long as no factions or "sectional associations" are introduced.²⁰ If one sectional association manages to dominate all others, there is no longer a general will and the state will be run on the basis of a private opinion.

This combination of ideas—the people as an associated body, the contradictory nature of resistance to the sovereign will, and a unity of interests making up the common good—are crucial features also of Kant's conception of constitutional right. The Kantian act of association, whereby the people is incorporated, is not a fact but an idea of reason, and as such it cannot allow exceptions. Officials of the state are representatives in the sense that they represent the *idea* of the incorporated will of the people. The act of association is necessary and, by that same token, not empirical; it has not happened, but it is necessary that we act as if it has. In the republic, resistance to law is ruled out, not, as for Rousseau, because and as long as law is my actual albeit artificial will, but because of the meaning of sovereignty. The very suggestion of legitimate resistance to a sovereign will makes

¹⁹ Rousseau (1968), *The Social Contract*, Book I, ch. VII.

²⁰ Rousseau (1968), *The Social Contract*, Book II, ch. III.

the idea of it nonsensical and law impossible. The legislating authority “can belong only to the united will of the people” and the people can do no harm to itself.²¹ Again, the idea of the republic rests completely on the unity—the united will—of the incorporated people: “Any true republic is and can only be a *system representing* the people [...] by all the citizens united and acting through their delegates”.²²

This route via Hobbes, Rousseau, and Kant shows the philosophical baggage that accompanies the idea of representation on a constitutional level. If the “what” that is being constitutionally represented is “a people” then we need to know how such an entity can exist and what it is. Hobbes, Rousseau, and Kant form a strong strand of thinking in which “the people” in its political guise exists by virtue of an act of association, making it true to say that the people is a political body, an incorporated being, with one will, the end of which is (on the anti-republican story of Hobbes) survival, or (on the republican story of Rousseau and Kant) the common good. The point is that “the people” serves in an argument about the necessity of a unity of interest for the existence of the commonwealth or the republic. The unity of interest is exercised through a united will of an agent sufficiently coherent to be capable of having a will of its own. Hence the people as an incorporated entity acting on *its* interests, protecting (as Kant puts it) “*its* rights in *its* name”²³ is necessary—as a fact or as an idea—for there to be a state in the proper sense at all, rather than just despotism.

It is crucial to understand that this is baggage that Wollstonecraft does not want to carry. The idea of a united people, she would tell us, is a problem. In fact, it is a trick.

9.3 Constitutional Representation

Wollstonecraft’s thoughts on constitutional matters are given largely in the context of her commentary on the early stages of the French Revolution. *An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution* displays a mix of conventional republican terminology and ideas, interspersed with qualifications and doubts, and needs to be interpreted against the background of the moral philosophy in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and the theory of liberty

²¹ Immanuel Kant (1996), *The Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 91 (academy pagination 6:313).

²² Kant (1996), *The Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 112f (6:341). See also Lena Halldenius (2011), “Kant on Freedom and Obligation Under Law”, *Constellations. An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory* 18 (2): 170–89.

²³ Kant (1996), *The Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 112f (6:341). (My emphases.)

and the critique of property, privilege, and historical justification in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790).

Coming from a republican, a passage like this following one is in a sense unremarkable. I quote at some length since this passage elucidates what representation on a constitutional level does within Wollstonecraft's larger argument:

The will of the people being supreme, it is not only the duty of their representatives to respect it, but their political existence ought to depend on their acting conformably to the will of their constituents. Their voice, in enlightened countries, is always the voice of reason. But in the infancy of society, and during the advancement of the science of political liberty, it is highly necessary for the governing authority to be guided by the progress of that science; and to prevent, by judicious measures, any check being given to it's advancement, whilst equal care is taken not to produce the miseries of anarchy by encouraging licentious freedom.²⁴

Several things in this passage serve usefully in our endeavour to understand Wollstonecraft's views of representation on a constitutional level.

We do well to recall that at no stage does Wollstonecraft show any interest at all in how political society came into existence. The incorporated character of the state, so important for Rousseau and Kant, and for Hobbes on whom they both depend, implies that states be founded on a constitutive act of association. There is nothing to indicate that Wollstonecraft saw political society in this way, neither does she use artificiality in this ontological sense. The artificial and the natural are moral, not ontological, categories. Political society, therefore, is not artificial in its character; it is artificial only to the extent that it falls short of its moral function. Its end is as natural as morality itself. Any distinction, privilege, or power that cannot be morally justified is artificial. The mind of man corrupted by "hereditary property—hereditary honours" into thinking that true happiness can result from anything other than a society of equals, and that charity is founded on justice rather than condescension, is artificial too, indeed monstrously so.²⁵ Artificiality is an aberration of rightfulness, not a characteristic of the state.

So what is the foundation of the constitution if not an act of association, not even as an idea? Wollstonecraft addresses the matter indirectly in her refutation of Burke's historical argument in support of monarchy in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*. What is the standard by which we measure our institutions? Surely not the "imagined virtues" of forefathers.²⁶ Using a longish quote from Hume's *History of England*, she stresses that by looking back for guidance we will

²⁴ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The French Revolution*, vol. 6, p. 210.

²⁵ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Rights of Men*, vol. 5, p. 10.

²⁶ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Rights of Men*, vol. 5, p. 41.

find nothing but a heterogenous mass of “opposite and incompatible” systems of government, so when are we supposed to stop?²⁷

Stating that “[i]t is not, perhaps, of very great consequence who were the founders of a state; savages, thieves, curates, or practitioners in the law”, Wollstonecraft implies that social compacts and historical legitimation are equally useless tools.²⁸ The virtues of forefathers, ancient constitutions, and acts of association are all imaginary, fictitious. The only standard by which we can possibly discriminate between any of these is justice. This is not a substantial answer in itself, but rather an indication that we need to engage with political morality. The only debate worth having is the debate over what justice means and requires. Wollstonecraft could have shaken hands with Hume on this matter: an imagined act of association is an unnecessary complication when all we want to say, really, is that a constitution is legitimate to the extent that it does what we want it to do.²⁹

But if justice is the only legitimate source of the constitution, then what remains for Wollstonecraft of the people’s status as sovereign source of authority? In other words, what remains of representation on the constitutional level? Let me suggest two things here, one concerning the meaning of “people” and one concerning the constitutional role of the people thus conceived.

The “people” could refer to one—or both—of two things. It could refer to the unprivileged segment of society, those who are not distinguished by rank. There is some textual support as well as republican precedents for this view, for instance in the several references that Wollstonecraft makes to how the third estate in France “constituted themselves a national assembly”.³⁰ The quote from Hume to which I just referred, and which she uses against Burke’s defence of the aristocracy and clergy, goes on to speak of the Commons as “the people, for whom chiefly government was instituted, and who chiefly deserve consideration”.³¹

Alternatively, or additionally, the “people” refers to the circle of rights holders, meaning human persons in general in their moral guise. The person is the “bond of union” between men and women and between humans in general, who in

²⁷ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Rights of Men*, vol. 5, p. 11. Compare Paine’s critique of Burke: “if antiquity is to be authority, a thousand such authorities may be produced, successively contradicting each other”, Thomas Paine (1995), *Rights of Man*, in *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings*, ed. Mark Philp (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 116. See further Halldenius (2015), pp. 37–8.

²⁸ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Rights of Men*, vol. 5, p. 40.

²⁹ David Hume (1994), “Of the origin of government” and “Of the original contract”, in *Political Essays*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 20–3, 186–201.

³⁰ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The French Revolution*, vol. 6, p. 63.

³¹ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Rights of Men*, vol. 5, p. 12.

other and morally irrelevant respects, might be radically different.³² In this sense the “people” does refer to something other than empirical men and women, not in an artificially constructed sense but in the natural moral sense in which all are equal by virtue of their moral standing, irrespective of distinctions in property and power.

We do not need to decide between these two significations since they are functionally the same, for the following reason. To borrow from Federalist parlance, the people in the republican tradition refers to “a more perfect union” than real-life men and women with their ordinary interests, their discontents, and their limited knowledge of and attention to civic matters. If that better union is what representatives represent, then they need to be capable of looking beyond ordinary life, beyond factional interests of different groups or classes (including their own) to the common good of the union itself. Representatives should be those “whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations”.³³ This capacity was believed to require independence, which in practice was taken to mean that representatives, in order to serve the republic well, had to be educated, possess sufficient property to support themselves, and incidentally, be male and white.

This means in its turn, that the union of the people is supposed to be represented by those who are privileged within it. Privilege—in terms of sex, money, colour, and social status—constitutes the independence that makes a person fit to represent the nation. On this view, women, labourers, and other dependents who are denied the suffrage and the right to be elected are as well-represented as anyone else, since their true interest is the interest of the nation, an interest best represented by those whose elevated status account for their believed wisdom to discern it.

The only understanding of the people that makes sense within Wollstonecraft's critical philosophy is based on a refutation of exactly that claim. It is not the privileged among us who are best situated and able to look beyond partisan interests to what justice requires. On the contrary, privilege and distinction corrupt the mind and produce “artificial monsters”; representation in the hands of the privileged is “only a convenient handle for despotism”.³⁴ A republicanism that does not account for the corrupting effects of hierarchy

³² Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Rights of Woman*, vol. 5, p. 207.

³³ *Federalist Paper*, no. 10. Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay (2008), *The Federalist Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

³⁴ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Rights of Woman*, vol. 5, p. 217.

on the minds of people will conflate justice and the common interest with the preservation of whatever suits the powerful. The rich man will benefit only his own class while all the while believing himself to be “a great author [...] more moral than the multitude”.³⁵

The people “for whom chiefly government was instituted” can be fairly represented, therefore, only by applying the perspective of those with no privileges to lose, not those who own but those who pay, with their labour and their taxes. The point is that the union of the only people there can be consists in morality, not incorporation, and the objective, disinterested view that is required if politics is to serve its moral purpose—the “philosophical eye” as Wollstonecraft puts it in the conclusion of *The French Revolution*—is the view of the poor man.³⁶

The “what” that is represented on the constitutional level can only be justice, but in actual political practice justice will be the principle on which representatives act only on condition that privilege and hierarchy do not cloud their judgement. Implicitly, we find here a further critique of the Federalist stance—as expressed in the tenth *Federalist Paper*—that factional interests and sectarianism can be fought only by disarming its effects through institutional design, not by removing its causes since the latter would inevitably amount to a violation of liberties. For Wollstonecraft, sectarian interests are caused by and allowed political influence through the existence of entrenched hierarchies—hereditary wealth and privilege, inequality of property, women’s subordination to men—and no institutional design can disarm the effects of them. Sectarian interests turn into a “chain of despotism” exactly when and because those in power are able to “[confound] their rights with metaphysical jargon”, that is, enforce a false view of what is good and “profit by the cheat”.³⁷

We cannot expect that the privileged will fairly administer the effects of their own advantages. This begs the question of how representation should be organized and executed within an existing, ongoing constitution, which will always be less than perfect in form as well as in content and consequences. Wollstonecraft displays little concern with the formal structure of institutions; this could be explained by her view of where the republican action is. If the “what” that is represented by the constitution of a republic is justice, and if a true perception of what justice is can only be had through the “philosophical eye” of the non-privileged position—the “common” people or the people in their moral guise—and if those persons most likely to float to the top of a political hierarchy are

³⁵ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The French Revolution*, vol. 6, p. 41.

³⁶ See also Halldenius (2015), *Mary Wollstonecraft and Feminist Republicanism*, pp. 123–4.

³⁷ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The French Revolution*, vol. 6, p. 17.

those least likely to look at things with the “philosophical eye”, then this much is certain: the republican struggle is not only about the writing of constitutions or the number of seats in senates; it is much more mundane than that.

9.4 Political Representation

A stable indicator of which we may not lose sight is that Wollstonecraft takes political society as it is, not as it should be. A fair system of representation needs to serve the purpose of the political association—to destroy the fact of natural and attributed inequality by protecting the weak. Representative government is one aspect of the advancement of civilization, but advancement has also exacerbated natural inequalities and created new ones, notably through state protection of vast inequalities of property. The strong will always try to use their advantages in order to normalize their upper hand, and to cast their privileges as rightful possessions, worthy of protection by laws, institutions, and social norms. In the wake of the constitutional upheavals of her own time, Wollstonecraft did not find much to contradict that tendency, only a new idiom in which to flaunt it: posing as the wise guarantors of a fair representation, the new republican statesmen also used their advantages to assert themselves. They managed to identify the independence required of an agent of the state with all the marks of their own patriarchal privilege: maleness, whiteness, and money.³⁸

Wollstonecraft's critique of Edmund Burke in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* placed her squarely in the revolutionary camp that Burke attacked in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. But Burke is a more ambiguous opponent than Wollstonecraft sets him up to be.³⁹ Despite his defence of natural aristocracies and his dismissal of the rights of man, he shares with many republicans a depiction of the “what” that is being represented politically. Parliament, said Burke, in 1774:

is not a *congress* of ambassadors from different and hostile interests, which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but Parliament is a *deliberative* assembly of *one* nation, with *one* interest, that of the

³⁸ In this section I build on my discussion in Halldenius (2015), pp. 125–7.

³⁹ Given Wollstonecraft's sharply formulated critique of Burke we are used to thinking of him as her main antagonist; see for instance Sapiro (1992), *A Vindication of Political Virtue*, ch. 6. Conniff portrays her instead as a moderate critic: James Conniff (1999), “Edmund Burke and His Critics: The Case of Mary Wollstonecraft”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60 (2): 299–318. O'Neill reads their clash through a joint debt to the Scottish Enlightenment: Daniel I. O'Neill (2007), *The Burke–Wollstonecraft Debate. Savagery, Civilization, and Democracy* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press).

whole—where not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole. You choose a member, indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is not member of Bristol, but he is a member of *Parliament*.⁴⁰

Many republicans could have said the same thing. For Burke, though, the oneness of the nation was a historical phenomenon and a parliamentary member's guide to the general good was not the constitution but "Providence". For republicans, as we have seen, the oneness of the nation tended to be based on the notion of the incorporated nature of the people; "the more perfect union" showing to street-level *hoi polloi* a better version of themselves.

The oneness of this more perfect "what" that is represented politically came, then, in different guises, but for Wollstonecraft they are all smoke screens. The idea of a united interest or will may make moral sense on the abstract level of constitutional form, but on the level of legislation and policy, the day-to-day running of the state, it is fraudulent.

The claim that what representatives represent politically is some kind of wholeness, a good held in union, portrays a political life where conflict and strife have no proper place. If segments of society protest against what they perceive as injustices of the majority view, they will come across as a hostile interest, a faction, a threat to the republic. The "oneness" claim also introduces a symbolic element into political representation, which legitimizes restrictions on the franchise in the name of republican values. On the argument that only the wisest of the congregation have enough judgement to act on the proper good of the united people, a person is properly represented not on the basis of whether she is allowed to participate, but on the basis of the civic virtues or sound judgement of deputies who take it upon themselves to shut her out while claiming to have her true interests at heart.

Wollstonecraft trades on two republican ideas in refutation of this symbolism in political representation. Proceeding from the republican conception of *freedom* she maintains that being denied a "direct share [...] in the deliberations of government" while still being expected and obligated to obey its law is to be "arbitrarily governed".⁴¹ The independence that one can expect from a responsible citizen is not a feature of propertied men, but the mark of any "being who discharges the duties of its station", be they the duties of a soldier, a senator, or a mother. From this she infers that "women ought to have representatives".⁴²

⁴⁰ Edmund Burke (2005), "Speech to the electors of Bristol", in *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, Vol. II* (Project Gutenberg EBook), p. 96.

⁴¹ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Rights of Woman*, vol. 5, p. 217.

⁴² Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Rights of Woman*, vol. 5, pp. 216–17. On Wollstonecraft and motherhood in the republic, see Bergès in this volume.

On the oneness-view of political representation women have representatives regardless of whether they are allowed to vote or be elected, simply by virtue of being subsumed into that nation so eminently represented by judicious members such as Burke. But this, Wollstonecraft insists, is not to be represented; it is to be governed arbitrarily. In other words—and as any consistent republican should agree—it is to be denied freedom. Political representation is not symbolic. It is practical, a “direct share in government”, where direct means women’s actual possession of the status to be electors and delegates.

Wollstonecraft is clearly conscious of the outrageousness of what she suggests; she knows she “may excite laughter”. Through the image of a “gaping crowd” reduced to admiring the rich whose idleness they pay for through taxes on the necessities of life while having no say in any of it, she emphasizes that women are no worse represented than the labouring classes, those who “pay for the support of royalty” but can’t feed their children. The principle is clear enough. This is oppression, if anything is.

Another republican idea at work here is the role of duty. In 1816, Benjamin Constant was to deflate the symbolic myth of representation by describing it as nothing more elevated than a practical way for people to charge a few men to look after their public affairs. He notes matter-of-factly that “Poor men look after their own business; rich men hire stewards”, but adds that they are “idiots” if they fail to ensure that stewards can be discarded if they don’t look after their interests properly.⁴³ Wollstonecraft had already spun a similar observation in a different direction by noting that in the upper ranks of society every duty is done “by deputies”, a tendency that rests on the contestable contention that “duties could ever be waved”.⁴⁴ Her direct target is the idleness of the rich but the point is a general one. Through the expectation that women and the labouring classes are supposed to take government simply on trust, they are in a practical way denied the performance of their duties. They are forced to wave their duties to deputies over whom they have no control. In effect, they are made to be Constant’s idiots.⁴⁵

If you rely on the virtue or judgement of representatives to look to the good of a presumed whole in an unequal society, and leave the weakest without means of either contestation or participation, then you use representative government as a cover for despotism. A principle of justice as a normative constitutional standard will have no purchase as long as inequalities remain. There is no unity beyond

⁴³ Benjamin Constant (1988), “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns”, in *Political Writings*, ed. Biancamaria Fontana (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 325–6.

⁴⁴ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Rights of Woman*, vol. 5, p. 218.

⁴⁵ Compare Wollstonecraft’s description of the social function of women of all classes, “to please fools” in *The Rights of Woman*, vol. 5, p. 168; also p. 259.

interests in an unequal society, only the power of the rich to “shuffle and trick” and “grind the poor”,⁴⁶ exploiting humanity, birthright, and human kindness in an “empty shew” of partial laws and institutions that “enable men to tyrannize over women”.⁴⁷ The mark of a successful minister is not his wisdom or respect for the constitution, but the extent to which he has mastered “the art of keeping himself in place”.⁴⁸

In political society as it is, not as it should be, one cannot expect representation other than of class interests or other markers of social distinction. That is why women and the labouring classes need to have their *own* interests represented by representatives who share their interests and perspectives, who look at society through their eyes. Only if the weakest and poorest, for whose liberty political society is necessary, have a public voice of their own can their interests be properly represented.

⁴⁶ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Rights of Woman*, vol. 5, p. 214; see also Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria*, vol. 1, p. 119.

⁴⁷ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria*, vol. 1, p. 153.

⁴⁸ Wollstonecraft (1989), *The Rights of Woman*, vol. 5, p. 218.

10

Mary Wollstonecraft, Public Reason, and the Virtuous Republic

Alan Coffee

One of Wollstonecraft's most significant observations was that legal and political rights alone would not enable women to secure women's freedom. A pervasive system of norms and social structures had grown up, limiting the opportunities available to women, placing strict expectations on them, and reinforcing the established perception that women were not suited to acting independently and on their own accounts. Although she was by no means the first person to recognize the impact that the cultural environment had in shaping the way that we behave, Wollstonecraft's analysis of its operation and effect was unique. Drawing on a republican framework in which freedom is understood in terms of independence from any sort of arbitrary power, she showed that we should understand the threat to freedom from oppressive ideas and social practices in exactly the same way as that from unjust laws or unaccountable rulers, namely that they were arbitrary in the republican sense of not being required to reflect the common good.¹ In each case, the remedy is identical: the dominating power has to be constrained so that it is no longer arbitrary. Ultimately, power is always held in check through processes that are guided by public reason or, in a particular sense of the term, virtue. This is because what is considered to be arbitrary must be established rationally and consensually. While republicans have traditionally focused on legal and political means of maintaining freedom, Wollstonecraft

¹ I give a full account of Wollstonecraft's republican commitments in Alan Coffee (2013), 'Mary Wollstonecraft, Freedom and the Enduring Power of Social Domination', *European Journal of Political Theory* 12 (2): 116–35; and Coffee (2014), 'Freedom as Independence: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Grand Blessing of Life', *Hypatia* 29 (4): 908–24. See also Lena Halldenius (2015), *Mary Wollstonecraft and Feminist Republicanism: Independence, Rights and the Experience of Unfreedom* (London: Pickering and Chatto).

shows not only that social and cultural threats, such as from prejudice, ignorance, and stigma, must not be forgotten, but that addressing these threats is logically prior to addressing the legal and political threats, and must be the starting point for a republican conception of freedom.

Wollstonecraft is rightly celebrated for her pioneering work advocating women's independence from men. Less widely appreciated is that in building her case she develops an innovative model of republican freedom that can be generalized and applied wherever power is exercised arbitrarily.² Her model differs in a number of respects from the dominant forms of contemporary republicanism. In contrast to Philip Pettit's influential ideal of non-domination, for example, Wollstonecraft does not regard freedom as a negative and non-moralized ideal that expresses a person's ability to make certain choices reliably. Freedom is understood, rather, as a complex ideal that comprises both protections and obligations, and in which an idea of individual and collective 'virtue' plays an integral role. Virtue, on Wollstonecraft's account, is not an instrumental value that is useful, even perhaps indispensable, for promoting and maintaining freedom in a population as the prevailing view now has it.³ It is a component element of freedom itself, so that a free republic is necessarily a virtuous republic. While the notion that virtue is part of freedom might strike modern readers as at best archaic, if not far-fetched or incoherent, I hope to show that properly understood it represents an important and relevant contribution to contemporary republican theory. Amongst the current concerns in which Wollstonecraft's approach can illuminate is the question of how to accommodate diversity in socially dynamic and plural populations without compromising either collective stability or individual freedom.⁴ This is, of course, a complex area that republicans have only recently begun to explore in detail. Nevertheless, while a complete

² Wollstonecraft herself applies some of the same arguments she uses to highlight women's domination to discrimination against the Dissenters: Wollstonecraft (1992), *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London: Penguin Books), pp. 326–7. Since the majority of my references to Wollstonecraft come from this book, I will refer to it subsequently as *Rights of Woman*. See also her analysis of the French Revolution in Wollstonecraft (1989), 'An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution', in *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, 7 vols, eds J. Todd and M. Butler (London: William Pickering), vol. 6.

