

coverture and related civil disabilities for women in the United States. Such a book needs to be written so that we better understand the historical development of women's rights in American politics.

Gender, Class, and Freedom in Modern Political Theory.

By Nancy J. Hirschmann. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press. 2008. 342 pp. \$69.50 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

doi:10.1017/S1743923X09000257

Christine Di Stefano
University of Washington

Nancy Hirschmann has been thinking and writing about freedom for nearly two decades. In this latest contribution to her long-standing and distinctively feminist approach to the concept of freedom, she returns to the canon of early modern and modern political theory for a series of sustained and deep investigations into the adventures of this concept. Hirschmann's interest in the concept of freedom is by no means dictated exclusively by the observation that freedom is a key concept, perhaps even "the" concept of the modern canon. More significant still is that the liberal political theory of freedom occupies a privileged place in "the common collective consciousness of the modern West" (p. 1). Thus, critical engagements with the history and vicissitudes of this concept offer productive insights into its contemporary attractions, deployments, limitations, and promises. As readers of this text will come to appreciate, freedom is a far more complex and textured concept than many interpreters of the canon, and those they have influenced, have acknowledged.

Five canonical thinkers figure prominently in this study: Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, and J. S. Mill. In chapters devoted to each theorist, Hirschmann utilizes and explores three themes: Isaiah Berlin's typology of negative and positive liberty, the idea of social construction, and the role of gender and class.

In his influential 1971 essay, "Two Concepts of Liberty," Berlin presented two distinct conceptions of freedom presumably culled from the canonical literature of political theory: Negative liberty and positive liberty. Negative liberty will be readily discernible to those who are familiar with the rhetoric of contemporary libertarians. According to this

conception, freedom should be understood as the absence of external barriers to the fulfillment of the will of the individual. Thus, “freedom of speech” means that I am free to express myself so long as laws or vigilantes or some other external agents or forces do not interfere with my desire to express my ideas. By contrast, positive liberty draws our attention to the internal barriers that may impede my ability to express myself in public speech. Perhaps my ability to do so has been severely compromised by the fact that I am illiterate because I do not have access to affordable education, or that I have been socialized to be agreeable and silent. Positive liberty directs our attention to enabling conditions such as education, whereas negative liberty presupposes ability. While negative liberty tends to construe the human subject as an individual, positive liberty is more inclined to view the human subject in relational and social constructivist terms. In contrast to negative liberty, which treats the desires of individuals as incontestable, positive liberty worries about the genesis and legitimacy of will and desire and is prepared to scrutinize them in terms of what is judged to be good and true. This can lead to the notorious problem of second-guessing, famously exemplified in Rousseau’s claim that under certain circumstances, human beings should be “forced to be free,” that is, compelled to recognize and act upon their true desires (of which they may be unaware), rather than their immediate and false ones.

Berlin’s typology had a major influence on political philosophies of freedom during the second half of the twentieth century. Following his lead, political theorists and their theories were parsed according to the grammar of negative and positive liberty. Thus, Kant, Rousseau, Hegel, and Marx, among others, were categorized as positive liberty advocates, while Hobbes, Locke, and Mill were cast as architects of negative liberty. Berlin himself, writing during the Cold War, associated negative liberty with liberal democracies and positive liberty with the communist Soviet regime. The ideological lines of battle were starkly drawn, particularly between “liberals,” who draw their inspiration from the panoply of classical English political theorists, and their critics, who look to “the Continent” for countervailing insights.

Hirschmann’s significant achievement in this text is to demonstrate that the opposition between the two models of freedom is mistaken. Instead, she argues, elements of positive and negative liberty articulate with each other to construct particular understandings of freedom. Looking closely at the arguments of the five political theorists under review here, she makes a convincing argument for the claim that none of these theorists fits into

the dichotomous analytical frame prescribed by Berlin: “I accept that the two models present contrasting views of freedom; what I reject is the idea that any given theory of freedom is one or the other” (p. 12).

The interesting thing about freedom, particularly its negative liberty variant, is its agnosticism with respect to choice, which generates anxiety about the potential discrepancy between free choice and the right choice. While positive liberty advocates are less hesitant to pronounce on the substance of those right choices, proponents of negative liberty must negotiate a more cautious (and frequently, as Hirschmann shows, disingenuous) path. In both cases, as the author demonstrates, conceptions of gender and class assist in constructing the missing link between radical freedom and its civilized, constrained variant. Theories “ostensibly dedicated to free choice, construct citizens and other subjects to make very particular choices” (p. 21). Thus, “the possibility of transgression, of difference, though ostensibly encouraged, as in Mill’s theory, or rejected, as in Rousseau’s, is in reality effectively contained” (p. 21).

One of the most intriguing and exciting aspects of Hirschmann’s analysis is her recovery of the deployment of social constructivism in canonical political theory. Standard readings of social contract theorists, for example, emphasize the role of “human nature” in setting limits on desire, thereby narrowing the distance between free choice and the right choice. What Hirschmann observes, however, is that theorists spend a great deal of effort on the constructed dimensions of human character. While freedom in the negative liberty sense — as the absence of external barriers to the exercise of my will — is central to their accounts of political legitimacy, “these theorists are equally concerned with what such free individuals might choose” (p. 19). Thus, “they also seek to construct men through social institutions and practices that will make them want to choose what the theorists think they should choose: freedom in the positive liberty sense of making the ‘right’ choice that reflects my ‘true’ will” (p. 19). The bright line distinguishing negative from positive liberty, external barriers to freedom from internal barriers, is fading. As Hirschmann’s provocative analysis suggests, there is plenty of second-guessing going on in the camp of negative liberty theorists.

The role of gender in these theories, along with class, further supports the author’s critique of the dichotomy between negative and positive liberty. For example, some theorists will endorse a negative liberty of rights in the public sphere (for men of the right race and class), and prescribe positive liberty in the private sphere, where obedience and molding/subordination of the will are cultivated for men, women, and

children, but often in gender- and class-specific ways. For those who are interested in studies of “intersectionality,” her consideration of gender and class in tandem, especially in the theories of Locke and Mill, will be welcome. While race figures much less prominently in this text, Hirschmann’s analysis cultivates potentially productive ground for political theory scholars who would like to pursue this line of inquiry, significantly initiated by the philosopher Charles Mills, in *The Racial Contract* (1997), although it does not appear in Hirschmann’s bibliography.

This text will be of interest primarily to students, scholars, and teachers of political theory and philosophy, who will appreciate Hirschmann’s close, deep, and nuanced interpretations of canonical texts. While her analysis is relevant to the concerns and interests of a multidisciplinary audience, including feminists and those who are interested in the concept of freedom, it will be an arduous slog for those who are not already familiar with most of the texts and authors she analyzes. This is by no means to suggest that this text is irrelevant to contemporary intellectual and political concerns. Indeed, as Hirschmann argues, contemporary assumptions and beliefs about the concept of freedom derive from the earlier contributions of the canonical figures scrutinized in this text. During the present era, when “freedom has become a term of ideological doublespeak” (p. 28), her newest work will inspire and enable scholars who read it to participate effectively in contemporary discourses of freedom, especially on behalf of those who have been ignored and harmed in the name of freedom, even as they aspire to its enduring allure.

***The New Politics of Gender Equality.* By Judith Squires.
Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave. 2007. 178 pp. \$106.95 cloth,
\$37.95 paper.**

doi:10.1017/S1743923X09000269

Joni Lovenduski
Birkbeck College, University of London

The new politics of gender equality are something of a labyrinth involving changing and multiple levels of government and a complex