³ Philip Pettit, for example, distinguishes between those institutions that 'instantiate' freedom by preventing domination, and the '*buoni costume*' (good customs or morals) that support and enable those institutions to function: Pettit (1997), *Republicanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 106–7, 240–2. The former are part of the ideal of freedom while the latter are instrumental to its success.

⁴ In applying Wollstonecraft's arguments in this way, I in no way suggest that the concerns of feminism and multiculturalism are the same or that the arguments from the one field can simply be lifted and reapplied to the other. Neither do I overlook the important insights Wollstonecraft had into the specific and unique nature of gendered power structures that cut across other social and

republican multiculturalism remains to be fully worked out, I shall venture that her work establishes a necessary precondition upon which such a theory must build.⁵

I will examine some of the distinctive features of classical republican freedom, before discussing Wollstonecraft's conception of virtue, the ways in which virtue can be corrupted, and then what it means and why it is so important to live in a 'virtuous' society. Finally, I briefly suggest how her arguments can be extended to form part of a wider contemporary republican political theory.

10.1 Republican Freedom

A distinguishing feature of the classical or Commonwealthman conception of freedom, upon which Wollstonecraft drew, is that two forms of freedom are always invoked simultaneously, the free man and the free state.⁶ These two ideas are linked and neither is possible without the other. In contrast to the now more familiar idea of freedom as consisting in the absence of interference in a person's intended actions, the classical conception builds from two directions, the individual and the collective. This is because personal freedom is understood in relation to a socially agreed idea of what is in the common good. As a result, freedom represents a complex idea with several components. In contrast to Berlin's belief that 'everything is what it is' so that 'liberty is liberty' rather than, for example, equality, fairness, or justice, republicans understand freedom as a broad term that embodies these other notions through the way that social relationships between free individuals are structured.⁷

Freedom itself is synonymous with independence, while its opposite, or dependence, is equated with slavery. Wollstonecraft uses these terms extensively, and it is central to her case that women, by being dependent on men, are not only

political boundaries. My argument is only that those insights are developed within a broader theoretical framework that she herself applies extensively.

⁵ A full theory will have to address a broader range of issues than freedom, including the claims of group rights, social cohesion, the rule of law, and how to deal with historical legacies. The republican literature on this is emerging but still at an early stage. Cecile Laborde's excellent *Critical Republicanism* examines such issues through the case of the hijab controversy in France, perhaps the most fully developed: Laborde (2008), *Critical Republicanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). See also Frank Lovett (2010), 'Cultural Accommodation and Domination', *Political Theory* 38 (2): 243–67; and Pettit, *Republicanism*, pp. 143–6.

⁶ This was the conception of freedom used by Wollstonecraft and many of her colleagues and coactivists, including Richard Price, Joseph Priestley, and James Burgh. I set out the details as they apply to Wollstonecraft and Price in anonymous reference. See also Quentin Skinner (1998), *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁷ Isaiah Berlin (1969), 'Two Concepts of Liberty', in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

unfree but are literally slaves. Independence has two parts, and we can think of these in light of the two perspectives of the individual and the collective. Individuals must be able to think for themselves and make their own decisions rather than simply following the direction or influence of others. The issue here is not simply that of being compelled to do things one might otherwise not want to do. It is, rather that independent people must be capable of scrutinizing the ideas, traditions, and received wisdom of their environment and of forming their own considered judgements. Not to be able to do that, according to Wollstonecraft, is to be dependent upon or captive to the other people's ideas, and therefore to be 'slaves of prejudices', locked into unreflective patterns of behaviour that one lacks the capacity to change.⁸ It is not enough, however, that people come to form their own opinions. They must also be able to put these into action. The right to act independently is guaranteed collectively by the state through the law.⁹ Laws, however, are reflections of the minds that create them, and so laws that guarantee independence must be made and maintained by people who are themselves independent.

Freedom has long been regarded as the central and pre-eminent value in republican theory.¹⁰ Beyond the positive case for promoting, extending, and maintaining opportunities for independence among the citizens, republican writers have insisted on a negative case. Dependence or slavery must not be permitted within the political community. There are strong moral reasons for this, of course. Wollstonecraft, for example, regards freedom as both the natural birthright of all human beings and indispensable for moral behaviour and Christian piety.¹¹ Alongside the moral case, however, republicans have traditionally offered a self-interested and pragmatic justification. Because freedom is a compound social ideal, for it to be possible requires several ingredients to come together at once. These various elements were understood to be internally connected and causally related. The absence of any one of its parts would have a corrosive effect that threatened to undermine the possibility of freedom

⁸ 'It is', she said, 'the right use of reason alone which makes us independent of everything': Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, pp. 219, 230. To submit to an unreflective opinion was to be guided by an arbitrary principle, since we could not be sure that it was reflective of the common good. It is always in our interests, by contrast, to follow reason as the Creator has guaranteed (p. 277).

⁹ For a detailed discussion, see Coffee, 'Freedom as Independence'.

¹⁰ This is especially clear in the writing of Richard Price. See also Quentin Skinner (2010), 'On the Slogans of Republican Political Theory', *European Journal of Political Theory* 9 (1): 95–102.

¹¹ Wollstonecraft (1995), 'A Vindication of the Rights of Men', in Sylvana Tomaselli (ed.), *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 7, and *Rights of Woman*, pp. 100–1, 142–6.

altogether. In other words, to the extent that we permit any individuals to be unfree, we jeopardize everyone's freedom. Wollstonecraft herself presents as her 'main argument' for the rights of women (ahead of her more celebrated moral case) that keeping women in a state of servitude posed a serious threat to men's own freedom.¹² Independence was seen as requiring two other features in particular. First, there had to be an equality of status between the citizens so that no one was either above the law or below its protection.¹³ The second element was virtue.

10.2 Independence and Virtue

There is a long republican tradition of emphasizing the tie between the freedom of state and the virtue of the citizens. Historically, it was said that there was a causal relationship that ran in both directions between independence and virtue, with each providing the conditions that enabled the other. Just as it was necessary for citizens to show restraint and to support the institutions that maintained their independence, so such virtue was said to be something that only independent individuals could be relied upon to show.¹⁴ Arbitrary power was seen to undermine or 'corrupt' the virtue of both those who wielded it and those who were subject to it.¹⁵ This focus on virtue has been downplayed in recent years, however, and hardly features in the most prominent neo-republican accounts other than in a general way connected to the standard models of reasonable behaviour for functioning democracies or as derived from the traditional platitude that 'power corrupts'.¹⁶ In contemporary republican accounts, virtue typically plays only an instrumental role in providing the background conditions

¹² *Rights of Woman*, p. 86. Her analysis of the causes of the French Revolution and the ferocity of the subsequent Terror is similarly based on the unequal nature of *ancien* society.

¹³ Both cases would lead to dependence. Where some people are above the law—and so able to circumvent its power to constrain—this leaves the rest of the population dependent on them. Wollstonecraft makes this very point in the case where the rich are able to buy favours in Parliament (*Rights of Men*, pp. 20–1). Anyone who is not protected by the law is, by contrast, dependent on all those who are. Even wealthy or middle-class women, for this reason are dependent on men (this is a prominent theme throughout her novel: Wollstonecraft (2005), *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* (New York: Dover)).

¹⁴ This was a constant theme in early republican literature from Roman times, through Machiavelli to Wollstonecraft's own period. See Skinner for a detailed discussion of its importance: Skinner (2002), *Visions of Politics*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

¹⁵ 'Inequality', Wollstonecraft says referring to situations of dependence, 'must ever impede the growth of virtue by vitiating the mind that submits or domineers': *Rights of Men*, p. 49.

¹⁶ Pettit, *Republicanism*, p. 211; Cecile Laborde and John Maynor (2008), 'The Republican Contribution to Contemporary Political Theory', in Laborde and Maynor (eds), *Republicanism and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Blackwell), pp. 1–30.

against which the necessary republican institutions can operate effectively. Wollstonecraft, however, regarded virtue as integral to, and constitutive of, the very notion of independence.

The idea of 'virtue' as behaviour that upholds the common good and helps preserve the institutions of state is as old as republican theory itself. Nevertheless, its precise meaning has shifted over time. At the birth of the Roman Republic, Livy notes that the people were not ready for freedom, being little more than a 'rabble of vagrants, mostly runaways and refugees'.¹⁷ They had not had time to develop the necessary character traits and patriotic values that would sustain a free state, including respect for the family and a love for the soil. In his *Discourses on Livy*, Machiavelli develops the concept of virtue (*virtù*) to embrace any action or behaviour that strengthens the republican state virtuous, no matter whether this might otherwise be considered immoral or underhanded. 'One's country' he says, 'should be defended whether it entail ignominy or glory, and . . . it is good to defend it in any way whatsoever'.¹⁸ By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the idea of virtue had become firmly associated with the capacity to exercise and to be directed by reason in pursuing the common good, which is considered always to conform to rational principles.¹⁹ Reason keeps our thinking grounded and thereby providing the necessary foundation for virtue, which would otherwise be swayed by erroneous, irrational, or selfish inclinations. It is as using this last sense of virtue as being guided by reason that I shall frame Wollstonecraft's model of political freedom.

In order to be virtuous, Wollstonecraft argues, one 'must only bow to the authority of reason'.²⁰ This does not say, of course, that reason is sufficient for virtue, or indeed that acting in accordance with reason is synonymous with virtue.²¹ In actual fact, both 'reason' and 'virtue' in Wollstonecraft's writing are

¹⁷ Livy (1960), *The Early History of Rome* (London: Penguin Books), Book II, p. 105.

¹⁸ Machiavelli (1983), *The Discourses* (London: Pelican), p. 514. In this context, the adventurer Castruccio Castracani is praised for possessing the following 'virtuous' characteristics: 'he was kind to his friends, and to his enemies terrible; just towards his subjects, faithless to foreigners; never when he could win by fraud did he attempt to win by force—he used to say that it was the victory itself, not the way in which you had won the victory, which brought you glory': Machiavelli (2003), *Life of Castruccio Castracani* (London: Hesperus), p. 33. Castracani's virtue consisted in his doing whatever it took to defend and further the interests of the republic.

¹⁹ This use features prominently in the writing of both Richard Price and James Burgh. 'Did reason govern mankind' argues Burgh, 'there would be little occasion for any other government so virtuous and happy would we be': Burgh (2009), *Political Disquisitions* (Carlisle, MA: Applewood Books), Book I, ch. 1.

²⁰ *Rights of Woman*, pp. 140–1.

²¹ Wollstonecraft's notion of reason, for example, is not that of a detached application of abstract logic, but entails the application of rational principles while being guided by the imagination, knowledge, and experience. When Wollstonecraft asks 'in what respect are we superior to the

rich and subtle terms. I cannot here hope to do justice to the complexities of either.²² My focus is, however, on virtue as a constitutive element of freedom as independence rather than its wider set of meanings. Sometimes Wollstonecraft speaks of virtue with reference to moral qualities or ‘human perfections’.²³ She refers, for example to ‘the love of mankind, from which an orderly train of virtues spring, can only be produced by considering the moral and civil interest of mankind’.²⁴ To the extent that a viable and decent society requires certain dispositions and behaviours from its citizens, this is something that no republican denies and so does not mark Wollstonecraft out in any way. But these are instrumentally useful to the maintenance of freedom rather than constitutive of it.²⁵ I set these aside and concentrate only on that aspect of virtue that is tied to the exercise of reason insofar as it forms part of the meaning of freedom.

Wollstonecraft gives two sets of arguments for linking the capacity to reason and independence. The first is connected to the ability to think for oneself, and the second to putting thought into action. While the first of these is important for Wollstonecraft herself, it does not affect the structure of her argument as I reconstruct it. I shall make no use of it and include it here only for completeness.²⁶ If we are not governed by reason, Wollstonecraft held, we must be governed either by emotion and caprice, or by ideas we have gleaned from other people. In both cases we would then be under the control of, and therefore dependent on, forces that could not be relied on necessarily to lead to behaviour that was always in our interests. This is the very definition of an arbitrary power, and therefore neither of these options is consistent with independence. Reason, however, represented the ‘the nature of things’, and to use this as our guide was guaranteed to ‘promote our real interest’, which was both best for us as individuals as well as being right for society.²⁷ Independence requires

brute creation, if intellect is not allowed to be the guide of passion?, she adds that without the ‘feelings of the heart . . . reason would probably lie helpless in inactivity’: Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Men*, p. 31. See Karen Green for much more on this topic: Green (1997), ‘The Passions and the Imagination in Wollstonecraft’s Theory of Moral Judgment’, *Utilitas* 9 (3): 271–90.

²² The contributions to this volume by Sandrine Bergès and Martina Reuter very helpfully explore different aspects of both reason and virtue in far greater detail.

²³ See, for example, *Rights of Woman*, p. 125 and throughout ch. 5.

²⁴ *Rights of Woman*, p. 86.

²⁵ Indeed, Wollstonecraft cautions against treating ‘virtue in a very limited sense’ that makes ‘the foundation of it solely worldly utility’ (*Rights of Woman*, pp. 168–9, her italics). ‘Virtues’ that come about to serve particular needs in particular situations often have unintended but harmful consequences. This has been especially damaging in the case of the duties of obedience imposed on women that in turn result in their being ill-equipped to raise independent children.

²⁶ I discuss her commitment to this idea in full in ‘Freedom as Independence’.

²⁷ *Rights of Woman*, p. 277.

individuals to think for themselves, scrutinizing their opinions and motives in the light of reason, rejecting those that they cannot justify.²⁸ Wollstonecraft's thinking here owes much to an eighteenth-century rationale that regarded a person's passions, emotions, and subjective inclinations as having originated outside their 'true' or rational selves. Pursuing this line would attribute to her a positive view of freedom as 'self-mastery' that is alien to the contemporary political discourse that most neo-Roman republicans position themselves within.²⁹ My aim, however, is not to present Wollstonecraft's own views in their entirety, but to build a 'Wollstonecraftian' position that contributes to this current discourse; I shall not pursue these considerations further.

Irrespective of the question of how we form our intentions, if we are independent we must be able to put these into practice. In a social context, this inevitably requires the presence of a suitable and effective institutional and legal structure within which independence is guaranteed. Since the law has coercive force, if it is to uphold rather than impede independence it must, like reason, promote or protect our interests.³⁰ The law must do this for each person over whom it has jurisdiction, since anyone whose interests are not promoted would not be independent. For this reason, the republican tradition has always held that the law is justified only where it is required always to uphold the population's common interests.³¹ What these common interests are, however, must be first identified and then justified. Ideally, Wollstonecraft says, the citizens would be individually and collectively motivated by 'reason, virtue, and knowledge', and would construct their laws accordingly.³² In reality, of course, she was all too aware that few of us are so enlightened. However, even if they were, this would not be sufficient for independence. It is not enough that the laws happen to uphold our interests. If we are to be independent, this must be guaranteed. It is essential for republican freedom, therefore, that everyone is able to represent themselves and their perspectives in public deliberations about what constitutes the common interest.³³ This can only be assured in a particular kind of environment.

²⁸ *Rights of Woman*, pp. 91–2, 100, 143.

²⁹ Pettit, *Republicanism*, pp. 25–7.

³⁰ It should be noted that although Wollstonecraft says of reason that it will always 'promote our real interest', there is no question of the law claiming to do the same while pursuing the private interests of only a few. On Wollstonecraft's own definition of individual independence, individuals must always come to see what is rational for themselves. Unless they come to endorse the law's idea of what is rational, then this cannot be imposed without undermining their independence. This would be to violate the very justification for the law.

³¹ It is when we 'consult the public mind in a perfect state of civilization' or virtue, that we generate a 'government emanating from the sense of the nation', or the common good, which will 'be productive of the happiest consequences': Wollstonecraft: 'French Revolution', p. 212.

³² *Rights of Woman*, p. 91.

³³ 'Who made man the exclusive judge', Wollstonecraft asks, 'if woman partake with him the gift of reason?': Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 87, adding that 'women ought to have representatives,

Wollstonecraft herself was wearily aware that, although she made a well-reasoned and highly rational case for women's independence, this alone would never be enough for her arguments to succeed. Invariably, other considerations, including people's prejudices, private inclinations, and powerful vested interests invariably would come into play and draw people's attention. Indeed, even if some of her arguments had succeeded, this would not be enough to secure independence unless there was a guarantee that they had succeeded for the right reasons. Women could only be independent in a society in which the best arguments, rather than any other factor, always carried the day. Anything less would leave them dependent on the vagaries of those other factors. So although I have said at an individual level, virtue in the sense of possessing a capacity and willingness to act in accordance with reason is not necessary for freedom, collectively it is a different story. Taken as an entity as a whole, an independent republic is a virtuous one. This does not require every individual to be virtuous so long as the institutions that define and uphold freedom are properly regulated. There must, however, be a sufficient stock of virtue in the community to guarantee the integrity of these institutions and to hold them in check.

The type of reasoning that is required by collective virtue is restricted to what we would now call public reason, although Wollstonecraft herself does not use this term. She does, however, insist that people must be both able to and prepared to justify the grounds on which they produce in public deliberation in terms that anyone could in principle accept (an 'obstinate persuasion for which we can give no reason' being nothing more than a prejudice).³⁴ Furthermore, arguments that are exclusive, such as the claim that women were incapable of reasoning, and so their perspectives should not be counted, are not legitimate.³⁵ This condition is necessary since if partisan or non-representative principles of this kind could be adopted then women (in this case) would be dependent on men by definition because they would not be able to represent themselves. They would be left at the mercy of men's discretion and goodwill. In the next section we will see why Wollstonecraft finds this so damaging. Since Wollstonecraft does not provide a full specification of public reason, for the purposes of this discussion it will be sufficient to think of it in terms of Pettit's formulation, according to which deliberation must be conducted using 'cooperatively admissible considerations'.

instead of being arbitrarily governed without having any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of government' (p. 265).

³⁴ 'The moment a reason can be given for an opinion', Wollstonecraft adds, 'it ceases to be a prejudice, though it may be an error in judgment' (*Rights of Woman*, p. 220).

³⁵ *Rights of Woman*, p. 155.

These are defined as principles ‘that anyone in discourse with others about what they should jointly or collectively provide can adduce without embarrassment as relevant matters to take into account’.³⁶ This approach has the advantage of being widely understood today and so allowing Wollstonecraft’s approach into dialogue with contemporary republican thinking.

10.3 Dependence and Corruption

Just as independence requires virtue, so traditionally dependence has been said to corrupt it. Dependence corrupts not by tarnishing people’s moral character, but by impeding a particular disposition to submit to reasoned argument. Traditionally, two causes of corruption have been identified, concerning first the structure of motivation that is inherent in dependent relationships, and secondly the habits that are formed as a result. Wollstonecraft appeals to both, although it is her use of the second that sets her work apart from earlier republican treatments. We should also note at the outset that the corrupting effect of dependence affects parties on both sides of the relationship, dominator and dominated alike. Wollstonecraft stresses that the virtue of dominating men, no less than dependent women, has been compromised.

A virtuous person is defined as one who acts in accordance with the best reasons, whether considered from a moral or, as we are taking it, a publicly reasonable perspective. This is not always easy to do, of course, and may come at a considerable and unacceptably high personal cost. We cannot, Wollstonecraft notes, expect a wife who is completely dependent on her husband to act in defiance of his wishes, even where she may have the stronger arguments, for fear of losing her livelihood or protection.³⁷ It is only where people are secure in their basic rights and social standing, republicans have argued, that they can be expected to stand up for a principle instead of putting their own needs and preservation first. A woman, Wollstonecraft says in this context, cannot be ‘really virtuous’ without the full ‘protection of civil laws’, and that if she is to ‘emulate the virtues’ expected of a man, she must enjoy the same rights.³⁸ For this reason, it has long been held that independence, which entails full and equal legal protection, is a prerequisite for virtue. This is said to be true, moreover, not only in making the sort of difficult moral decisions involving self-sacrifice that are often associated with virtue, but also with committing to use and being bound by public reason.

³⁶ Pettit (2001), *A Theory of Freedom* (Oxford: Polity), p. 156.

³⁷ Again, this theme occurs throughout *Maria*.

³⁸ *Rights of Woman*, pp. 264, 327.

The republican focus on public reason, it must be remembered, is grounded in the need to identify the common interests of the citizens, which is the criterion by which the arbitrary power they oppose is understood, and then to ensure that this concept is consistently applied. Dependent people, however, are, formally speaking, slaves. Their interests, then, are not part of the common good at all, which is an ideal that includes only citizens and free men. Slaves have been left outside the social compact and have no reason to abide by its norms or to respect its code of public discourse. Wollstonecraft is explicit about this. As slaves, women, have no country because they have no rights, and ‘without rights there cannot be any incumbent duties’.³⁹ Slaves have no reason to respect any of the norms of society that excludes them from its benefits. Why, Wollstonecraft asks, would anyone ‘expect virtue from a slave from a being whom the constitution of civil society has rendered weak, if not vicious?’⁴⁰ Masters, for their part, have a corresponding motivation to secure their private interests rather than submitting to the outcome of public reason. They are in a privileged position. The temptation, Wollstonecraft notes, to prefer arguments that justify their advantage is almost irresistible. The experience of dominating others is both intoxicating and misleading, and ‘is an insuperable bar to the attainment of either wisdom or virtue’.⁴¹ The powerful are tempted to surround themselves with ‘flattering sycophants’ who inflate their egos and tell them what they want to hear.⁴² This is doubly damaging, since it means that they are often fed lies and misinformation by those around them, also discouraging them from facing up to the sorts of challenges that would build the skills and character necessary for making good, independent decisions.⁴³

The structural inequality between dominator and dominated means that instead of being united in seeking the common good, their interaction becomes simply a tactical game grounded in mutual suspicion, one-upmanship, and the desire for personal gain. Wives, for example, being in a subordinate position, cannot reason with their husbands openly but must instead resort to cunning, deceit, and coquetry to ‘govern their tyrants by sinister tricks’.⁴⁴ The strong must watch the weak very carefully, while the weak are inclined to use every opportunity to steal an advantage over their masters. This dynamic not only encourages bad habits in individuals but creates a climate that stifles fruitful public

³⁹ *Maria*, pp. 80–1 (women have no country). Wollstonecraft makes the point about duties being tied to rights twice in quick succession, *Rights of Woman*, p. 262 and again on p. 264: ‘Take away natural rights, and duties become null’.

⁴⁰ *Rights of Woman*, p. 135.

⁴¹ *Rights of Woman*, p. 96.

⁴² *Rights of Woman*, p. 92.

⁴³ They become instead, ‘extravagant freaks’ and ‘dead-weights’ on the community (*Rights of Woman*, p. 97).

⁴⁴ *Rights of Woman*, pp. 100, 262.

deliberation and has a devastating effect on public virtue. Rather than seeking to create an inclusive idea of the common good, the population divides into competing factions and interest groups. Public debate descends into an exercise in rhetoric, propaganda, and persuasion. Left unchecked, as we shall see, this has the potential to render rational public deliberation ineffective as a means of challenging arbitrary power, and so undermines the very foundations of republican independence.

Wollstonecraft notes two particular tendencies that follow from the breakdown in public reason. First, people stop scrutinizing the arguments they hear, falling back instead on their own prejudices. 'A kind of intellectual cowardice prevails', Wollstonecraft observes, whereby 'men, in general, seem to employ their reason to justify prejudices, which they have imbibed, they cannot trace how, rather than to root them out'. Once these views become widespread, they are very difficult to remove because people's ability to reason becomes 'clouded' by their prejudice.⁴⁵ If anyone attempts to correct these falsehoods, or to argue against them by going 'back to first principles', their efforts are rebuffed. 'A set of shallow reasoners are always exclaiming that these arguments prove too much' until 'truth is lost in a mist of words, virtue in forms and knowledge rendered a sounding nothing, by the specious prejudices that assume its name'.⁴⁶ In such an environment, the social elite and other powerful groups in society are able to use their influence to promote their own ideas and values so forcefully that they become established as the accepted baseline for public deliberation throughout society, allowing them to dictate the course that future arguments will take.

The result is the creation of a background cultural environment that exerts a very powerful hold over the way people are able to think and to argue.⁴⁷ Once this happens, it becomes very difficult for opposing or countervailing points of view to even be expressed. As an example, Wollstonecraft complains that the suggestion that women might represent themselves in government is more likely to 'excite laughter' than to gain any support.⁴⁸ Showing just how great the power of ideas is, Wollstonecraft goes so far as to identify the belief that women were 'created rather to feel than reason' as the source of the endless variety of 'meanness, cares and sorrows into which women are plunged'.⁴⁹ The resulting

⁴⁵ *Rights of Woman*, p. 91.

⁴⁶ *Rights of Woman*, pp. 91–2.

⁴⁷ It is, for example, men who write the books that underpin the 'false system of education' that does so much to keep women in a state of dependence (*Rights of Woman*, pp. 79, 103). Wollstonecraft points to the creation story in the Book of Genesis where Eve is formed from Adam's rib, arguing that men have played on their superior physical strength to create a myth that legitimates and perpetuates the current system of social gender-ordering, providing it with a divine backing (p. 109).

⁴⁸ *Rights of Woman*, p. 265.

⁴⁹ *Rights of Woman*, pp. 154–5.

system of social prejudices and customs, Wollstonecraft describes as a ‘specious slavery which chains the very soul of woman’.⁵⁰ It is not only women, however, who are affected. ‘Men and women’ are, she argues, inevitably ‘educated in a great degree by a stream of popular opinions and manners of the society they live in’, adding that ‘in every age there has been a stream of popular opinion that has carried all before it’.⁵¹

10.4 Public Reason and the Virtuous Republic

We can now take our earlier observations about the traditional republican emphasis on independence a step further. As Pettit notes, historically there was ‘no other end for the state—no other justified end—besides that of furthering this freedom’.⁵² A republican society cannot permit or tolerate any form of arbitrary power within its midst because the dependence that this creates has the potential to undermine everyone’s freedom. However, since independence can only be secured through appeal to reasoned argument, the state’s most fundamental goal must be to promote and to safeguard the conditions necessary for virtue as public reason to flourish. Wollstonecraft shows us that even when we are focusing on collective virtue there are two distinct levels at which it enables freedom.⁵³ At the first, citizens deliberate about their common interests and define the non-arbitrary laws that are used to challenge the unconstrained use of power. More deeply, however, this deliberation can only function within a suitably accommodating and representative social and cultural background. If freedom is the supreme political value, then ensuring that the conditions necessary for this second level of virtue must be the first goal of the republic. To rework a well-known slogan, for republicans ‘the first virtue of social institutions’ is virtue itself.

Although Wollstonecraft has demonstrated how the collective lack of virtue prevented women’s subjection from being articulated and addressed, she does not limit her arguments to feminist concerns. ‘When any power but reason curbs the free spirit of man’, she notes, ‘dissimulation is practised’.⁵⁴ She points to the way that Dissenters had been stereotyped and stigmatized in public life, drawing a direct comparison with her arguments about women. The effect shaped both

⁵⁰ *Rights of Woman*, pp. 261–2. See Coffee, ‘Enduring Power of Social Domination’ for a detailed discussion of Wollstonecraft’s idea of ‘slavery to prejudice’.

⁵¹ *Rights of Woman*, p. 102.

⁵² *Republicanism*, p. 80.

⁵³ Alan Coffee (2015), ‘Two Spheres of Domination: Republican Theory, Social Norms and the Insufficiency of Negative Freedom’, *Contemporary Political Theory* 14 (1): 45–62.

⁵⁴ *Rights of Woman*, p. 326. Wollstonecraft singles out the effect that Samuel Butler’s then century-old satire *Hudibras*, which pillories Dissenters, continued to exert on the public imagination.

how Dissenters were seen by others, which in turn affected the characters of the Dissenters themselves:

Oppression thus formed many of the features of their character perfectly to coincide with that of the oppressed half of mankind; for is it not notorious that dissenters were, like women, fond of deliberating together, and asking advice of each other, till by a complication of little contrivances, some little end was brought about? A similar attention to preserve their reputation was conspicuous in the dissenting and female world, and was produced by a similar cause.⁵⁵

Wollstonecraft's arguments raise an important set of issues for modern democratic societies in which social pluralism and cultural diversity are integral features. Since no systematic patterns of dependence can be permitted, the members of every social class or group must be independent. If they are to be independent, individuals from minority or marginal groups must be able to promote their interests as part of a genuinely inclusive common good, voice their concerns, and defend themselves against arbitrary interference under the law, having a fair and reasonable chance of being taken seriously, and of having their arguments judged impartially. This is a demanding condition, but if it is not met, then those citizens whose perspectives are not included or represented will be dependent on the rest of the population because they will not be able to defend themselves against arbitrary power.

Independence is only possible in a virtuous deliberative environment, meaning one that is substantially free from prejudice and misunderstanding that would hinder rational debate. It must be stressed first of all that this does not imply that a republican state must be culturally homogeneous. A representative and accommodating background culture is not the same as a uniform one. Moreover, a shared set of cultural expectations, values, and traditions is no indication of virtue. After all, Wollstonecraft was writing in what we might regard as a fairly uniform cultural setting by today's standards and yet she identifies both women and religious minorities as the victims of sufficient cultural misunderstanding to strip them of their voices. No matter how culturally uniform a population may appear to be at a given time, its internal divisions can always become the source of disadvantage, stereotype, or prejudice—based for example, on features such as gender, class, wealth, employment, region, sexuality, or religion—that enter unnoticed into the deliberative process.⁵⁶ That ideas and perspectives change over time is, in any case, inevitable and ongoing, as beliefs and attitudes shift in

⁵⁵ *Rights of Woman*, p. 327.

⁵⁶ Social division, according to James Madison, is 'sown into the nature of man': Madison (1987), *The Federalist Papers* (London: Penguin Books), p. 124.

response to events and experiences.⁵⁷ What is essential for independence is not what background cultural frames of reference people share so much as its openness and flexibility towards new and divergent perspectives. Since homogeneity could never be maintained, the basis for independence must lie in how divisions are handled.

It will not do for a society to be one in which there *happens to be* no prejudice or systematic social obstacles to freedom such as patriarchy. According to the republican standard definition of independence, we *must be sure* that there are none.⁵⁸ This might make independence seem to be an impossible goal. In general, however, the republican solution to threats of arbitrary power is not to attempt to remove them altogether—this is rarely possible—but instead to seek to constrain that power so that its effects will be non-arbitrary. Normally, they turn to the law to constrain arbitrary power, scrutinizing its operation through the lens of public reason. The law cannot reliably guarantee freedom from social domination, however, because prejudices have the potential to subvert its operation. Nevertheless, the republican standard for non-arbitrariness is still applicable. If the effect of the deliberative social background is to be non-arbitrary, then the network of ideas and values that shape public debate must satisfy the standard test. In the case of the law, it is deemed to be non-arbitrary only if it is required to be responsive to the shared interests of all those it governs, treating everyone as an equal, and giving each individual a voice and the opportunity to challenge its provisions. The imperative to maintain collective virtue, so that effective deliberation is possible has implications for both government and citizens.

There is, of course, an obvious difference between the deliberative background and the law. Whereas the latter consists of a coherent and codified body of principles, the former represents an unstructured and open-ended collection of ideas and attitudes that are in constant and unpredictable flux. Nevertheless, while the background cannot be controlled in the same way as the law, the government can strive to create and maintain an open and inclusive environment that is receptive to new ideas and aware of the ever-present danger of hidden prejudices by ensuring that citizens from all social groups have access to the important channels of influence, such as education, the arts, the media,

⁵⁷ Wollstonecraft notes that in any society certain particular ideas and ways of looking at things will arise quite naturally. These are typically based more on 'a local expedient than a fundamental principle that would be reasonable at all times' (*Rights of Woman*, p. 220). Over time, however, the original causes are often forgotten while the ideas they generated 'assume the disproportionate form of prejudices when they are indolently adopted only because age has given them a venerable aspect, though the reason on which they were built ceases to be a reason, or cannot be traced'.

⁵⁸ Republican freedom is said to be resilient rather than contingent. See Pettit, *Republicanism*.

law, and politics. This would allow all sections of the population the opportunity to help reshape the way that their interests are presented and understood by others. Over time, and supported by a suitable institutional structure, an inclusive, diverse, and representative cultural setting can be created and maintained in which virtue, as the effective operation of public reason, can support individual and collective independence.

Citizens, for their part, not only have a right to be independent, they have an obligation to be so. Any form of dependence, whether accepted willingly on the part of the dominated party or not is said to have the same corrupting potential. Certainly Wollstonecraft often makes the point to women that they must be independent.⁵⁹ While this is in part a 'duty to themselves as rational creatures', we can see a theoretical grounding in the preceding arguments. Women can only be independent in a society in which their rational arguments are heard, understood, and have a fair chance of succeeding.⁶⁰ That society is one in which women's perspectives have helped shape the public culture so that the kinds of pernicious ideas (such as that women are made rather to feel than reason) that impede their freedom cannot gain a foothold. It is for this reason that Wollstonecraft calls for a 'revolution in female manners', led from the front by women who, by reforming themselves, will go on to reform the world.⁶¹

This is one of Wollstonecraft's conclusions that generalizes to other marginalized social groups, and which provides a foundational principle for a republican multiculturalism that is distinct from most mainstream liberal approaches.⁶² The members of each social group have a duty to be independent. If they are to be independent, they must be able to defend themselves against arbitrary power using public reason. This means that citizens from all social groups, but especially from those whose interests and practices are most misunderstood or least accommodated, must play some part in civil society to the extent that they are able to ensure that they can be adequately represented in public debate. Citizens from most minority groups, of course, would not find this duty burdensome since it is the lack of opportunity that is most often the cause for regret. Nevertheless, the literature on multiculturalism often discusses those kinds of groups whose members may wish to distance themselves from wider society and to live on their

⁵⁹ Women cannot fulfil their duties unless they are independent (*Rights of Woman*, pp. 264, 306). In particular, 'to be a good mother' Wollstonecraft explains, 'a woman must have sense, and that independence of mind which few women possess who are taught to depend entirely on their husbands', for if a woman is not capable of governing herself, 'she will never have sufficient sense or command of temper to manage her children' (*Rights of Woman*, p. 272).

⁶⁰ *Rights of Woman*, p. 262.

⁶¹ *Rights of Woman*, p. 133.

⁶² See Coffee, 'Enduring Power of Social Domination'.

own terms as a separate group. These include, for example, small-scale indigenous peoples, ethnic, or subnational populations incorporated in past conflicts or by colonial expansion, and some ideological and religious communities.⁶³ If the price of their isolation is that they are not able to resist arbitrary power because there is insufficient mutual understanding with the rest of society, then these citizens will be dependent. Even if this is a price that the group members are prepared to pay, the potential for virtue to be corrupted means that a republican state must be very reluctant to permit such an arrangement. It is no justification for permitting dependence that the people concerned, individually or as group members, consent to their condition. Contented slaves, after all, are still slaves.

10.5 Concluding Remarks

Wollstonecraft's insight that social norms and prejudices represented sources of arbitrary power just like any other kind of unconstrained power represented an important innovation within the classical republican paradigm. It also sets her apart from contemporary republicans because it shows that freedom cannot be a solely negative ideal, consisting only in the absence of dominating power. Drawing a sharp distinction between 'contestatory' and 'participatory' approaches, contemporary republicans typically argue that freedom consists in rights to challenge arbitrary power without necessarily entailing positive rights to participate in the shaping of the environment in which freedom is exercised.⁶⁴ While freedom may be secured by resisting arbitrary power under the law, Wollstonecraft shows that the cultural environment in which the law operates could be corrupted thereby nullifying the law's power to prevent dependence. A non-arbitrary set of background cultural norms, however, must necessarily be made collaboratively by members of all sections of the community. Since citizens have a duty to preserve their independence, this entails a degree of civic engagement.

Although the duty to be independent is one that every individual shares, the requirements of participation and virtue are collective, meaning that they are conditions that the citizenry as a whole must fulfil without this entailing each individual member to do so. It is by no means a part of individual independence

⁶³ For example, and from different perspectives, see Will Kymlicka (2009), *Multicultural Odysseys* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); and Chandran Kukathas (2003), *The Liberal Archipelago* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

⁶⁴ Pettit (2012), *On the People's Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). Pettit does, of course, recognize the importance of citizen participation and virtue in his account of republican and democratic politics. These, however, play a strictly instrumental role in his understanding of freedom itself in contrast to Wollstonecraft.

that one is actively engaged in promoting civic virtue. Nevertheless, it is necessary for an independent republic to have a sufficient number of citizens from each constitutive social group to be engaged in this way. In seeing independence from both an individual and a collective perspective, Wollstonecraft is able to retain the subjective element in which persons are free only where they are able to act on their own terms according to their own lights while recognizing that this necessarily requires a cultural and institutional context that is disposed to bind itself to a genuinely inclusive idea of the common good. These two perspectives are integral to the single notion of freedom and are causally related to each other. Individual independence presupposes collective virtue, and while free individuals need not continually manifest virtue, should collective virtue waver they must then act virtuously or lose their freedom.

Wet-Nursing and Political Participation

The Republican Approaches to Motherhood of Mary Wollstonecraft and Sophie de Grouchy

Sandrine Bergès

There is a well-known antagonism between feminists and republicanism such that feminist philosophers have been reluctant to embrace the growing trend for reviving various aspects of republican thinking. One way to phrase this antagonism is this: caring duties, which fall particularly to women, are not always compatible with the degree of public life and political participation that republican citizenship seems to require.¹ More precisely, this can be taken to mean two related things. First, the republican emphasis on participation to acquire the full status of citizen makes it harder for women who have less leisure to take part in public life because they have duties inside the home. Secondly, it looks as if republicanism fails to give proper consideration to values that tend to be more represented in the female part of the population, such as caring for children, the elderly, and invalids, and instead, it tends to prefer values such as independence, which are more typically associated with men's experience.

There are two strands to the republican revival, which are very often brought together in some combination or other.² Neo-Roman republicanism derives its

¹ Melisa Matthes (2001), *The Rape of Lucretia and the Founding of Republics* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press); Anne Phillips (2000), 'Feminism and Republicanism: Is this a Plausible Alliance?', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8 (2): 279–93.

² Some say this is the result of confusion, for instance, Alex Sager (2012), 'Political Rights, Republican Freedom and Temporary Workers', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 2: 1–23, whereas others believe that it is an inherent feature of republicanism that it should mix the two strands: Iseult Honohan (2002), *Civic Republicanism* (London: Routledge).

influence mostly from Roman ideals and its focus point is the definition of liberty as non-domination. It uses as its paradigmatic case the example of slavery: to be a slave is to be subject to arbitrary domination by a master; even if that master is benevolent, one is always at risk of being interfered with.³ Civic republicanism, on the other hand, focuses on the Aristotelian ideals of participation and civic virtues. Its premise is that for human beings to flourish, they must participate in political life and that to do so successfully, they need to develop certain character traits such as virtues.⁴ It is this second strand, rather than the first, which proves problematic from the point of view of feminism.⁵ Civic virtues are often modelled on an Aristotelian model, and their focus is on public life, active participation rather than on the work that takes place in private but that is equally necessary in order to sustain the city: bringing up children, caring for the sick, etc.

Mary Wollstonecraft has recently been brought forward as a republican in the first sense thanks to her emphasis on the arbitrary nature of the power that men exercise over women, and her description of the effect that taking away women's liberty will have on their development and their capacity to become citizens. Yet, Wollstonecraft also discusses civic virtues, and in particular, she recognizes that bringing up children, first to be healthy, and secondly to develop the virtues necessary in a good citizen is a valuable form of participation, one that ought to earn mothers the right of citizenship. At the same time, her stance brings up the following worry: must participation for women depend on their willingness to be mothers? Shouldn't women be granted the rights of citizenship on the same basis as their male counterparts?

In this chapter I explore the relationship between mothering and republican virtues with respect to Mary Wollstonecraft as well as another eighteenth-century author, Sophie De Grouchy. I argue that taken together, their views can help us reconcile feminist and republican ideals to some extent. I will argue that both writers believe that mothering is central to the development of republican virtues: the early development of affections in a child, leading to the faculty of compassion, enables the growth of the republican sentiments of equality and fraternity. It is also noteworthy that for Wollstonecraft making mothering central to republicanism is a double-edged sword. For women to earn the status of citizens,

³ Philip Pettit (1997), *Republicanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). Quentin Skinner (2008), 'Freedom as the absence of arbitrary power', in Cecile Laborde and John Maynor (eds) (2008), *Republicanism and Political Theory* (London: Blackwell); Honohan, *Civic Republicanism*.

⁴ Honohan, *Civic Republicanism*.

⁵ It is not always clear that those who object to republicanism because of its emphasis on participation and the civic nature of virtue distinguish between the neo-Roman and the neo-Athenian branches. In any case, as Coffee argues in this volume, neo-Roman republicans need a stronger account of both participation and civic virtues.

Wollstonecraft says, they must, if they are mothers, perform all duties attending to motherhood, including breastfeeding their children. Unfortunately, it is those mothering duties which I suggested could enter into conflict with republican citizenship. A comparison with de Grouchy's own views on wet-nursing will point to a possible solution.

11.1 Wollstonecraft on Republican Mothering

Despite her emphasis on the thought that, as far as their capacity for reason and virtue is concerned, men and women are equal and her vehement disagreement with Rousseau as to whether virtue can be relative to gender throughout the first part of her 'Animadversions', Wollstonecraft appears to demand a different sort of virtue for women in exchange for citizenship.⁶ In this section, I recommend caution in drawing that conclusion. Though some passages clearly suggest such an intention on her part, others are more tentative and lend themselves to a different interpretation altogether. Several passages strongly suggest that Wollstonecraft is adopting different requirements for men and women to attain citizenship: 'The wife, in the present state of things, who is faithful to her husband, and neither suckles nor educates her children, scarcely deserves the name of a wife and has no right to that of a citizen'.⁷ A little later she tells us that 'the care of children in their infancy is one of the grand duties annexed to the female character by nature', and again that 'the rearing of children [...] has justly been insisted on as the peculiar destination of woman'.⁸

Is Wollstonecraft saying that women are essentially better fitted to parenting duties than men, and that therefore their civic duties and virtues must be different? This would be going back on her claims that virtue must be the same for men and women. If virtue is based on reason, and reason is gender-neutral, then it is difficult to imagine how women's virtue can be radically different from men's. Wollstonecraft states clearly that she believes virtue arises from the exercise of reason at the beginning of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, when she says that 'from the exercise of reason, knowledge and virtue naturally flow, is equally undeniable'.⁹ She further argues that this capacity for becoming virtuous cannot be either weaker or absent in women, as this would mean that God had created half of humanity as incapable of worshipping him.¹⁰ Whether or

⁶ Mary Wollstonecraft (1994 [1792]), *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 106, 122, 150–66. Note that 'Animadversions' is the title of ch. 5.

⁷ Wollstonecraft (1994), p. 227.

⁸ Wollstonecraft (1994), pp. 223, 278.

⁹ Wollstonecraft (1994), p. 76.

¹⁰ Wollstonecraft (1994), p. 86.

not this is a good argument (and in fact, Wollstonecraft finds other ways of making similar points throughout the book¹¹) it makes clear her commitment to virtue equality across the sexes. But equality can still entail difference: one could argue that a man who goes to work and a woman who cares for children are equally virtuous relative to their nature. But if, as Wollstonecraft argues, virtue is derived from reason, and not any other aspect of our nature, such as the ability to make and feed babies, then this does not follow. Reason is universal, therefore, so must virtue be.¹²

Rather than accuse Wollstonecraft of contradicting herself by holding both that virtue is universal and that women's virtue is relative to their capacity for motherhood, I suggest we look at some of her pronouncements, such as the following, more carefully. 'Speaking of *woman at large*, their first duty is to themselves as rational creatures, and the next, in point of importance, as citizens, is that which includes so many, of a mother'.¹³ Note the qualification Wollstonecraft is using: it certainly seems to indicate that she is not making a universal claim, and she could easily be read as commenting on the situation of her contemporaries, rather than trying to define womanhood in general. There is more: she talks of women having certain duties 'in the present state of things'.¹⁴ This also could be taken to indicate that the duties of motherhood are in part determined by social context. Women are not by their nature designed to be parents first and workers second, but at the time she is writing, it is what seems best for them, on the whole, to do. Another passage can be read in a similar fashion:

Mankind seems to agree that children should be left under the management of women during their childhood. Now, from all the observations I have been able to make, women of sensibility are the most unfit for this task, because they will infallibly, carried away by their feelings, spoil a child's temper.¹⁵

In this passage she is again tentative: this, *we seem to agree on*, she says. But agreement is by no means always represented by her as a sign of correctness: earlier in the book she refers to a general agreement that men look to the future and women to the present only.¹⁶ The passage just cited is also noteworthy for the following reason: Wollstonecraft is attempting to show that on men's own

¹¹ Wollstonecraft (1994), p. 106.

¹² In this volume, Coffee discusses the claim in one of the senses in which she uses it, virtue, is synonymous with an ability and willingness to submit to reason. See Coffee, this volume, Section 10.2.

¹³ Wollstonecraft (1994), p. 226 (my emphasis).

¹⁴ Wollstonecraft (1994), p. 227.

¹⁵ Wollstonecraft (1994), p. 139.

¹⁶ Wollstonecraft (1994), p. 100. This is an agreement of 'moralists' rather than mankind. But another reference to moralists' 'unanimous' agreement later on brings forth her approval (p. 280).

standards of gendered division of labour, it is not the case that virtues should be gendered too. Even if women must do certain kinds of work because they are women, they will need to develop the same virtues and knowledge as men. So even though the consensus seems to her to be that women, when they are mothers, must fulfill certain duties, and even though Wollstonecraft herself, to some extent, seems to share this consensus, it does not follow, contrary to what I considered to be the case at the beginning of this section, that women need to develop different virtues. However, one must exercise care in drawing even this tentative conclusion, as Wollstonecraft does clearly state that she regards mothering as a peculiar duty of women assigned to them by nature, which does suggest that she thinks women's moral development, hence their virtues, may take a route determined in part by their biology.

In what follows, I would like to suggest that there are two strands in Wollstonecraft's concern for motherhood. One is simply that she regards the upbringing of infants, both physical and emotional, as crucial to the rearing of virtuous citizens. A second is that she is somewhat bound by the manifestations of motherhood in eighteenth-century England, and that these do not include the possibility of a good mother who does not nurse her own children. In Section 11.2 I will explore the first point, i.e. the ties between infant upbringing and good citizenship from the perspective of a French contemporary of Wollstonecraft's, Sophie de Grouchy. The second point will be addressed in Section 11.5.

11.2 De Grouchy on the Origins of Sympathy

Sophie de Grouchy produced several pieces of writing that ought to be central to the study of republicanism's influence on moral and political philosophy. Her *Letters on Sympathy*, written in 1792 and published in 1798, together with her translation of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, offer the development of an original ethical theory that presupposes equality (of all, including women) and clearly entails a programme of social reform. What is particularly original about the theory is that, like the ethics of care, it regards mothering as paradigmatic of ethical behaviour. The *Letters* had until recently been all but forgotten but there has been a recent renewal of interest in de Grouchy's work.¹⁷ There are

¹⁷ Deidre Dawson (1991), 'Is Sympathy So Surprising? Adam Smith and French Fictions of Sympathy', in *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland, Eighteenth-Century Life* 15 (1&2): 147–62, argues that for Smith, sympathy is the basis of all human interaction, but that de Grouchy sees it especially as the basis of social reform. This makes the *Letters on Sympathy* especially relevant to care ethics: see Nel Noddings (2002), *Starting at Home* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), p. 22.

two recent editions of the text in French, one also including some private letters and one critical edition, as well as a translation into English.¹⁸ Aside from the *Letters*, it is arguable that two articles published anonymously in the summer 1791 in the journal *Le Républicain* associated with de Grouchy and her husband Condorcet were in fact written or cowritten by de Grouchy.¹⁹ The articles present an early defence of republicanism in France, at a time when even Robespierre was not keen to adopt this appellation.²⁰

The text I focus on in this section is de Grouchy's reaction to Smith's theory: her *Lettres sur la Sympathie* written in 1792 and published as an appendix to her 1798 translation of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.²¹ The text is divided into eight letters, the first of which explains that what prompted the author to write this commentary was the observation that Smith merely observed the existence of sympathy and of its 'principal effects' but did not attempt to find its origins, even though its discovery is bound to affect our understanding not only of its effects, but of its development and preservation.²² In the second and third letters, de Grouchy gives a detailed account of how sympathy comes into being, which puts her in a position to give an equally detailed account of how sympathy can be nurtured through education and the creation of good laws and institutions, which she does in the fourth letter. In the fifth, sixth, and seventh letters, she gives the details of a moral theory based on sympathy, and in the final letter, she reiterates the social implications of her claims, namely that human flourishing requires sensible laws and institutions and the lack of excessive social inequalities.

Unlike Smith, who sees the sentiment of sympathy as a first principle, de Grouchy wants to trace it to a physiological first cause, that of the experience of

¹⁸ Jean-Paul Lagrave (1993), *Sophie de Grouchy, Lettres sur la Sympathie suivies des Lettres d'Amour à Maillat Garat* (Montreal: Presses de l'Université du Québec); Marc-André Bernier and Deirdre Dawson (2010), *Les Lettres sur la Sympathie (1798) de Sophie de Grouchy: philosophie morale et réforme sociale* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation); Karen Brown and James McClellan III (2008), 'Letters on Sympathy (1798), A Critical Edition', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series, 98: 4.

¹⁹ Condorcet, Paine (1991), *Aux Origines de la République 1789–1792. Volume III Le Républicain par Condorcet et Thomas Paine, 1791* (Paris: EDHIS).

²⁰ See Iain McLean (2011), 'The Paris Years of Thomas Jefferson', in Francis D. Cogliano (ed.), *A Companion to Jefferson* (London: Wiley-Blackwell), pp. 110–27; and Jean-Paul Lagrave (1989), 'L'influence de Sophie de Grouchy', in Pierre Crépel (ed.), *Condorcet: Mathématicien, économiste, philosophie, homme politique* (Paris: Colloque International), p. 437.

²¹ All references are to Brown and McClellan III (2008), 'Letters on Sympathy'.

²² Brown and McClellan III, p. 108. There is a question as to whether de Grouchy misunderstood Smith's point, i.e. interpreted his desire to use sympathy as a theoretical starting point as the belief that its origins could not be found. However, the conclusions de Grouchy draws from her own discussion of the origins of sympathy are interesting enough that we can suppose that she, in fact, had reason to disagree with Smith that it was enough to start from sympathy without delving further into its genesis.

physical pain and pleasure.²³ Pain and pleasure, she says, produce two kinds of effects in our bodies, one that is local, focused on the part of the body that is injured or pleased, and one that is general, a feeling of well-being or discomfort that affects our entire bodies. This general feeling is such that it can be reproduced without directly experiencing the particular feeling, through remembering pain or pleasure, reflecting on it, or witnessing it in others. It is the latter, i.e. the experience of a general feeling of pain or pleasure on witnessing someone else's pain or pleasure, that she calls sympathy. Sympathy is therefore first directed towards physical pain, and from there it reaches out to moral suffering. Also, because it is first experienced as a result of feeling the repercussions of a particular person's pain in one's body, sympathy is at first directed at particular individuals. Only later, through the development of our faculties, in particular the mastery of abstraction, does it extend to the general condition of a class of people, or even the whole of humanity; only then does it become moral thinking. Because it means at first that we feel specific individuals' pains and pleasures as our own, sympathy necessitates a sort of dependence between people. De Grouchy represents codependence as a fact of life, a necessity, which we all experience first-hand as newborns, and then more or less, depending on our circumstances, throughout our lives. For de Grouchy, sympathy originates in the cradle, in the first relationship a human being is part of, that is, between a baby and its nurse. This first relationship not only teaches us to create a link between ourselves and other people, but to use this link in order to understand how they feel. It is also, she says, the first means by which we learn and develop.

The specific dependency on some individuals begins in the cradle. It is the first tie that attaches us to our fellows. It causes the first smiles, and the most regular smiles of a child are for his wet nurse; he cries when he is not in her arms and for a long time he loves to throw himself on this breast that satisfied his first needs, that made him feel the first sensations of pleasures, and where he began to mature and to form his initial life habits.²⁴

²³ This is the source of two disagreements with Smith. First, de Grouchy disagrees with Smith that we feel less sympathy for physical pain than we do for moral pain, and secondly, that we feel little sympathy for pleasure (letter 4). De Grouchy's physiological claims are derived from the thought of Cabanis, her friend and the person to whom the letters are addressed (C*). What it amounts to is the belief that sensibility is the bridge between the body and the intellect, it is the starting point for all intellectual processes, and yet it originates in the brain. For Cabanis, the brain famously stood in relation to thinking as the stomach stood to digestion.

²⁴ Brown and McClellan III, pp. 117–18. Note that de Grouchy accepts the then-common practice of wet-nursing, so that although the first relationship involves maternal practice, or mothering, to use Ruddick's terminology, it does not have to involve a child's biological mother and could, in the twenty-first century, involve a father: Sarah Ruddick (1989), *Maternal Thinking* (Boston: Beacon Press), pp. 17, 51.

Because we are dependent on our nurse, she goes on to say, the thought that she might suffer is bound to affect us more than somebody else's suffering would. We feel the connection between her life and ours, and we are more alert to what affects her. Later in life, de Grouchy carries on, we develop individual sympathies for two kinds of people: those who can help us when we are in need, and those who share pleasures or interests with us. Again, there must be a link between these people and ourselves in order for us to be able to experience their suffering as our own. The ability to form such links is learned during our infancy and our survival and happiness later on depends on it. Individual sympathy, she argues, is also the basis for love and friendship. The link between two individuals who love each other must be strong enough that they are able to enjoy each other's happiness fully. She describes this link as a magnified interest for another, which makes us especially aware of what they feel.²⁵ It is striking that to a large extent, de Grouchy pre-empts some of the concerns and arguments of care ethicists in her description of the relationship between an infant and her nurse. And what is particularly interesting from our point of view, is that she believes that this particular relationship is crucial for the growth and preservation of republican virtues. Mothering is not just one way of sustaining the republic while the men make the important decisions, but it is its bedrock, the only way in which it is at all possible for human beings to develop the sort of virtues required for a republic.

11.3 Educating Sympathy and Preserving it Through Sensible Laws: A Republican Ideal

In this section, I put together de Grouchy's and Wollstonecraft's views on the importance of sound educational laws and institution for the proper moral development of republican citizens. This paves the way for Section 11.4 in which I discuss the centrality of mothering practices and the education of infants in both their accounts.

One thing that Enlightenment and republican thinkers of that period have in common is that they all believe that the good organization of society depends on making sure all citizens receive a sound education. Wollstonecraft and de Grouchy are both followers of Rousseau in that they believe that we must educate children from infancy, so as to assist the right development of their natural

²⁵ This is strongly reminiscent of some characterizations of caring, for instance, Noddings (2002), *Starting at Home*, p. 15.

inclinations to be good. For de Grouchy, this includes sympathy.²⁶ In order to become more sympathetic, she says, we must become better at recognizing pain. This does not entail, of course, that parents should inflict pain on their children (though she does say that those who live harder lives tend to be more sympathetic than those who know only ease and pleasure). The role of parents and teachers is to familiarize children with suffering and develop their ability to recognize its symptoms.²⁷ Also, in order to learn to move from individual to general sympathy, children must be taught abstraction. But education as it is practised in eighteenth-century France, she remarks, simply does not encourage abstract thinking. Learning by rote knowledge that one does not understand and only touching on the very basic scientific pursuits will not do.

Educational reform is needed, in content as well as method. Here again de Grouchy's position is very close to Wollstonecraft's who bemoans the fact that girls, in particular, are not taught to think abstractly and who also believes that the capacity for thinking beyond one's immediate circle is necessary for ethical thinking.²⁸

Just as they believed in education's power to help human beings make the most of their natural sympathy, Wollstonecraft and de Grouchy shared many of their contemporaries' beliefs in the influence of laws and social institutions on human character. In particular, de Grouchy believed that we are naturally prone to sympathy and to developing moral beliefs based on this natural propensity, but that the most likely effect a law or institution will have is a perverting one. Therefore, the point of social reform is to ensure that laws and institutions do not actively prevent the natural development of human sympathy. This is not to say that de Grouchy's views about social reform are in any way lightweight. She perceives the laws and institutions in late eighteenth-century France as extremely harmful to the proper development of human morality. A few years into the revolution has not undone the fundamental social and economic inequalities that crippled her country.²⁹ And one could argue that in very few parts of the world has this been achieved today. In fact, the example she gives of how social inequalities work against sympathy is one that would not be anachronistic a century later: that of the relationship between a powerful boss and his employee. The social distance between them means that they will not recognize each other

²⁶ On how Wollstonecraft's theory of education drew on republican ideals, see Sandrine Bergès (2013), *Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London: Routledge), pp. 30–5.

²⁷ De Grouchy cites her own experience of visiting the poor with her mother as a crucial part of her own education: Brown and McClelland III, p. 112.

²⁸ Wollstonecraft (1994), pp. 200, 276.

²⁹ Though the *Letters on Sympathy* were published in 1798, she had already drafted them in 1792.

as someone who can experience pain as they do, and they will not feel sympathy for each other. As a result, the boss, de Grouchy says, will oppress his employee without any remorse, and the employee will not think twice before cheating his boss. Virtues, she says, need to be placed at more or less the same height if they are to find each other. So at the very least, laws and social institutions should not separate people from each other, at least not to the extent that they do not recognize human virtues in each other and are unable to feel sympathy for each other.³⁰

More than this, de Grouchy feels that reform is needed to undo the damage created by previous bad laws and institutions. If sensible laws and non-dividing institutions would, in principle, suffice to ensure that human beings develop as they are supposed to, given how much harm has been done and how divided the people she sees around her are, much more work is needed. And there is no suggestion that such reform could be gentle either, as ‘vicious institutions’ have not only corrupted our nature, but driven us to ‘idiotic blindness’, which makes us ‘accept as a law of necessity the chains one has become incapable of judging or breaking’.³¹ In this, her views are again very close to Wollstonecraft’s who blames the viciousness of women on poor educational practices and laws which stunted their natural development.

11.4 Wet-Nursing and Participation

On de Grouchy’s account, women’s place in a society that values relationships would be very central: mothering infants—or wet-nursing—forms the very basis of the way we are linked to each other, and are able to flourish as members of a group.³²

³⁰ On this de Grouchy disagrees with Smith who thinks that not only can we feel sympathy for a king, but we feel more for a king than we do for an equal because of his greatness. De Grouchy points out that if we do feel sorry for a fallen king, it is because we assume that his previous state did not do enough to prepare him for his current pain, but that on the whole, his being so much above us grates against our natural sense of equality and disposes us to jealousy rather than sympathy.

³¹ Wollstonecraft (1994), p. 175.

³² De Grouchy has very little to say about gender directly in the *Letters on Sympathy*. Only in the seventh of the eight letters does she address gender differences, and then only over a couple of pages. Having argued that it is the fundamental unreasonableness of the marriage institution that causes men to commit injustice on grounds of passion—forcing people to be monogamous, attaching shame to illegitimate births, not allowing couples to get to know each other before they marry, making divorce all but impossible for the majority of the population—she asks whether the same considerations may apply to women. Her answer is short and indirect. She quotes a passage from one of her husband’s Academy of Science speeches, in which he describes the life and achievements of a British surgeon, and says in passing: ‘the faults of women are the work of men, just as the vices of a people are the crimes of their tyrant’. But this need not mean that she is either conflating men and

In her picture, those who care for infants take centre stage in the first crucial step of moral development, that is, help an infant develop the seeds from which compassion will grow. Later on, mothers, fathers, and teachers are said to hold in their hands the future welfare of the next generation.³³ But perhaps one ought to be suspicious of a proposal that makes the flourishing of society depend on women performing a job that is paid little or not at all and leaves no time for participating. A woman who has to stay home to look after babies, disabled, sick, or elderly relatives is obviously not in a position to participate in political life to the same extent as somebody who goes to work outside the home, keeps regular hours, and can take time off. The nature of caring is such that it does not include time off—and therefore carers tend to find themselves alienated from the public space and political participation.³⁴

Women in the eighteenth century, whether mothers or wet nurses, certainly did *not* occupy a central place in the running of society, and no real attempt was made at making it so. But this does not mean that de Grouchy's proposal does not point in the direction of reforms that would enable the empowerment of care workers.

One reason why women are traditionally associated with care is that they are the first carers for those who have not yet learned to care for themselves. A newborn without a mother or a female substitute would have been unlikely to survive in the eighteenth century. Yet, throughout Europe, the common practice for upper- and middle-class women and for working women in urban areas was to employ wet nurses, that is, women who had children of their own and produced enough milk to feed another at the same time. As far as some Enlightenment philosophers were concerned, wet-nursing was a crime committed by aristocratic women towards their children, out of laziness and vanity. Rousseau dedicates the first chapter of *Emile*, his highly popular and influential treatise on

humanity, ignoring the particular plight of women, nor that she is not putting forward a feminist philosophy that highlights the way in which women's contribution to society, were it not stifled, would be beneficial to humanity in general. In private correspondence with Etienne Dumont, a few months before writing the *Letters*, she comments on a book that he has sent her that she is 'dreaming about the manner of bringing up a reasonable woman to live alongside men who will not be so with respect to women for a long time yet' (my translation). It seems that her preoccupations were not unlike Wollstonecraft's in that respect.

³³ 'Fathers, mothers, teachers, you have virtually in your hands alone the destiny of the next generation! Ah! How guilty you are if you allow to wither away in your children these precious seeds of sensibility that need nothing more to develop than the sight of suffering, the example of compassion, tears of recognition, and an enlightened hand that warms and cuddles them!' Brown and McClelland III, p. 112.

³⁴ On this see Bergès (2015a) 'Is Motherhood compatible with political participation? Sophie de Grouchy's Care-based Republicanism', *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 18: 47–60.

education, to this very question. In a footnote he tells us that ‘The earliest education is most important and it undoubtedly is woman’s work. If the author of nature had meant to assign it to men he would have given them milk to feed the child’.³⁵ Rousseau argues that it is best that the child not be farmed out to a stranger, as there will be no one to ensure that the child is brought up in a healthy manner and one that does not endanger his moral development (I say ‘his’ because Rousseau is concerned here entirely with the education of men). On the other hand, because mothers are often unwilling to breastfeed their children, it may be best to choose a wet nurse carefully, and supervise her habits and diet closely.³⁶ This is the solution he settles on for Emile: the mother is conveniently taken out of the equation, replaced by a nurse who is little more, in this case, than a feeding machine, thus leaving the tutor complete freedom in the upbringing of Emile. But this is not a practice Rousseau can recommend that all parents should follow. If their children do not benefit from the tutelage of someone such as he, Rousseau, it is better that the mother should step up and take charge of the feeding of her own infant. Not to do so would cause the following problem. Even if we choose a ‘healthy nurse rather than a petted mother’ to care for the infant, we run the risk of psychologically corrupting the child. A child who is suckled by a nurse will develop affections for someone he is taught to look down upon, while asked to respect a mother he has no affection for. The child thus is bound to develop ingratitude instead of more positive emotions.

Wollstonecraft’s own argument in favour of mothers breastfeeding their own children is not dissimilar to Rousseau’s. For her, morality begins at home, and a child who is sent out to a wet nurse will not learn what it is to be loved and to love in return.³⁷

Her parental affection, indeed, can scarcely deserve the name, when it does not lead her to suckle her children, because the discharge of this duty is equally calculated to inspire maternal and filial affection: and it is the indispensable duty of men and women to fulfill the duties which give birth to affections that are the surest preservative against vice. Natural affection, as it is termed, I believe to be a very faint tie, affections must grow out of

³⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1966), *Emile ou de L’Education* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion), p. 37.

³⁶ ‘There can be no doubt about a wife’s duty, but considering the contempt in which it is held, it is doubtful whether it is not just as good for the child to be suckled by a stranger’, Rousseau (1966), p. 11.

³⁷ On this, see Eileen Hunt Botting’s excellent discussion of the place of the family in Wollstonecraft’s thought and her argument that Wollstonecraft, at the time she is writing both the *Vindications*, sees the home as the ‘affective space within which citizens are effectively formed’: Eileen Hunt Botting (2006), *Family Feuds: Wollstonecraft, Burke, and Rousseau on the Transformation of the Family* (Buffalo, NY: SUNY), p. 131.

the habitual exercise of a mutual sympathy; and what sympathy does a mother exercise who sends her babe to a nurse, and only takes it from a nurse to send to school?³⁸

The character of future citizens, Wollstonecraft tells us, is formed in their childhood and in particular, their ability to care for each other and treat each other with respect is developed according to whether they experience affectionate relationships with their own carers. Being sent away twice, and later on expected to love and respect a mother who is but a stranger, is not conducive to the development of the kind of emotions that will later on bind citizens together. Thus, the mother in Wollstonecraft's picture is in charge of two crucial stages in a child's moral development (as well as being responsible for the child's health). The first is to 'inspire affection' in the very young child and infant, in such a way as to give him or her the capacity to love and be loved. Secondly, a mother's duty is to help those early affections grow into full-blown civic virtues. These two stages are tied to the mother, Wollstonecraft tells us; suckling does not merely help a child develop feelings of affection, but also inspires maternal love. A mother who does not feed her child, Wollstonecraft tells us, is less likely to learn to love her child and thereby to give him or her the necessary care and attention in later childhood. Though there is certainly some evidence that breastfeeding can be a bonding experience between mother and child, we also know that it is neither necessary nor sufficient. Mothers who bottlefeed (and indeed fathers) love their children just as much as those who breastfeed, and breastfeeding does not guarantee maternal love.

Another reason why Wollstonecraft is not willing to separate the duties of suckling an infant from those of educating a child is a contingent one. Wollstonecraft believes, very plausibly, that natural affection is not of itself sufficient for parental love but that it must be strengthened by 'the habitual exercise of mutual sympathy'. Sympathy, she says, does not arise automatically, as soon as the baby is placed in his mother's arms. It requires the development of a relationship throughout its formative years. It requires that the child be cared for, consistently, and in a way that matches her progress—so hopefully by the same person or group of people who can develop a relationship with her and build on it over the years. The upper-class English practice of sending a child off to live with a nurse and then back home, and then to school clearly does not achieve this. One cannot receive a child at the age of three and expect to be loved by him or her instantly. A child's love and affection will grow through daily interactions, not simply because he or she is told that they are blood relations.

³⁸ Wollstonecraft (1994), p. 234.

Wollstonecraft fails to consider a different kind of scenario, in which mother (or indeed father) and wet nurse work together to bring up the child with love and affection. Suzanne Necker, an outspoken defender of Rousseau's educational methods who gave up her attempts at breastfeeding her daughter after three months, described such an experience. Having experienced difficulties breastfeeding and suffered from depression as a result, she engaged a Flemish nurse to feed her baby. The nurse lived in the family home and Suzanne was able to work together with the nurse, and be part of every aspect of her daughter's infancy and childhood apart from her feeding. She contrasts this positive experience of mothering to the depression that followed from her inability to feed her daughter herself.³⁹ But perhaps the fact that wet-nursing was a state-licenced occupation in France, while in England, the employment of wet nurses was more ad hoc, and therefore probably carried more risks, is relevant here.⁴⁰

Wet-nursing seems to have been not only more regulated, but better established in France than it was in England, thereby allowing parents more flexibility in working together with the women who nursed their children. Moreover, wet-nursing in France was not, as it was portrayed by its detractors, the privilege of the idle rich, of aristocratic women who did not want to make the effort to raise their own child, or to risk spoiling their looks by doing so, but common practice among the urban poor working women who could not afford to keep infants at home.⁴¹ Wollstonecraft may not have been fully aware of the social realities of the practice of breastfeeding in France, and this may have prevented her from seeing the possibility of a more rational and healthy relationship between nurse and mother such as the one displayed by the Necker household.

One last consideration as to why Wollstonecraft is so adamant that a mother must suckle her child is that she is attempting to derive a mother's right to citizenship from her duties, and obviously, the greater the duty, the clearer the right. Looking after babies, after all, is a 'grand duty' of women, and it belongs to them 'by nature'.⁴² The strong implication is that women's natural contribution to the common good is very high and that consequently they deserve to have a say in it! Were a woman's contribution to the raising of future citizens be replaceable, it would be less clear that they deserved the title of citizen.⁴³ This

³⁹ Madelyn Gutwirth (2004), 'Suzanne Necker's Legacy: Breastfeeding as Metonymy', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 28 (2): pp. 19–20.

⁴⁰ Mary Jacobus (1992), 'Incorruptible milk: breastfeeding and the French revolution', in Sarah E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine (eds), *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 71.

⁴¹ See Jacobus (1992), 'Incorruptible milk', p. 54.

⁴² Wollstonecraft (1994), p. 223.

⁴³ Wollstonecraft (1994), p. 227.

consideration, however, could be made to apply separately to any woman who feeds a child, whether or not her own, as well as to any person, male or female who takes care of a child's daily need. A wet nurse and a mother or father who looks after a child's early upbringing all contribute to the common good in the way Wollstonecraft describes, whether they care for the child alone or as a team.

Because she insists on breastfeeding as central to this relationship, Wollstonecraft ties the actual mother to this process. If a wet nurse won't do, then the mother has to be the one who is responsible for making sure the child becomes a moral being, i.e. capable of caring for others. This is to be contrasted with Sophie de Grouchy's view which, because she does not insist on mothers feeding their own children, pre-empts that scenario. De Grouchy separates the various stages of a child's moral development. First, an infant must experience need and satisfaction at the hands of another. An infant must experience dependence. Later on, through the development of intellectual faculties, a child must learn to recognize suffering in others and understand how it can be relieved. But the two stages need not be supervised by a single person: indeed, one requires only a physical, and perhaps emotional presence, whereas the other demands a greater intellectual involvement. So for de Grouchy, a wet nurse suffices to the first stage, but the second requires also 'mothers, fathers and teachers'.⁴⁴

By allowing that mothering can be practised by people who are not necessarily themselves mothers—of course, wet nurses had to have given birth in order to lactate, but in some cases, at least, the child had not lived, so they were not, technically mothers—she allows that the act be separated from the property of being a mother.⁴⁵ This is a direct consequence of her looking for the physiological origins of sympathy. There is nothing physiologically special about a mother except that she produces milk and has a warm body with which to cuddle a baby. If another person can be found who has those same qualities, then there is no reason, on de Grouchy's account, why that person should not nurse a child. If Wollstonecraft did not come to the same conclusion it is not only because wet-nursing as she knew it was not a healthy practice and one that did not allow parents to develop close relationships with their children, but also because for her, the work of educating a child into citizenship is a civic duty, and thus must

⁴⁴ Brown and McClellan III (2008), 'Letters on Sympathy', p. 112.

⁴⁵ This anticipates Sarah Ruddick's distinction between birthing and mothering. According to her, though birthing is always female, mothering can be practised by anyone regardless of their sex, and insists, further, that every person who practises mothering is adoptive in some way, even if they are mothering a child they gave birth to, as they had to make a choice, once that child was born, to care for it or not: Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, p. 51.

have moral substance. She is not prepared to say that children's moral education depends, at first, on a purely physiological process.

11.5 A Feminist Solution?

Arguing that mothers must feed their own children, whether or not it is part of a programme to include women in politics or on the contrary to exclude them, certainly puts obstacles to their capacity to participate.⁴⁶ De Grouchy's *Letters on Sympathy* offer a different solution to revolutionary French mothers simply because, unlike Rousseau or Wollstonecraft, she does not insist that mothers should breastfeed their own children. Unfortunately this is not, of itself, a solution to the systematic relegating of women to the kind of support work that leaves little room or opportunity for participation. Historically, wet nurses were lower-class women, so if their existence freed other women for activities that potentially could help them become citizens, it did nothing for women in general.

One tentative reply to this problem draws on the idea that if children develop the right kind of relationships with their nurses, they will have the right kind of moral attitude towards them and will do their best to treat them with fairness and kindness later in life. But this does not solve the problem that care workers, while they are working, have little time or opportunity for participation. De Grouchy took care of her own nurse when she was too old to work, but this could not make up for lost opportunities to (try and) become a citizen. Wet nurses as a class remain alienated from public life.

A better solution begins with the thought that de Grouchy, by insisting that wet nurses can be responsible for a child's early moral development, demystifies motherhood. If an eighteenth-century mother could only be replaced by another lactating woman, the same is no longer true. Bottle-feeding and expressing milk mean that men, too, can feed infants, providing them with the same physical closeness and the same milk as women can. This means that we have a great deal more flexibility for redistributing the work of caring for infants. Two potential applications are: (1) the availability of workplace nurseries staffed by men and women who receive fair financial and social compensations for their work, and (2) an equally distributed parental leave, built on the expectation that fathers

⁴⁶ Interestingly, the question of whether or not women should breastfeed their own children did not help settle one way or the other the question of whether women should participate in politics. For some, such as Rousseau, women's nature as feeders did preclude their participation. But for others, such as Wollstonecraft (1994), p. 227, and Pierre Roussel (1977), *Système Physique et Moral de la Femme* (Paris: Vincent), women could only accede to political rights if they performed their duties as mothers, including breastfeeding!

and mothers will take equal time off work to perform the work of caring for infants.⁴⁷ Under such conditions, it is possible to recognize the work of caring for infants as essential to the flourishing of society and not, at the same time, turn it into a means of oppressing women and/or lower-class people.

Wollstonecraft, perhaps because she tries to argue that the fact that they are mothers is a reason for granting women citizenship—if they are to educate future citizens they ought to participate in the city, and be educated as a citizen would—does not succeed in proposing full gender equality: women’s citizenship remains conditional on their performing certain biological duties. De Grouchy who is less concerned with establishing women’s rights to citizenship—perhaps because she feels that her husband Condorcet has already done this as well as it could be done—is not constrained by such considerations and paradoxically, it allows her to propose a less oppressive account of mothering.

11.6 Conclusion

De Grouchy’s argument enables us to rethink the role of motherly duties in the republic, and share the burden of these more equally among citizens, so that women can have the same opportunity for political participation as men. Her perspective only differs from Wollstonecraft’s in that she separates the duty of caring for infants, specifically providing them with the sort of warmth that will enable them later on to develop healthy relationships with other people, from the act of breastfeeding. This entails that parents have duties to ensure that they do their utmost to bring up their children properly, emotionally as well as physically, but that a mother’s duty does not translate into an exclusive ability or responsibility to nurture. Under such circumstances, it is possible to argue, following Wollstonecraft in every other respect, that there should be no disparity in the requirements that men and women need to fulfil in order to be considered good citizens.

⁴⁷ For a defence of these proposals see Anca Gheaus (2012), ‘Is the Family Uniquely Valuable?’, in *Ethics and Social Policy* 6 (2): 120–31; and Gheaus (2011), ‘Arguments for non-parental care for children’, *Social Theory and Practice* 37 (3): 483–509; Anca Gheaus and Ingrid Robeyns (2011), ‘Equality-promoting parental leave’, *Journal of Social Philosophy* 42 (2): 173–91.

12

Mary Wollstonecraft and Modern Philosophy

Barbara Taylor

Was Mary Wollstonecraft a republican? The question focuses attention on a constellation of issues which today we label political—freedom, liberty, domination, rights, representation—but which in Wollstonecraft’s day arose at the interface between politics and culture, and that she and her contemporaries dubbed ‘manners’.¹ Wollstonecraft was very interested in political matters but she rarely treated them as a separate field of discussion. (And it is worth noting that when she did, women featured mostly negatively, as obstacles to political progress.) But if politics in the modern sense was a subsidiary element in Wollstonecraft’s thought, this was emphatically not true of manners. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) famously called for a ‘revolution in female manners’, and it was bad manners both in and towards women—that is, manners that degraded and corrupted them—that was a principal *casus belli* in Wollstonecraft’s fierce quarrel with some of her intellectual contemporaries.² I return to this theme later.

All the contributors to this volume ask us to take Wollstonecraft seriously as a political theorist. None, I am glad to see, freeze her into the philosophical canon (as a ‘Great Western Thinker’). Rather, they offer us the image of a young intellectual forming and reforming her ideas under great pressure, seizing whatever tools were available to her—especially, this volume proposes, republican

¹ ‘Manners’ in the eighteenth century had a much broader meaning than today, encompassing not just codes of conduct but social customs, attitudes, habits: all those elements of collective existence that we describe as culture.

² Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* ([1792] 1989), in M. Butler and J. Todd (eds), *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft* (London: Pickering and Chatto), vol. 5, p. 114 (hereafter VRW).

ideas as sharpened up in previous ideological conflicts—to meet the challenges of the times. However, sparing Wollstonecraft death by canonization is not the same as saying that she was not a philosopher. Indeed, this was precisely how she saw herself: as a ‘modern philosopher’ in her phrase, one of those ‘bold thinkers’ whose ‘enlightened sentiments of masculine and improved philosophy’ were transforming Europe; a ‘Gallic philosophess’ as her enemies dubbed her, for whom philosophy meant a no-holds-barred, consequential critique of ‘things as they are’, leading to universal human betterment.³ By the mid-1790s English Jacobin philosophers were working under heavy fire, which makes the hunt for philosophical system in their writings rather beside the point. Many of Wollstonecraft’s ideas changed dramatically in the course of her brief philosophical career, including her analysis of women’s oppression which underwent some startling revisions between the *Rights of Woman* and what was meant to be its second volume, *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*. I can only gesture towards these changes here, but it is important to remind ourselves about them before we begin slotting Wollstonecraft’s thought into this or that intellectual tradition.

This brings me to my second point about Wollstonecraft as a modern philosopher, which is the degree to which her ideas were shaped by her womanhood, or rather by the female predicament as she lived it and understood it. The *Rights of Woman* opens with the declaration that she will ‘first consider women in the grand light of human creatures who, in common with men, are placed on this earth to unfold their faculties’ and only afterwards go on to ‘point out [women’s] peculiar designation’.⁴ The order of priorities is important; but it is in fact the peculiarities, the particularities, of womanhood that are the book’s leitmotif. This results in a particular, in some respects highly novel, slant on issues of power and oppression. In terms of the ‘modern philosophy’ of my title, it positions Wollstonecraft in a very critical relationship to some of her enlightened contemporaries, as she analyses their attitudes to women and finds these suffused with prejudice and hypocrisy. In some cases—Edmund Burke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, James Fordyce—she offers a symptomatic reading of these attitudes in terms of masculine anxieties: about virility, about intellectual and sexual potency; the male mind at bay. I emphasize this because I think it is useful to remind ourselves about the agonistic conditions under which feminism emerged, which again places question marks around attempts to assimilate Wollstonecraft to male-dominated philosophical traditions, not least because such assimilation runs the

³ Barbara Taylor (2003), *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminine Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 176–202.

⁴ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 74.

danger—one perhaps not entirely avoided in this volume—of losing sight of those aspects of her thought which are specific to her feminism, and indeed to the feminist tradition that she inaugurated.

We need also to recall that Wollstonecraft was a religious thinker. Every contemporary commentator on her—including two people who were very close to her: William Godwin and Mary Hays—emphasized her strong, albeit unorthodox, religious faith. This aspect of her thought has proven difficult to integrate into present-day interpretations, so it is good to see thoughtful references to it here, although its implications for her radicalism could perhaps have received more attention. Wollstonecraft's critique of male power, for example, is framed by a classic anti-voluntarist account of divine power (her move from God to man in this argument is a model of ingenuity), while one of the main charges she hurls against sexist men is that they would condemn women to spiritual abjection (if we think such ideas are archaic, just take a look at present-day anti-fundamentalist feminisms). And there is one type of female dependency that Wollstonecraft not only approves but insists upon, calling on her female readers to 'attain conscious dignity by feeling themselves dependent only on God'.⁵ God, not man: here was the moral ground on which Western feminists staked their claims prior to the late twentieth century. Does labelling Wollstonecraft a republican obscure the significance of this? There are, of course, many Early Modern Christian thinkers—including Wollstonecraft's fellow Jacobin Richard Price—currently sporting the republican tag, so I may be merely cavilling here, but the question deserves further consideration.

Turning to Wollstonecraft's political programme—the theme of the chapters by Susan James, Lena Halldenius, and Alan Coffee—we see the advantages of using the republican model to highlight aspects of her thought occluded by older characterizations of her as a classical liberal. True freedom, as Wollstonecraft believed and these chapters emphasize, means much more than non-interference; it is freedom from all arbitrary power, whether formal and informal, gentle or harsh in its exercise. No person is free, as Wollstonecraft points out, when her well-being depends on the 'good humour' of her master. A truly free woman must be able to act on her own freely reached judgements. This I take to be the force of James's account of rights as 'realizable powers to act', and Halldenius's definition of political rights as 'rights against oppression' (which presumably would include the right that Wollstonecraft mentions most often: the right to education). Coffee's description of freedom as liberation from those 'social ideas, values, and traditions' that underpin female oppression takes the

⁵ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 105.

argument further. This broadened view of the conditions for personal freedom is very illuminating (although it would have benefited from being seen in the context of the radical Protestantism of Wollstonecraft's circle). I say more about the ideological and cultural aspects of this programme below; first, a brief word about rights as powers to act effectively, as described in James's chapter.

One difficulty with defining rights as powers to act, as James indicates, is that this definition appears to strip rights-talk of any moral content, making it impossible to prefer one set of rightful actions over another, and leaving power alone as the measure of right, exactly as Wollstonecraft accused Burke of doing (in her 1790 *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, her reply to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*). Rights in the Burkean sense—that is, historic privileges—were certainly open to this charge, which is why, as James says, Wollstonecraft turns to God-given rights, that is to rights as prescribed by natural law, instead of historic rights. Let us look at this more closely.

As James notes, Wollstonecraft does not have much to say about rights. She mentions them briefly in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, and again in the *Rights of Woman*; and her history of the French Revolution contains an unambiguous statement of her belief in the 'natural and imprescriptible rights of man' under the social contract.⁶ But there is no extended treatment of the theme anywhere in her corpus. What little she does say is both conventional and innovatory, simultaneously shaped by and subverting natural law theory as it came to her from two sources: her radical associates, especially Richard Price and his circle, and—more importantly—from that large and influential genre of enlightened moral literature devoted to women, adumbrating their prescribed roles and duties, or their 'offices' in natural law terminology. Wollstonecraft's debt to this discourse of female offices is very apparent. Why is her magnum opus entitled *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* rather than 'women'? The answer lies in woman's 'peculiar' place in the moral order, which assigns her a specific package of duties and rights: not as discretionary powers—which Wollstonecraft would have called licence—but as powers granted by God for the fulfilment of the requirements of the female office. A 'right always includes a duty,' Wollstonecraft writes, 'and I think it may, likewise, fairly be inferred that they forfeit the right, who do not fulfil the duty'.⁷ What does this imply for women's civic entitlements?

⁶ Mary Wollstonecraft ([1794] 1989), *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution*, M. Butler and J. Todd (eds), *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft* (London: Pickering and Chatto), vol. 6, p. 115.

⁷ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 227.

As Sandrine Bergès reminds us, in the *Rights of Woman* Wollstonecraft states that women only deserve full citizenship if they fulfil their familial responsibilities. This is true also of men, Wollstonecraft notes, echoing many male political reformers who, however, tended to interpret this as legitimating male power over women. As masters of households, men were said to possess rights in their wives and children: a position held by many French and English radicals. The influential radical Whig James Burgh (whose widow befriended Wollstonecraft in the mid-1780s) waxed eloquent on this theme. ‘Every man’, James Burgh wrote in his *Political Disquisitions* (1774/5), ‘has a life, a personal liberty, a character, a right to his earnings, a right to a religious profession and worship according to his conscience, &c. and many men, who are in a state of dependence upon others, and who receive charity, have wives and children, in whom they have a right’. Poor men needed greater political power, Burgh went on, in order to protect ‘their lives, their personal liberty, their little property . . . and the chastity of their wives and daughters’.⁸

This was the version of political rights that held sway among British constitutional reformers until the early twentieth century. To challenge it in the 1790s was near to impossible; just how near, we see when we look at Wollstonecraft’s ideas about female independence.

Wollstonecraft has plenty to say against female dependency and to think about this in relation to republican polemics against dependence is illuminating (although we need to remind ourselves of the strongly macho flavour of these polemics, as republicans contrasted manly independence to womanly weakness and effete dependency: a popular theme in republican rhetoric). But what does independence really mean for a woman? Coffee teases out some important elements in this when he describes independence as psychological as well as practical—the capability, as he puts it in very Wollstonecraftian language, to ‘think for oneself’ instead of being a ‘slave of prejudice’. But he tends to treat female independence in individual terms, which leaves us with the problem that most women in Wollstonecraft’s day (as in our day) lived lives that were deeply embedded in the lives of others. Bergès’s discussion of mothering points this up in interesting ways: as she says, the *Rights of Woman* makes great play of mothering as the basis of female entitlements. Thus, when Wollstonecraft turns to female independence she describes it in terms of domestic responsibilities: the independent woman is no autonomous individual but an equal partner in the family. ‘The being who discharges the duties of its station is independent’, she

⁸ James Burgh (1774–5), *Political Disquisitions*, 3 vols (London: Printed for E. and C. Dilly in the Poultry), vol. 1, p. 37.

states at one point, going on to paint an extravagantly sentimentalized portrait of a humble rural abode inhabited by an exemplary mother-homemaker and her diligent craftsman husband: 'a couple . . . equally necessary and independent of each other', she writes, 'because each fulfils the respective duties of their station'.⁹

Yet having made this argument, Wollstonecraft edges past it, attacking all those enlightened moralizers—Rousseau, James Fordyce, Dr Gregory, etc.—who have 'earnestly laboured to domesticate women' by 'prevailing on them to make the discharge of [family] duties the main business of life, though reason were insulted', reminding her readers that, like all God's children, women have a prior duty, to 'perfect our souls by the exercise of our own reason'.¹⁰ The independent woman must be free to act on her own moral judgements, 'dependent only on God'. This argument, drawn straight from Rational Dissent but implicit in all varieties of Protestantism, was undoubtedly the sharpest weapon in Wollstonecraft's intellectual armoury, the most difficult for her opponents to counter. But in addition, and much more daringly, she goes on to argue that for women as for men, it is the power 'to earn their own subsistence' which is the 'true definition of independence'.¹¹ This economic dimension of Wollstonecraft's feminism doesn't receive much attention in this volume, but it is of central importance to her radical vision, as we see when we look at *The Wrongs of Woman*. This final feminist work is much more subversive of natural law prescriptions than the *Rights of Woman*, propounding a version of women's rights—to legal and political equality, but also to economic independence, sexual self-determination, and custody of children—which amounts to a wholesale onslaught on patriarchal marriage. It was to be another 150 years before any feminist dared again to pitch the stakes this high.

What *The Wrongs of Woman* also did—in ways that the *Rights of Woman* began to do but did not do well, partly because of Wollstonecraft's emotional inexperience when she wrote it—is to probe some of the deepest and most intractable sites of the feminine predicament: in motherhood, as Bergès reminds us, but also in heterosexual love. Loving men is complicated for feminists. For the young and virginal author of the *Rights of Woman*, such love is an 'arbitrary passion' which, if unchecked by reason, degrades and imperils women, generating dependencies in them that are unamenable to socio-political remedies. Yet Wollstonecraft was also a Romantic, much preoccupied with the vicissitudes of human subjectivity; and here we need to recall her debt to another republican thinker—Rousseau—whose weirdly contradictory but highly influential views on

⁹ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 223.

¹⁰ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 133.

¹¹ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 155.

women are a chief target of the *Rights of Woman*, and whose *La Nouvelle Héloïse* Wollstonecraft evokes to good effect in the *Wrongs of Woman*, where it serves to inspire the adulterous love affair between Maria and Henry Darnford (a portrait of Wollstonecraft's unfaithful lover Gilbert Imlay). This affair, which ends disastrously, showcases the dangers of sexual fantasy and passion for women: one of the key themes of Wollstonecraft's feminism.

Everywhere we look in Wollstonecraft's life and writings we see her struggling to reconcile erotic love with female self-governance and moral dignity. Her solution in the *Rights of Woman* is to set aside sexual love in favour of transcendent love, the divine *eros*, the ardours of the soul as against those of the body. But by the time she wrote the *Wrongs of Woman* this pseudo-solution had been given up, with no alternative offered in its stead. 'I feel my fate united to yours by the most sacred principles of my soul . . .' she writes to Gilbert Imlay two months before attempting suicide after his abandonment of her.¹² Even the powers of soul could not protect a woman from emotional agony, it seemed, in this most intimate nexus of power relationships.

What *Maria* also does, or mostly does, is to eschew the misogynist caricatures of women that appear throughout Wollstonecraft's earlier works, especially the *Rights of Woman* which is riddled with them. When we think about Wollstonecraft's views on power and domination, we need to remind ourselves of this: that the harshest criticisms of illegitimate power in the *Rights of Woman* are directed not at men but at women, whom Wollstonecraft repeatedly accuses of deliberately foregoing their natural rights in favour of a guileful sexual ascendancy over men. 'When, therefore, I call women slaves,' she writes, 'I mean only in a political and civil sense; for, indirectly they obtain too much power, and are debased by their exertions to obtain illicit sway.'¹³ She compares women to Britain's degenerate aristocracy, as described by Adam Smith. Why this fierce anti-woman rhetoric? Republicanism offers us one clue here, albeit a negative one, as we look to its own misogynistic strain, its attacks on 'effeminacy' and luxury (always portrayed as feminine), its portrayal of women as agents of reaction. But Halldenus gives us another, very important, clue when she talks about the issue of 'artificial' manners and the roles assigned to women in the theatre of polite manners.

As I indicated earlier, it was bad manners that aroused Wollstonecraft's ire towards some of her philosophical contemporaries. The *Rights of Woman*

¹² Mary Wollstonecraft to Gilbert Imlay, 13 June 1795, Ralph Wardle (ed.) (1979), *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), pp. 292–3.

¹³ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, p. 239.

inveighs against ‘gothic manners’, by which is meant not the crude sexist effronteries to which women had long been subjected—which by the late eighteenth century were *démodé* in polite society—but the florid language of sexual compliment known as ‘gallantry’. Gallantry, an updated version of medieval chivalry, featured widely in British Enlightenment writings, and especially in the hugely popular conduct books of James Fordyce and Dr Gregory. Wollstonecraft rakes these with fire in the *Rights of Woman*, ridiculing their gross sentimentality and charging them with corrupting women’s minds by ‘bubbling’ them with ‘specious homage’, ‘those pretty feminine phrases, which the men condescendingly use to soften our slavish dependence’.¹⁴ Wollstonecraft is adamant that the fault here lies with men, but the rhetorical weight of her argument falls so heavily on women, in language so derogatory, that the modern reader is inclined to turn away. If we *do* turn away, however, what we lose is Wollstonecraft’s suggestion—a very important suggestion I think—that manners can be simultaneously degrading *and* empowering for women. This is worth pausing over. Some of Wollstonecraft’s remarks about female manipulation of sexual codes can still stop us in our tracks. Power isn’t always a one-way street. Women are not always only victims; there are types of female empowerment which are not, to my mind, feminist desirables. Feminism is not like other sorts of politics; it is the personal made political, it is politics with a sexual difference. I think we need to keep this in mind when we read Mary Wollstonecraft in the light of the feminist tradition she inaugurated, and consider the implications of her ideas for our own sexually fraught and deeply unequal society.

¹⁴ Wollstonecraft, *VRW*, pp. 76–7. For a fuller discussion of this, see Barbara Taylor (2005), ‘Feminists versus Gallants: Sexual Manners and Morals in Enlightenment Britain’, in S. Knott and B. Taylor (eds), *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (Houndsmill: Palgrave), pp. 30–52.

Bibliography

- Abbey, R. (1999), "Back to the Future. Marriage as Friendship in the Thought of Mary Wollstonecraft", *Hypatia* 4 (3): 78–95.
- Abbey, R. (2011), *The Return of Feminist Liberalism* (London: Routledge).
- Adair, J. M. (1790), "Unanswerable arguments against the abolition of the slave trade. With a defence of the proprietors of the British sugar colonies" (London: J. P. Bateman).
- Adams, C. J. (1994), "Bringing Peace Home: A Feminist Philosophical Perspective on the Abuse of Women, Children, and Pet Animals", *Hypatia: Feminism and Peace* 9 (2): 63–84.
- Adams, C. J. (2010), *The Sexual Politics of Meat (20th Anniversary Edition): A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York: A&C Black).
- Allen, P. (1985), *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution 750 BC–AD 1250* (Montreal: Eden Press).
- Anderson, J. and Honneth, J. (2005), "Autonomy, Vulnerability, Recognition and Justice", in J. Christman and J. Anderson (eds), *Autonomy and the Challenges to Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 127–49.
- Aristotle (2000), *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. R. Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Aristotle (2011), *The Eudemian Ethics*, trans. A. Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Astell, A. (1706), *Reflections upon marriage. The third edition. To which is added a preface, in answer to some objections* (London: R. Wilkin).
- Baehr, A. (2004), *Varieties of Feminist Liberalism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield).
- Bahar, S. (2002), *Mary Wollstonecraft's Social and Aesthetic Philosophy: "An Eve to Please Me"* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).
- Baldwin, A. and Hutton, S. (eds) (1994), *Platonism and the English Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Baltzly, D. and Eliopoulos, N. (2009), "The Classical Ideals of Friendship", in B. Caine (ed.), *Friendship: A History* (London: Equinox), pp. 1–64.
- Baucom, I. (2005), *Specters of the Atlantic* (Durham and London: Duke University Press).
- Beatson, J. (1789), *Compassion the duty and dignity of man; and cruelty the disgrace of his nature. A Sermon occasioned by that branch of British Commerce which extend to the Human Species. Preached to a Congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Hull, 21 January 1789, Hull.*
- Bellamy, R. (2007), *Political Constitutionalism: A Republican Defense of the Constitutionality of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Beitz, C. R. (2009), *The Idea of Human Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Benson, P. (1991), "Autonomy and Oppressive Socialization", *Social Theory and Practice* 17: 385–408.
- Benson, P. (1994), "Free Agency and Self-Worth", *Journal of Philosophy* 91: 650–68.
- Benson, P. (2005), "Taking Ownership: Authority and Voice in Autonomous Agency", in J. Christman and J. Anderson (eds), *Autonomy and the Challenges to Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 106–26.

- Bentham, J. (1789), *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (London: T. Paine).
- Bergès, S. (2013), *The Routledge Guidebook to Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London and New York: Routledge).
- Bergès, S. (2015a), "Is Motherhood compatible with political participation? Sophie de Grouchy's Care-based Republicanism", *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 18: 47–60.
- Bergès, S. (2015b), "Sophie de Grouchy on the Cost of Domination in the Letters on Sympathy and Two Anonymous Articles in *Le Républicain*", *The Monist* 98: 102–12.
- Berlin, I. (1969), *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Bernier, M-A. and Dawson, D. (2010), *Les Lettres sur la Sympathies (1798) de Sophie de Grouchy: philosophie morale et réforme sociale* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation).
- Berville, J. and Barriere, A. (1827), *Mémoires de Madame Roland, avec une notice sur sa vie, des notes et des éclaircissements historiques* (Paris: Baudoin Frère).
- Besson, S. and Martí, J. L. (2008), *Law and Republicanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Bohman, J. (2007), *Democracy Across Borders: From Demos to Demoi* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).
- Booth, A. (1792), *Commerce in the Human Species, and the Enslaving of Innocent Persons, Inimical to the Laws of Moses and the Gospel of Christ* (London: printed; Philadelphia: reprinted and sold by Daniel Lawrence).
- Botting, E. H. (2006a), "Mary Wollstonecraft's Enlightenment legacy: the 'modern social imaginary' of the egalitarian family", *American Behavioral Scientist* 49 (5): 687–701.
- Botting, E. H. (2006b), *Family Feuds: Wollstonecraft, Burke, and Rousseau on the Transformation of the Family* (Albany: SUNY).
- Brace, L. (2000), "Not Empire, but Equality: Mary Wollstonecraft, the Marriage State and the Sexual Contract", *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8 (4): 433–55.
- Brace, L. (2004), *The Politics of Property* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).
- Brace, L. (2010), "Improving the inside: gender, property and the eighteenth-century self", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 12 (1): 111–28.
- Brace, L. (2013), "Inhuman Commerce: Antislavery and the ownership of freedom", *European Journal of Political Theory* 12 (4): 447–65.
- Bradshaw, L. (1991), "Political Rule, Prudence and the Woman Question in Aristotle", *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 24 (3): 557–73.
- Braithwaite, J., Charlesworth, H., and Soares, A. (2012), *Networked Governance of Freedom and Tyranny: Peace in East Timor* (Canberra: ANU Press).
- Braithwaite, J. and Pettit, P. (1990), *Not Just Deserts: A Republican Theory of Criminal Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Broad, J. and Green, K. (2009), *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1400–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Brugger, W. (1999), *Republican Theory in Political Thought: Virtuous or Virtual* (New York: Macmillan).
- Bryson, A. (1998), *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Burger, R. (2008), *Aristotle's Dialogue with Socrates: On the Nicomachean Ethics* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press).

- Burgh, J. (1774, 1775), *Political Disquisitions*, 3 vols (London: E. and C. Dilly).
- Burke, E. (1968), *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: Penguin Books).
- Burke, E. (2005), "Speech to the Electors of Bristol", in *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, vol. II (Project Gutenberg EBook).
- Butler, M. (1984), *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Christman, J. (1991), "Autonomy and Personal History", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 21: 1–24.
- Christman, J. (2004), "Relational Autonomy, Liberal Individualism, and the Social Constitution of Selves", *Philosophical Studies* 117: 143–64.
- Christman, J. (2009), *The Politics of Persons: Individual Autonomy and Socio-historical Selves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Clarkson, T. (1786), *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (London: J. Phillips).
- Coffee, A. (2013), "Mary Wollstonecraft, Freedom and the Enduring Power of Social Domination", *European Journal of Political Theory* 12 (2): 116–35.
- Coffee, A. (2014), "Freedom as Independence: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Grand Blessing of Life", *Hypatia, A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 29 (4): 908–24.
- Coffee, A. (2015), "Two Spheres of Domination: Republican Theory, Social Norms and the Insufficiency of Negative Freedom", *Contemporary Political Theory* 14 (1): 45–62.
- Coleman, J. (2005), "Pre-modern property and self-ownership before and after Locke: or, when did common decency become a private rather than a public virtue?", *European Journal of Political Theory* 4 (2): 125–45.
- Condorcet, N. Marquis de and Paine, T. (1991), *Aux Origines de la République 1789–1792*, vol. III, *Le Républicain par Condorcet et Thomas Paine, 1791* (Paris: EDHIS).
- Conniff, J. (1999), "Edmund Burke and His Critics: The Case of Mary Wollstonecraft", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60 (2): 299–318.
- Constant, B. (1988), "The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns", in *Political Writings*, ed. Biancamaria Fontana (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Curzer, H. (2010), "An Aristotelian Critique of the Traditional Family", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 47 (2): 135–47.
- Dardenne, E. (2010), "From Jeremy Bentham to Peter Singer", *Revue d'études benthamiennes* [En ligne], 7 | 2010, online 13 September 2010, accessed 28 July 2014, <<http://etudes-benthamiennes.revues.org/204>>.
- Darwall, S. (2006), *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect and Accountability* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
- Dawson, D. (1991), "Is Sympathy So Surprising? Adam Smith and French Fictions of Sympathy", in *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland, Eighteenth-Century Life* 15 (ns. 1&2): 147–62.
- Donovan, J. (1990), "Animal Rights and Feminist Theory", *Signs* 15 (2): 350–75.
- Douglass, R. (2013), "Rousseau's Critique of Representative Sovereignty: Principled or Pragmatic?", *American Journal of Political Science* 57 (3): 735–47.
- Draper, N. (2010), *The Price of Emancipation: Slave-Ownership, Compensation and British Society at the End of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

- Drescher, S. (2002), *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor versus Slavery in British Emancipation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Duran, J. (2006), *Eight Women Philosophers: Theory, Politics, and Feminism* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press).
- Elliot, G. (1855), "Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft", *The Leader* 6: 988–9.
- Elster, J. (1983), *Sour Grapes: Studies in the Subversion of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- European Convention on the Protection of Pet Animals* (1987), Council of Europe, Treaty Office: Strasbourg <<http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/Treaties/Html/125.htm>>, accessed 16 July 2014.
- Ferguson, M. (1992), "Mary Wollstonecraft and the Problematic of Slavery", *Feminist Review* 42: 82–102.
- Festa, L. (2010), "Humanity without feathers", *Humanity* 1 (1): 3–27.
- Foley, R. (2010), "The Order Question: Climbing the Ladder of Love in Plato's *Symposium*", *Ancient Philosophy* 30: 57–72.
- Foot, J. (1792), *A Defence of the Planters of the West-Indies* (London: J. Debrett).
- Ford, T. H. (2009), "Mary Wollstonecraft and the Motherhood of Feminism", *Women's Studies Quarterly* 37 (3&4): 189–205.
- Fortenbaugh, W. W. (1977), "Aristotle on Slaves and Women", in J. Barnes, M. Schofield, R. Sorabji (eds), *Articles on Aristotle*, vol. 2 (New York: St. Martin's Press), pp. 135–9.
- Frankfurt, H. (1971), "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person", *Journal of Philosophy* 68: 5–20.
- Frazer, E. (2008), "Mary Wollstonecraft on Politics and Friendship", *Political Studies* 56: 237–56.
- Frazer, E. (2011), "Mary Wollstonecraft and Catharine Macaulay on education", *Oxford Review of Education* 37: 603–17.
- Friedman, M. (1986), "Autonomy and the Split-Level Self", *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 24 (1): 19–35.
- Gatens, M. (1986), "Rousseau and Wollstonecraft: Nature vs. Reason", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, in J. Thompson (ed.), *Women and Philosophy* Supplement to vol. 64: 1–15.
- Gatens, M. (1991a), "'The Oppressed State of My Sex': Wollstonecraft on Reason, Feeling and Equality", in Mary Lyndon Shanley and Carole Pateman (eds), *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Gatens, M. (1991b), *Feminism and Philosophy: Perspectives on Difference and Equality* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- George, S. (2005), "The cultivation of the female mind: enlightened growth, luxuriant decay and botanical analogy in eighteenth-century texts", *History of European Ideas* 31 (2): 209–23.
- Gheaus, A. (2011), "Arguments for non-parental care for children", *Social Theory and Practice* 37 (3): 483–509.
- Gheaus, A. (2012), "Is the Family Uniquely Valuable?", in *Ethics and Social Policy* 6 (2): 120–31.
- Gheaus, A. and Robeyns, I. (2011), "Equality-Promoting Parental Leave", *Journal of Social Philosophy* 42 (2): 173–91.

- Gilbert, P. (2011), "Humanist and Political Perspectives on Human Rights", *Political Theory* 39 (4): 439–67.
- Gilchrist, J. (2012), "Women, Slavery and the Problem of Slavery in Wide Sargasso Sea", *Twentieth Century Literature* 58 (3): 462–94.
- Gisborne, T. (1792), *On Slavery and the Slave Trade* (London: Sold by J. Stockdale, J. Debrett, and J. Phillips).
- Godwin, W. (1971), *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, ed. K. C. Carter (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Godwin, W. (1987), *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (New York: Penguin Books).
- Godwin, W. (1993), *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, vol. 5, gen. ed. Mark Philip, ed. Pamela Clemit (London: William Pickering).
- Goldman, L. (ed.) (2008), "Hamilton, Alexander, James Madison, & John Jay", *The Federalist Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Goodman, D. and Wellman, K. (eds) (2004), *The Enlightenment* (New York: Houghton Mifflin).
- Gordon, L. (2005), *Vindication: A Life of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York: HarperCollins).
- Gould, P. (2003), *Barbaric Traffic* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press).
- Govier, T. (1993), "Self-Trust, Autonomy, and Self-Esteem", *Hypatia* 8: 99–120.
- Great Britain, Privy Council, Select Committee Respecting the Treatment of Slaves in the West Indies. *Observations on slavery, and the consumption of the produce of the West India islands: together with and an abstract of the evidence given before the committee of Privy Council and the select committee of the House of Commons, respecting the treatment of slaves in the West Indies* (1792) (London: Printed for T. Bossey).
- Green, C. A. (2006), "Hierarchies of Whiteness in the Geographies of Empire: Thomas Thistlewood and the Barretts of Jamaica", *New West Indian Guide* 80 (1&2): 5–43.
- Green, K. (1995), *The Woman of Reason: Feminism, Humanism and Political Thought* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Green, K. (1997), "The Passions and the Imagination in Wollstonecraft's Theory of Moral Judgement", *Utilitas* 9 (3): 271–90.
- Green, K. (2012), "Liberty and Virtue in Catherine Macaulay's Enlightenment Philosophy", *Intellectual History Review* 22 (3): 411–26.
- Green, K. (2015), *Political Ideas of Enlightenment Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Green, K. and Hagenruber, R. (2015), "Introduction", *The Monist* 98: 1–6.
- Grouchy, S. de (2008), *Letters on Sympathy (1798) A Critical Edition*, Karin Brown and James E. McClellan III (eds), Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series, 98: 4.
- Gubar, S. (1994), "Feminist misogyny: Mary Wollstonecraft and the paradox of 'It takes one to know one'", *Feminist Studies* 20 (3): 452–73.
- Gunther-Canada, W. (2001), *Rebel Writer: Mary Wollstonecraft and Enlightenment Politics* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press).
- Gutmann, A. (1999), *Democratic Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

- Gutwirth, M. (2004), "Suzanne Necker's Legacy: Breastfeeding as Metonym in Germaine de Stael's *Delphine*", *Eighteenth-Century Life* 28 (2): 17–40.
- Haac, O. (1995), *The Correspondence of John Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction).
- Haldenius, L. (2001), *Liberty Revisited* (Lund, Sweden: Bokbox Publications).
- Haldenius, L. (2007), "The Primacy of Right: On the Triad of Liberty, Equality and Virtue in Mary Wollstonecraft's Political Thought", *British Journal of the History of Philosophy* 15: 75–99.
- Haldenius, L. (2011a), "David Humes politiska filosofi", in *Förnuft, Känsla, Moral: Perspektiv på David Hume*, ed. Robert Callergård (Stockholm: Bokförlaget Thales).
- Haldenius, L. (2011b), "The Progressive Form of the State. Kant on Freedom and Obligation Under Law", *Constellations. An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory* 18 (2).
- Haldenius, L. (2013), "The Political Conditions of Free Agency: The Case of Mary Wollstonecraft", in Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen (eds), *Freedom and the Construction of Europe*, vol. II, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 227–43.
- Haldenius, L. (2014), "Mary Wollstonecraft's Feminist Critique of Property: On Becoming a Thief from Principle", *Hypatia. A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 29 (4): 942–57.
- Haldenius, L. (2015), *Mary Wollstonecraft and Feminist Republicanism* (London: Pickering and Chatto).
- Hamilton, A., Madison, J., and Jay, J. (2008), *The Federalist Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Harrington, J. (1992), *The Commonwealth of Oceana and A System of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Hobbes, T. (1994), *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing).
- Homiak, M. (1996), "Feminism and Aristotle's Rational Ideal", in J. K. Ward (ed.), *Feminism and Ancient Philosophy* (New York and London: Routledge), pp. 118–37.
- Honohan, I. (2002), *Civic Republicanism* (London: Routledge).
- Honohan, I. and Jennings, J. (eds) (2006), *Republicanism in Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge).
- Howard, C. (2004), "Wollstonecraft's thoughts on slavery and corruption", *The Eighteenth Century* 45 (1): 61–96.
- Hume, D. (1994), *Political Essays*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Hunt Botting, E. (2006), *Family Feuds: Wollstonecraft, Burke, and Rousseau on the Transformation of the Family* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press).
- Hutton, S. (2007), "Virtue, God, and Stoicism in the Thought of Elizabeth Carter and Catharine Macaulay", in *Virtue, Liberty, and Toleration: Political Ideas of European Women, 1400–1800*, eds J. Broad and K. Green (Dordrecht: Springer), pp. 137–48.
- Innes, W. (1792), "A Letter to the members of Parliament who have presented petitions to the Honourable House of Commons for the abolition of the slave trade" (London: Sold by J. Sewell, Cornhill, J. Murray Fleet Street, and J. Debrett).
- International League for Animal Rights, *Universal Declaration of the Rights of Animals* (1977), <http://www.jainworld.com/jainbooks/images/20/The_Myth_About_Milk.htm>, accessed 16 July 2014.

- Jacobus, M. (1986), *Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism* (New York: Colombia University Press).
- Jacobus, M. (1992), "Incorruptible Milk: Breastfeeding and the French Revolution", in Sarah E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine (eds), *Rebel Daughters Women and the French Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Jaggard, A. (1983), *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield).
- Johnson, C. (ed.) (2002), *Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Kant, I. (1996), *The Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Kant, I. (1997), *Lectures on Ethics*, Peter Heath and J. B. Schneewind (eds) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Kant, I. (2002), *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Allen W. Wood (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).
- Kaplan, C. (1986), *Sea Changes: Essays on Culture and Feminism* (London: Verso).
- Khin Zaw, S. (1998), "The Reasonable Heart: Mary Wollstonecraft's View of the Relation between Reason and Feeling in Morality, Moral Psychology, and Moral Development", *Hypatia* 13 (1): 78–117.
- Klein, L. (1994), *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Korsgaard, C. (1996), *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Kraut, R. "Aristotle's *Ethics*", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/>>, accessed 26 May 2016.
- Kukathas, C. (2003), *The Liberal Archipelago* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Kymlicka, W. (2009), *Multicultural Odysseys* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Laborde, C. (2008), *Critical Republicanism: The Hijab Controversy and Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Laborde, C. and Maynor, J. (eds) (2008), *Republicanism and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Blackwell).
- Lagrange, J-P. (1989), "L'influence de Sophie de Grouchy", in *Condorcet: Mathématicien économiste, philosophe, homme politique* ed. Pierre Crépel (Paris: Colloque International).
- Lagrange, J-P. (1993), *Sophie de Grouchy, Lettres sur la Sympathie suivies des Lettres d'Amour à Maillat Garat* (Montreal: Presses de l'Université du Québec).
- Laird, S. (2014), *Mary Wollstonecraft, Philosophical Mother of Co-education* (London: Bloomsbury).
- Landes, L. (1988), *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).
- Lilburne, J. (1646), *The Legal Fundamental Liberties of the People of England, asserted, revived, and vindicated* (London: J. Lind).
- Livy (1960), *The Early History of Rome* (London: Penguin Books).
- Lloyd, G. (1984), *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge).

- Locke, J. (1960), *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Locke, J. (1988), *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, student edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Locke, L. (2003), *Second Treatise of Government*, in *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).
- Lovett, F. (2010), "Cultural Accommodation and Domination", *Political Theory* 38 (2): 243–67.
- Lovett, F. (2010a), *A General Theory of Domination and Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Lovett, F. (2010b), *Justice as Non-domination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Lovett, F. and Pettit, P. (2009), "Neo-Republicanism: A Normative and Institutional Research Program", *Annual Review of Political Science* 12: 18–29.
- Macaulay, C. (1996), *Letters on Education; with Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects* ed. Janet Todd (London: William Pickering).
- MacGilvray, E. (2011), *The Invention of Market Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Machiavelli, N. (1950), *The Discourses of Niccolò Machiavelli*, trans. with introduction and notes Leslie J. Walker (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).
- Machiavelli, N. (1983), *The Discourse* (London: Pelican).
- Mackenzie, C. (1993), "Reason and Sensibility: The Ideal of Women's Self-Governance in the Writings of Mary Wollstonecraft", *Hypatia* 8 (4): 35–55.
- Mackenzie, C. (2000), "Imagining Oneself Otherwise", in C. Mackenzie and N. Stoljar (eds), *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency and the Social Self* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 124–50.
- Mackenzie, C. (2002), "Critical Reflection, Self-Knowledge, and the Emotions", *Philosophical Explorations* 5 (2): 186–206.
- Mackenzie, C. (2008), "Relational Autonomy, Normative Authority and Perfectionism", *Journal of Social Philosophy* 39: 512–33.
- Mackenzie, C. (2014), "Three Dimensions of Autonomy: A Relational Analysis", in M. Piper and A. Veltman (eds), *Autonomy, Oppression and Gender* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 15–41.
- Mackenzie, C. and Stoljar, N. (eds) (2000a), *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency and the Social Self* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Mackenzie, C. and Stoljar, N. (2000b), "Introduction: Autonomy Refigured", in C. Mackenzie and N. Stoljar (eds), *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency and the Social Self* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 3–31.
- Mackie, E. (2009), *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press).
- Madison, J. (1987), *The Federalist Papers* (London: Penguin Books).
- Martí, J. L. and Pettit, P. (2010), *A Political Philosophy in Public Life: Civic Republicanism in Zapatero's Spain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Martin, J. R. (1985), *Reclaiming a conversation: the ideal of the educated woman* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).
- Matthes, M. (2001), *The Rape of Lucretia and the Founding of Republics* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press).

- Maynor, J. (2003), *Republicanism in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- McCowan, T. (2012), "Human rights within education: assessing the justifications", *Cambridge Journal of Education* 42 (1): 67–81.
- McKeon, M. (2005), *The Secret History of Domesticity* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press).
- McLean, I. (2011), "The Paris Years of Thomas Jefferson", in Francis D. Cogliano (ed.), *A Companion to Jefferson* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell), pp. 110–27.
- McLeod, C. (2002), *Self-Trust and Reproductive Autonomy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).
- McMillen, C. S. (1994), *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Language of Sensibility* (Rutherford, Madison, Teaneck, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press).
- Mellor, A. K. (1995), "Sex, violence and slavery: Blake and Wollstonecraft", *Huntington Library Quarterly* 58 (3/4): 345–70.
- Meyers, D. (1989), *Self, Society and Personal Choice* (New York: Columbia University Press).
- Mill, J. S. (1962), *On Liberty*, in Mill, *Utilitarianism, On Liberty and other Essays*, ed. M. Warnock (London: Fontana), pp. 126–250.
- Milton, J. (1953–82), *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, vols 1–8 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).
- Moore, J. (ed.) (2012), *Mary Wollstonecraft*, International Library of Essays in the History of Social and Political Thought (London: Ashgate).
- Montesquieu, C. d. S. (1989), *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Niederbeger, A. and Schink, P. (eds) (2012), *Republican Democracy: Liberty, Law and Politics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).
- Nisbet, R. (1772), "Slavery not forbidden by Scripture: or a defence of the West-India Planters" (Philadelphia: Printed by John Sparhawk).
- Noddings, N. (2002), *Starting at Home* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).
- Nussbaum, M. (1979), "The Speech of Alcibiades: A Reading of Plato's *Symposium*", *Philosophy and Literature* 3 (2): 131–72.
- Nyquist, M. (2013), *Arbitrary Rule: Slavery, Tyranny and the Power of Life and Death* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).
- O'Neill, E. (2005), "Early Modern Women philosophers and the history of philosophy", *Hypatia* 20 (3): 185–97.
- O'Neill, D. (2007), *The Burke-Wollstonecraft Debate: savagery, civilization, and democracy* (Philadelphia, PA: Penn State University Press).
- O'Neill, O. (1980), "Kantian Approaches to some Famine Problems", in Tom Regan (ed.), *Matters of Life and Death: New Introductory Essays in Moral Philosophy* (New York: McGraw Hill), pp. 258–70.
- O'Neill, O. (1988), "Children's Rights and Children's Lives", *Ethics* 98 (3): 445–63.
- O'Neill, O. (1989), *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Ober, J. (2012), "Democracy's Dignity", *American Political Science Review* 106 (4): 827–46.
- Oshana, M. (1998), "Personal Autonomy and Society", *Journal of Social Philosophy* 29 (1): 81–102.

- Oshana, M. (2006), *Personal Autonomy in Society* (Aldershot: Ashgate).
- Oshana, M. (ed.) (2015), *Personal Autonomy and Social Oppression: Philosophical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge).
- Oswald, J. (1791), *The Cry of Nature; or, An Appeal to Mercy and to Justice, on Behalf of Persecuted Animals* (London: Printed for J. Johnson).
- Packard, P. (1788), *Am I not a Man and a Brother? With all humility addressed to the British Legislature* (Cambridge: T. Payne and Son).
- Paine, T. (1995), *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings*, ed. Mark Philp (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Paine, T. (2000), *Political Writings*, ed. Bruce Kuklick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Pakaluk, M. (ed.) (1991), *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett).
- Pateman, C. (1989), *The Disorder of Women* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Pateman, C. (2007), "Why Republicanism?", *Basic Income Studies* 2 (2): 1–6.
- Patterson, O. (1982), *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
- Penner, J. (2009), "Property, Community, and the Problem of Distributive Justice", *Theoretical Inquiries in Law* 10: 193–216.
- Pettit, P. (1997), *Republicanism. A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Pettit, P. (2001), *A Theory of Freedom* (Oxford: Polity Press).
- Pettit, P. (2012), *On the People's Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Pettit, P. (2014), *Just Freedom: A Moral Compass for a Complex World* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co.).
- Phillips, A. (2000), "Feminism and Republicanism: Is this a Plausible Alliance?", *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8 (2): 279–93.
- Philp, M. (1998), "English Republicanism in the 1790s", *Journal of Political Philosophy* 6 (3): 235–62.
- Pitkin, H. F. (1967), *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).
- Plumer, T. (1807), "The speech of Mr. Plumer, at the bar of the House of Lords, on the second reading of the bill for the abolition of the slave-trade, in support of the petition of the West India planters and merchants against that measure" (London: T. Osborne).
- Pocock, J. G. A. (1975), *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Poovey, M. (1984), *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).
- Poston, C. H. (1996), "Wollstonecraft and 'The Body Politic'", in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Maria J. Falco (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press).
- Price, R. (1991), *Political Writings*, ed. D. O. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Price, R. (1991a), "Britain's Happiness and the Improvement of it", in *Political Writings*, ed. D. O. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 1–13.

- Price, R. (1991b), "Two Tracts", in *Political Writings*, ed. D. O. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 14–100.
- Pyle, A. (1995), *The Subjection of Women: Contemporary Responses to John Stuart Mill* (London: Continuum).
- Ramsay, J. (1787), *A Letter to James Tobin, Esq. Late member of His Majesty's Council in the Island of Nevis* (London: Printed and sold by J. Phillips).
- Rawls, J. (1971), *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Raz, J. (1986), *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Rée, J. (2002), "Women philosophers and the canon", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 10 (4): 641–52.
- Rehfeld, A. (2011), "The Child as Democratic Citizen", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 633, *The Child as Citizen*: 141–66.
- Reid, J. P. (1988), *The Concept of Liberty in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chicago, IL, Chicago University Press).
- Reuter, M. (2005), "Mary Wollstonecraft on Love and Friendship", in *Philosophical Aspects on Emotions*, ed. Åsa Carlson (Stockholm: Thales), pp. 119–39.
- Reuter, M. (2007), "Mary Wollstonecraft and Catharine Macaulay on the Will", in *Virtue, Liberty, and Toleration: Political Ideas of European Women, 1400–1800*, eds J. Broad and K. Green (Dordrecht: Springer), pp. 149–69.
- Reuter, M. (2014), "'Like a Fanciful Kind of Half Being' Mary Wollstonecraft's Criticism of Jean-Jacques Rousseau", *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 29 (4): 925–41.
- Reuter, M., Halldenius, L., and Coffee, A. (2014), "Mary Wollstonecraft: Philosophy and Enlightenment", *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 29 (4): 906–7.
- Richardson, A. (2002), "Mary Wollstonecraft on Education", in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Claudia Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 24–41.
- Rorty, A. O. (ed.) (1980), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).
- Rousseau, J-J. (1966), *Emile ou de L'Education* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion).
- Rousseau, J-J. (1968), *The Social Contract* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books).
- Rousseau, J-J. (1974), *Emile* (London: Dent/Everyman's Library).
- Rousseau, J-J. (2002), *The Social Contract and the First and Second Discourses*, ed. Susan Dunn (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).
- Ruddick, S. (1989), *Maternal Thinking* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press).
- Sager, A. (2012), "Political Rights, Republican Freedom and Temporary Workers", *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 2: 1–23.
- Sapiro, V. (1992), *A Vindication of Political Virtue: The Political Theory of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).
- Sen, A. (1983), "Liberty and Social Choice", *Journal of Philosophy* 80: 18–20.
- Sen, A. (2000a), "Consequentialist Evaluation and Practical Reason", *Journal of Philosophy* 97 (9): 477–502.
- Sen, A. (2000b), *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor).
- Shapiro, L. (2004), "The Place of Women in Early Modern Philosophy", in Lilli Alanen and Charlotte Witt (eds), *Feminist Reflections on the History of Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer).

- Sharp, A. (ed.) (1998), *The English Levellers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Shelley, P. B. (1813), *A Vindication of Natural Diet* (London: Printed for J. Callow by Smith & Davy).
- Shope, R. K. (1978), "The Conditional Fallacy in Contemporary Philosophy", *Journal of Philosophy* 75: 397–413.
- Sidney, A. (1990), *Discourses Concerning Government* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Classics).
- Sidney, Algernon (1996), *Discourses on Government*, ed. Thomas G. West (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund Studies in Political Thought).
- Singer, P. (1989), "All Animals are Equal", in *Animal Rights and Human Obligations*, T. Regan and P. Singer (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall).
- Skinner, Q. (1998), *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Skinner, Q. (2002), *Visions of Politics*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Skinner, Q. (2008a), "Freedom as the Absence of Arbitrary Power", in *Republicanism and Political Theory*, eds Cécile Laborde and John Maynor (London: Blackwell).
- Skinner, Q. (2008b), *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Skinner, Q. (2010), "On the Slogans of Republican Political Theory", *European Journal of Political Theory* 9 (1): 95–102.
- Slaughter, S. (2005), *Liberty beyond Neo-Liberalism: A Republican Critique of Liberal Government in a Globalising Age* (London: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Smith, M. B. (2010), "Does Humanity Share a Common Moral Faculty?", *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 7 (1): 37–53.
- Spinoza, B. (1958), "Tractatus Politicus", in *The Political Works*, ed. A. G. Wernham (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 258–445.
- Spinoza, B. (2007), *Theologico-Political Treatise*, ed. Jonathan Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Springborg, P. (2005), *Mary Astell: Theorist of Freedom from Domination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Stern-Gillet, S. (1995), *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press).
- Stoljar, N. (2000), "Autonomy and the Feminist Intuition", in C. Mackenzie and N. Stoljar (eds), *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency and the Social Self* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 94–111.
- Stoljar, N. (2014a), "Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-autonomy/>>, accessed 26 May 2016.
- Stoljar, N. (2014b), "Autonomy and Adaptive Preference Formation", in *Autonomy, Oppression and Gender*, M. Piper and A. Veltman (eds) (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 227–52.
- Sudan, R. (2002), *Fair Exotics: Xenophobic Subjects in English Literature, 1720–1850* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press).
- Sugden, R. (1998), "The Metric of Opportunity", *Economics and Philosophy* 14: 307–37.
- Superson, A. (2005), "Deformed Desires and Informed Desire Tests", *Hypatia* 20 (4): 109–26.
- Swaminathan, S. (2009), *Debating the Slave Trade, 1753–1815: Rhetoric of British National Identity* (Farnham: Ashgate).
- Swift, J. (2005), *Gulliver's Travels*, Claude Rawson and Ian Higgins (eds) (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

- Taylor, B. (1983), *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Virago Press).
- Taylor, B. (1985), "What Is Human Agency?", in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Taylor, B. (2003), *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Taylor, B. (2005), "Feminists versus Gallants: Sexual Manners and Morals in Enlightenment Britain", in S. Knott and B. Taylor (eds), *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (Houndsmill: Palgrave).
- Taylor, C. (1989), *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Taylor, C. (2003), *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).
- Taylor, N. F. (2007), *The Rights of Woman as Chimera: The Political Philosophy of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York and London: Routledge).
- Taylor, T. (1792), *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes* (London: Printed for Edward Jeffrey, Pall Mall).
- Thompson, E. P. (1990), *Whigs and Hunters* (Harmondsworth: Penguin).
- Todd, J. (2000), *Mary Wollstonecraft: a Revolutionary Life* (London: Weidenfeld).
- Tomaselli, S. (2001), "The Most Public Sphere of All: The Family", in Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Cliona O. Gallchoir, and Penny Warburton (eds), *Women and the Public Sphere: Writing and Representation, 1700–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Tomaselli, S. (2017), "Have ye not heard that we cannot serve two masters? The Platonism of Mary Wollstonecraft", in Douglas Hedley and David Leech (eds), *Revisiting Cambridge Platonism: Sources and Legacy* (Dordrecht: Springer).
- Tone, T. W. (1998), *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763–98*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Trenchard, J. and Gordon, T. (1971), *Cato's Letters* (New York: Da Capo).
- United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner: The United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), (New York: OHCHR) <<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>>, accessed 15 July 2014.
- Van Gelderen, M. and Skinner, Q. (2002), *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Veltman, A. and Piper, M. (eds) (2014), *Autonomy, Oppression and Gender* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Vieira, B., Runciman, M., and Runciman, D. (2008), *Representation* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Villanueva Gardner, C. (2003), *Women Philosophers: Genre and the Boundaries of Philosophy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press).
- Viroli, M. (2002), *Republicanism* (New York: Hill and Wang).
- Vlastos, G. (1981), *Platonic Studies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Waithe, M.-E. (1987, 1989, 1990, 1994), *A History of Women Philosophers*, 4 vols (Dordrecht: Kluwer).
- Ward, A. (2008), "Mothering and the Sacrifice of Self: Women and Friendship in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*", *thirdspace* 7 (2): 32–57.
- Ward, J. K. (1996), "Aristotle on *Philia*: The Beginnings of a Feminist Ideal of Friendship?", in J. K. Ward (ed.), *Feminism and Ancient Philosophy* (New York and London: Routledge), pp. 155–71.

- Watson, G. (1975), "Free Agency", *Journal of Philosophy* 72: 205–20.
- Weinstock, D. and Nadeau, C. (eds) (2004), *Republicanism: History, Theory and Practice* (London: Frank Cass).
- Weiss, P. (2009), *Canon Fodder: Historical Women Political Thinkers* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press).
- Westlund, A. (2009), "Rethinking Relational Autonomy", *Hypatia* 24 (4): 26–49.
- Whale, J. (2000), *Imagination under Pressure 1789–1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- White, S. and Leighton, D. (eds) (2008), *Building a Citizen Society: The Emerging Politics of Republican Democracy* (London: Lawrence and Wishart).
- Whiteley, H. (1833), *Three Months in Jamaica in 1832: comprising a residence of seven weeks on a sugar plantation* (London: J. Hatchard and Son).
- Willett, C. (1995), *Maternal ethics and other slave moralities* (London: Routledge).
- Wingrove, E. (2005), "Getting Intimate with Wollstonecraft: in the Republic of Letters", *Political Theory* 33 (3): 344–69.
- Witt, C. (1996), "How Feminism Is Re-writing the Philosophical Canon", The Alfred P. Stiernotte Memorial Lecture in Philosophy at Quinnipiac College, <<http://www.uh.edu/~cfreelan/SWIP/Witt.html>>, accessed 26 May 2016.
- Wolf, S. (1990), *Freedom within Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1975), *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Miriam Kramnick (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books).
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1976), *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, ed. Carol H. Poston (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press).
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1979), *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books).
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1980), *The wrongs of woman; or Maria, A fragment*, in *Mary and "The wrongs of woman"*, James Kinsley and Gary Kelly (eds) (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1982), *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (New York: Whitston).
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1989), *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, 7 vols, J. Todd and M. Butler (eds) (London: William Pickering).
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1994), *A Vindication of the Rights of Men in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, introduced by Janet Todd, Oxford World Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1995), *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Sylvia Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Wollstonecraft, M. (2004), *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Ralph Wardle (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).
- Wollstonecraft, M. (2005), *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* (New York: Dover).
- Woodcock, G. (1989), *William Godwin: A Biographical Study* (Montréal and New York: Black Rose Books).
- Woods, J. (1784), *Thoughts on the Slavery of the Negroes* (London: James Phillip).
- Zagzebski, L. T. (1996), *Virtues of the Min* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Zonana, J. (1993), "The Sultan and the Slave: Feminist Orientalism and the Structure of 'Jane Eyre'", *Signs* 18 (3): 592–617.

Author Index

- Aristotle 1, 7, 25, 34–42, 44–7, 122
Astell, Mary 1, 9, 10, 96
- Baltzly, Dirk and Eliopoulos, Nick 39
Bentham, Jeremy 9, 112, 113
Bergès, Sandrine 6, 10, 13, 35, 46, 49, 50, 65, 78, 180, 189, 201, 222
Burgh, James 95, 185, 188, 222
Burke, Edmund 2, 7, 15, 16, 19, 22–5, 27–9, 31–3, 36, 38, 43–4, 49, 63, 93, 97, 128, 131, 148, 153, 157–8, 161–2, 170, 175–6, 179–81, 212, 219, 221
Butler, Samuel 195
- Carter, Elizabeth 8, 65
Christman, John 80, 82
Cicero 36, 46, 136
Clarkson, Thomas 122, 124–5, 130
Coffee, Alan 6, 12, 49, 50, 51, 62, 66, 68, 76, 78, 86, 93, 150, 167, 183, 186, 195, 198, 202, 204, 220, 222
Condorcet, Marquis de 3, 206, 217, 220
Constant, Benjamin 181
- Epictetus 8, 65
- Federalists, The 168, 177–8, 196
Fordyce, James 219, 223, 225
- Gatens, Moira 4, 51–2, 73, 78
Godwin, William 2, 30, 43, 49, 52, 54, 57, 61–2, 132
Gregory, Dr 123, 223, 225
Green, Karen 2, 10, 54, 61, 64, 65, 74, 189
Grouchy, Sophie de 1, 10, 12, 13, 201–3, 205–11, 215–17
- Halldenius, Lena 4, 6, 12, 50, 51, 61, 66, 68, 76–8, 87, 130, 147, 150, 166, 183, 220, 224
Hays, Mary 220
Hobbes, Thomas 1, 140, 144, 147, 172–5
Hume, David 36, 175–6
Hutton, Sarah 30, 65
- James, Susan 6, 11, 13, 93, 148, 220–1
Johnson, Joseph 6, 14, 94
- Kant, Immanuel 1, 2, 9, 31–3, 87, 94, 102, 111–13, 173–5, 203
Kraut, Richard 39, 41, 45–6
- Locke, John 1, 12, 32, 35, 95, 102–3, 105, 117, 130, 136, 143, 155–6, 162–4, 173
- Macaulay, Catharine 1, 2, 8, 10, 21, 61–5, 93, 95–6
Machiavelli, Niccolo 10, 130, 154–6, 161, 187–8
Mackenzie, Catriona 6, 8–9, 52–3, 65, 67
Madison, James 177, 196
Mill, John Stuart 3, 81
- Necker, Jacques 14
Necker, Suzanne 214
- Oshana, Marina 68, 79, 81–2
- Pettit, Philip 6, 11, 68, 70, 81, 83, 135, 143, 151, 184–5, 187, 190, 191, 195, 199
Phillips, Anne 11, 73, 76–8, 201
Plato 1, 3, 7–8, 16, 24–5, 28, 30, 32, 35, 58–9, 79, 115
Price, Richard 7, 10, 13, 15–16, 23, 25, 54, 59, 93, 96, 111, 135, 137, 143–5, 148, 151–2, 157, 160–4, 185, 188, 220
Priestley, Joseph 185
- Reuter, Martina 6, 8, 35, 49, 50, 74, 151, 189
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 4, 20, 35–6, 38, 43–4, 53–4, 59, 63, 71, 73–4, 78, 93, 95–7, 112, 135, 150, 164, 171–5, 203, 208, 211–12, 214, 216, 219, 223
- Sapiro, Virginia 4, 17, 41, 52–4, 62, 149, 168, 179
Sen, Amartya 95, 106, 116, 139
Sidney, Algernon 12, 143, 155, 162
Skinner, Quentin 61, 140, 143, 147, 150–1, 167, 172, 185–7, 202
Smith, Adam 36, 205–7, 210, 224
Spinoza, Baruch 1, 12, 156–7, 161
Stern-Gillet, Susan 38
Swift, Jonathan 8, 51, 56–8, 61–4
- Talleyrand-Périgord, Charles Maurice de 95, 148
Taylor, Barbara 4, 6, 13, 14, 17, 30, 42, 49, 53, 59, 63, 167, 218
Taylor, Harriet 3
Taylor, Natalie 7, 35, 40, 45–6, 57
Tomaselli, Sylvana 6, 7, 14, 34, 59, 111, 119, 170, 186

Subject Index

- abolitionist 6, 9, 19, 96, 117, 119–22, 124–30, 133, 152
 anti-abolitionist 129
 anti-tyrannicism 117, 118
- abuse:
 domestic 75
 of animals 94, 109, 113
 of children 92–4, 97, 98, 101, 103, 104, 109, 112–15
 physical 75, 92, 109, 112, 113, 115
 psychological 75, 92
 sexual 75, 77
- adaptive preferences 83, 84, 86
- Africans 117, 120, 122, 124, 125
- animal rights 97, 113–15
- apathia* 56
- appetites 22, 53–4, 126, 129, 158
- arbitrary, *see also* dependence, independence:
 arrest 83
 government 156, 163, 180–1, 191, 195, 197
 judgement 44
 law 197, 199
 norms 195, 197, 199
 passion 31, 223
 point of honour 21
 power 9–11, 49, 67, 68, 75–6, 78, 81, 86, 117, 125–6, 129, 131–3, 151, 155–8, 161–4, 166, 183–4, 187, 189, 193–7, 199, 202, 220
 power and reason 186, 189, 194, 198
 power and the common interest 193, 195–6
 power and virtue 187, 195
 power of interference 142, 151, 196
 privilege 157
 unnatural distinctions as 171
 will 78, 87, 151, 156, 167
- artificial 43, 125, 128, 131, 133, 172–3, 175, 177, 224
 artifice of society 101
- autonomy, *see also* Independence, self-determination, self-government: 4, 118, 119, 130, 131, 133, 134
 relational 9, 65, 67–91
- beauty 16, 19, 24, 28–31, 58, 73, 86
 women as beautiful flaws in nature 72, 125, 152
- benevolence 32, 47, 49, 57, 58, 60, 109–14, 128
- body 22–3, 27, 30, 52–3, 58, 63, 67, 73, 123, 150, 153, 159, 162, 207, 215, 224
- breast-feeding 27, 95, 203, 207, 212–17
 and bonding 213
- brutes 21, 35, 72, 93–5, 97, 109–11, 115, 119, 121–2, 124–5
 brute creation 97, 111, 122, 162, 189
- care:
 duty of 93–4, 97, 98–106, 108, 110, 113–15, 150, 203–5, 208, 211–13, 215–17
 caregiver 78, 108, 211, 213, 215–16
 for animals 94, 97, 110, 113–15
- character 48–9, 51, 56, 57, 64, 73, 74, 75, 83, 85, 87, 88, 122, 129, 150, 152, 153, 163, 188, 192, 193, 196, 202, 203, 209, 213, 222
- children 3, 6, 9, 13, 19, 37, 39, 40, 47, 49, 60, 72, 76, 78, 92–116, 132, 150, 153, 159, 163, 181, 189, 201–5, 207–9, 211–17, 222, 223
- childbirth 27
 childhood 212, 214
 out of wedlock 3, 210
- Christian 21, 41
 Catholic Church 23, 137–8
 Christianity 19, 32, 59, 65
 Platonism 59
 Dissenters 16, 126, 138, 184, 195, 196, 223
 Protestantism 126, 138, 221, 223
- citizen 6, 12–13, 15, 17, 19, 27, 47, 78, 88–90, 92, 106–7, 114, 117, 119, 134, 137–9, 143, 146, 152, 158, 161, 163–4, 173–4, 180, 186–7, 189–90, 193, 195–200, 201–5, 208, 212–14, 216, 217
- citizenship 11, 13, 67, 69, 77, 88–9, 92–3, 106–8, 121, 130, 137, 167, 201–5, 215, 217, 222
- civil
 freedom 78, 141, *see also* independence
 independence 67, 71, *see also* independence
 institutions 158
 interest 189
 laws 154, 192
 liberty 90, 148, 173, *see also* independence
 protection 171
 rights 105–8, 118, 148–9, 158, 166, 171
 slavery 118, 224
 society 26, 29, 90, 118, 126, 129, 134, 150, 155, 164, 193, 198
 state 173
 status 67, 134
- commercial society 20, 23–4, 119, 130

- common good 12, 156, 173–4, 176–8, 183,
 185–8, 190, 193–6, 200, 214–15, *see also*
 general will
 common interest, *see* common good
 commonwealth 143–6, 174
 Commonwealthman, *see also* republican: 68,
 135–8, 165
 community 8, 11, 23, 27, 162, 164, 173, 186,
 191, 199
 compact, *see* contract
 social compact, *see* social contract
 complementary:
 character 36, 46
 virtues 40–1, 46
 complementarity 40, 46
 constitutional 136, 144, 150, 158, 166–8, 173–6,
 178–82, 222
 contract 96, 131, 134, 148, 176, 193, 221
 corruption, *see also* virtue:
 and power 133, 137, 169, 187
 of virtue 10, 12, 47–8, 67, 72, 86, 89, 118, 120,
 126, 131, 134, 175, 177, 185, 187, 192,
 198, 199, 210, 212, 218, 225
 coverture 108
 culture 20, 33, 51, 73, 83, 86, 107, 118, 121,
 130–1, 133, 138–9, 146, 168–9, 183–4,
 194–200

 dehumanizing, *see* human being, humanizing
 deliberation
 public 12, 86, 107, 179–80, 190–1, 194–7
 and self-sufficiency 62–4
 dependence, *see also* independence: 12, 31
 animals as 114–15
 and law 12, 177, 187
 and the poor 158, 187
 as domination 67, 123
 as unfreedom 6, 151, 153–4, 163, 165, 195–8
 body and mind 159
 children as 98–9, 102–5, 208, 215
 economic 12, 65, 187, 192, 199
 mothers 159
 mutual 75, 105, 160, 207
 on arbitrary power 67–8, 70, 128, 145
 on arbitrary will 76, 87, 146, 151, 166
 on God 65, 223
 on ideas 186
 on men 11, 47, 77, 100, 147, 150, 153–4, 157,
 167, 185, 187, 191–2, 198, 222–3
 on passions 51, 54, 66, 121
 slavish 11, 23, 72, 121, 133, 151–3, 158, 185,
 186, 193
 dignity 19, 59, 87–8, 118–19, 122–3, 126–8,
 131–4, 137, 153, 220, 224
 discretionary powers 191, 221
 Dissenters, *see* Christian, Dissenters
 division of labour, gendered 73, 78, 205

 divorce 86, 108, 210
 domination, *see also* dependence, freedom as
 non-domination: 6, 10–12, 19, 71, 76,
 79, 81–2, 84, 86, 90, 96, 123–4, 127,
 134, 135, 173, 183–4, 192–3, 197–9,
 218–19, 224
 duty
 and Stoics 58
 as citizens 78, 215
 as rational beings 111, 134, 198–9, 204, 223
 caring, *see* care, duty of
 friendship 31–2
 moral 21, 23, 43, 51, 111
 of benevolence 57
 of mothers 78, 203–5, 212–15, 217
 of representatives 134, 175, 181
 of respect 94
 of station 180
 of the rich 18–19
 parental 93, 97–105
 perfect, universal, fundamental 98
 rights and 28, 94, 154–5, 161, 193, 221
 to be autonomous 69
 to be independent 198–9
 to have children 6, 46, 58
 to marry 46
 women's 25, 28, 43, 46, 86, 189, 221

 education 4, 6, 8, 14–16, 23, 26–8, 43, 47, 48, 57,
 60, 72, 83, 92–110, 114–15, 150–1, 154,
 157–9, 162–4, 177, 194, 195, 197, 203,
 206, 208–17
 egalitarian 8, 12, 14, 17–19, 23, 99, 103, 107,
 121, 170
 embodiment 51, 159
 emotion, *see also* feelings, passions: 4, 6, 8, 16,
 50, 53, 58, 65, 74, 118, 121, 223, 225
 as arbitrary 189, 190
 role in upbringing 205, 212–13, 215, 217
 emotional skills 85
 Enlightenment 4, 208, 211, 225
 equality 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 14–33, 35, 53, 57, 87–91,
 107, 162, 203–4, 206–12, 216, 217, 222–3
 and independence 11, 185
 and freedom 153, 161–3
 and property 73, 77, 133, 179–82
 and socio-relational status 67–70, 76–84, 187
 as citizens 92, 108, 114, 146
 before the law 135–7, 144, 197, 202
 between siblings 100–4
 friendships of 39–49
 in education 95, 99
 inequality as corrupting virtue 177, 192–3
 natural law 117, 119, 155, 179
 political 12, 166–79
eros, *see* love: 30, 224
 excellence, human 25–7, 32, 35, 42, 44, 47, 65

- family life 36, 38, 78, 92
 fathers 39, 46, 67, 93, 97, 207, 211, 213–16
 feelings, *see also* emotions, passions: 29–30, 44, 46, 50, 52, 60, 74, 77, 85–6, 127–8, 132–3, 189, 204, 213
 feminism, *see* feminist
 feminist 2–5, 8, 11, 13–14, 33, 51–2, 69–71, 73, 75–6, 78, 83, 96, 108, 157, 184, 195, 201–2, 211, 216, 219–20, 223–5
 freedom, *see also* independence, liberty: 6, 9–12, 23, 64, 68–9, 72, 78, 80–4, 87, 91, 95–7, 106, 115, 117–22, 127–8, 134–47, 149, 150–65, 167, 172, 175, 180, 181, 183–200, 212, 218, 220–1
 freedom as non-domination 6, 11, 68, 70, 76, 81–2, 90, 136, 141–6, 184, 202
 friendship 24–5, 27, 31–2
 friendships of pleasure 36–9, 43
 friendships of utility 34–49
 virtue friendships 6, 7, 34–49
 general will, *see also* common good: 171, 173
 God 15, 19, 21, 27, 32, 41, 43, 58–60, 65, 72, 89, 93, 97, 99, 100, 103, 109–11, 113, 124, 150, 155, 162–3, 203, 220–1, 223
 God's-eye perspective 102
 government 12, 17, 107, 143–4, 146, 156, 158, 160, 162–3, 166–72, 173, 176, 178–80, 188, 190–1, 194, 197
 human being 15, 22, 26–7, 30–3, 37, 54, 65, 71–2, 89, 93–4, 99, 100, 102, 114, 121, 126, 137, 150, 152, 154, 159, 163, 186, 202, 207–10
 humanity 19–20, 23, 28, 47–8, 60, 69, 88, 96, 98, 105, 109–11, 115, 118, 119, 122, 124–5, 127, 132–4, 182, 203, 207, 211
 human nature 23, 54, 56, 61
 human perfectibility 41, 44, 56, 63, 189
 humanizing 17, 60, 111, 124–5, 132–3
 human rights 9, 92–116, 150, 164
 husband 35, 38–9, 41, 45–8, 67, 75–7, 88, 100, 108, 118, 135, 138, 146–7, 150, 154, 161, 163, 191, 193, 198, 203, 206, 210, 223
 identity 82, 84, 108, 118, 126, 133
 imagination 18, 30–1, 59, 61, 74–5, 78, 85, 132, 188
 individualism 8, 69
 independence, *see also* dependence, freedom, autonomy: 6, 9–11, 22, 24, 65, 67–91, 99, 100, 106, 108, 132–4, 138, 146–7, 150, 152–9, 162, 164, 166, 177, 179–80, 183–200, 201, 222–3
 inequality, *see* equality
 inherited wealth 23, 108, 131, 133
 injustice, *see* justice
 Jacobin 219, 220
 Jamaica 127
 Jemima, *see Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*
 judgement 54–6, 72, 74, 79, 84–5, 87–90, 132, 153, 164, 172, 178, 180–1, 186, 220, 223
 justice 18–19, 26, 29, 62–3, 100, 109, 114, 117, 119, 125, 127, 129, 130, 132, 148, 158, 169–70, 175–81, 185, 210
 knowledge 25–6, 52, 60–4, 72, 149–50, 177, 188, 190, 194, 203, 205, 209
 self-knowledge 60, 85
 law of nature, *see also* natural law: 22, 155–6, 162
 liberal 8, 13, 17, 81, 136, 150, 198, 220
 liberalism 8, 60, 154, 163
 liberal democracy 71, 83, 90, 114
 liberty, *see also* freedom, independence: 8, 19, 25, 71, 76, 78, 80–2, 88, 90, 120, 129, 131, 142–6, 148–64, 166–7, 171–5, 182, 185, 202, 218, 222
 love 3, 6, 7, 14–16, 19, 24–33, 34, 36–7, 40, 43, 45, 48–9, 52, 54–62, 74, 86, 88, 100, 125, 132, 208, 213–14, 223–4
 manners, *see also* revolution, in female manners: 21, 73, 125, 128, 148, 195, 218, 224, 225
Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman 48, 49, 72, 75–7, 86, 219, 224
 market, morality of 129–31
 marriage 6–7, 20, 25, 27, 28, 31, 75–8, 96, 138, 163, 210
 and friendship 7, 31, 34–49, 75, 88
 and private sphere 76–7
 and property 77, 108
 and slavery 96, 163
 of pleasure 46
 patriarchal 75, 138, 223
 mental faculties 17, 55, 62, 124, 132, 159
 moral agent 7, 49, 72, 91
 moral being 93, 94, 215
 husband and wife as one 45
 moral development 39, 119, 134, 205, 208, 211–16
 multiculturalism 184–5, 195–8
 natural law, *see also* law of nature: 12, 13, 18, 111, 117, 149, 155, 162–4, 220, 223
 natural rights 97, 111, 117, 130–1, 137, 149–50, 154–6, 163, 171, 179, 193, 221, 224
 natural duties 104, 154, 193
 natural equality 17, 170
 natural justice 18, 129
 to freedom 10, 76, 120, 150, 163, 172–3, 186

- obligations 72, 92–116, 119, 161, 179, 180, 184, 198
- opportunity 9, 19, 55, 80, 82–4, 106, 122, 157, 183, 186, 193, 197–8, 216–17
- oppression 17, 19, 67–71, 74–90, 96, 99, 103, 115, 119, 131–4, 151, 162, 171, 181, 183, 196, 210, 217, 219, 220
- parent 15, 37, 39, 47, 72, 74, 86, 88, 92–109, 203–4, 209, 212–17
- passions, *see also* emotions, feelings: 8, 22, 29–31, 43, 50–66, 73–5, 78, 85, 110, 124–5, 128, 159, 189–90, 210, 223–4
- philosophess, Gallic 219
- philosophical canon 1, 5, 13, 33, 218–19
- pleasure 20, 22, 123–4, 208–9
and pain 207
pursuit of 74, 88
- political society 12, 167–71, 175, 179, 182
- political participation 12–13, 67, 78, 83, 92, 106–7, 118, 136–7, 167, 180–1, 199, 201–2, 210–11, 216–17
- power, *see also* arbitrary, power: 17, 19–20, 23–4, 26, 28, 53, 56, 66, 90, 103, 118–19, 121, 124–34, 137, 144–6, 150–4, 166–72, 175, 177, 183, 202, 209, 211, 220–5
as corrupting 137, 187
of husbands 135, 138, 161
of ideas 194
to act 6, 12, 154–65
- private sphere, *see also* public/private
distinction: 61, 77, 143–4, 146, 168, 173, 190–1, 193, 202
- property 18, 20–3, 27, 47, 77, 90, 92, 97, 99–100, 108, 119–20, 124–34, 135, 152–3, 156, 162, 164, 166–7, 170, 175, 177–9, 222
as corrupting 10, 133
in a person 10, 117–18, 126–7, 129–30, 134
private 18, 118–19, 132–4
women as 6, 77
- public:
public debate 12, 86, 190–7
public reason 6, 52, 86, 183–4, 190–200
public schools 92, 94, 108, 113–14
public sphere 77, 88, 92, 107, 118, 130, 134, 144, 146, 152, 170, 173, 181–2, 201–2, 211, 216
- public/private distinction 51–2, 73, 76, 77, 173
- radicalism 14, 17, 67, 75, 78, 92, 95, 130–1, 136–7, 163–4, 220–3
- reason, *see also* public reason: 2, 4, 8, 16, 21–2, 24, 29, 31–2, 42, 45, 48, 50–6, 62–6, 71–5, 78–80, 84, 86–9, 94, 97, 100, 103, 108, 110, 122, 124, 128, 130, 133, 148–9, 155, 173, 175, 180, 188–95, 203–4, 223
- relational 20, 42, 45, 65, 66, 133
- relational autonomy, *see* autonomy
- religion 13, 24, 120, 138, 142, 198
- religious 7, 13, 14, 18, 21, 30, 37, 60, 81, 83, 97, 103, 121, 145, 148, 196, 199, 220, 222
- representation 6, 12, 77, 166–8, 171–82, 218
- republican 6, 9, 10–12, 68, 70, 76, 81–3, 86, 91, 92–3, 107, 118, 121, 130, 135–47, 149–65, 166–81, 183–200, 201–2, 204, 206, 208–9, 217, 218, 220–4
- respect 6, 14–15, 22–31, 42–3, 46, 49, 89, 94, 100, 103, 105, 107, 114, 153, 175, 182, 193, 212–13
mutual 75, 88, 213
self-respect 70, 72, 80, 87–8, 89, 90–1, 100, 118, 128, 133–4
- revolution 90, 121, 162
American 136
English 137
French 2–3, 10, 18, 30, 136, 148, 167–9, 174, 179, 187, 209
in manners 15, 67, 75, 121, 198, 219
- rights 6, 9, 11–13, 19, 23, 26, 67, 77, 90, 94, 121, 131, 148, 166, 168, 170–9, 183, 185, 192–3, 199, 220–2, 224
as powers to act 6, 12, 154–65, 220–1
children's 9, 92–116
women's 9, 14, 16, 26–7, 77, 90, 119, 149–50, 157, 187, 202, 217, 218, 223
- school 93, 94, 108, 213
boarding school 72, 109
family as 93
national 109
private 113
public 92, 107, 113–14, 154
- self-affective attitudes 70, 75, 80, 87
- self-authorization 9, 70, 80–1, 87, 89, 91
- self-determination 9, 70, 79, 80–4, 89, 223
- self-esteem 80, 89, 90
- self-government 9, 52–3, 67, 70–91, 94, 121, 224
- self-interest 63, 131, 186
- self-respect 70, 72, 87–91, 118, 128, 133–4
- self-sufficiency 62, 65–6, 75
- sensualism 54
- sentience 93, 94, 109–15
- slavery 9–11, 19, 22, 68, 71–81, 96–103, 115, 117–34, 138, 145, 150–3, 158, 160–5, 166, 171, 185–6, 193, 195, 199, 202, 224
- social norms 9, 42, 67, 75, 84–5, 87, 90, 100, 101, 106, 114, 167, 179, 183, 193
of feminine beauty 73, 86
- sovereignty 156, 164, 171–3, 176
self-sovereignty 73, 149
- stereotype 127, 195–6

- subjection:
 to arbitrary power 9, 18, 67, 79, 81–2, 120,
 143, 151–6, 162–4, 176, 187, 202
 women's 2, 20, 67, 75–7, 195, 225
 Stoicism 8, 56–8, 63, 65–6
 sympathy 13, 26, 205–10, 213, 215–16

 vegetarianism 94, 112
 victim 10, 20, 103, 127, 129, 134, 161, 196, 225
 violence 93, 108–9, 119, 127, 155, 169
 virtue 6–8, 11–12, 19, 25–31, 34–49, 50–66,
 70–8, 85–9, 100, 109–10, 113, 119–28,
 131, 146–53, 158, 170, 175–7, 180–1,
 183–200, 202–5, 208, 210, 213
 virtue ethicist, Wollstonecraft as 35,
 44, 50

 Waltham Black Acts, 131–2
 West Indies 120, 126–9
 West Indian plantations 123, 126
 wet nursing 13, 201–16
 wisdom 24–6, 29, 39, 55, 60, 63, 74, 125, 170,
 177, 182, 186, 193
 womanly weakness 222