



Gender, Class, and Freedom in Modern Political Theory

Nancy J. Hirschmann

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In *Gender, Class, and Freedom in Modern Political Theory*, Nancy Hirschmann demonstrates not merely that modern theories of freedom are susceptible to gender and class analysis but that they must be analyzed in terms of gender and class in order to be understood at all. Through rigorous close readings of major and minor works of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, and Mill, Hirschmann establishes and examines the gender and class foundations of the modern understanding of freedom. Building on a social constructivist model of freedom that she developed in her award-winning book *The Subject of Liberty: Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom*, she makes in her new book another original and important contribution to political and feminist theory.

Despite the prominence of "state of nature" ideas in modern political theory, Hirschmann argues, theories of freedom actually advance a social constructivist understanding of humanity. By rereading "human nature" in light of this insight, Hirschmann uncovers theories of freedom that are both more historically accurate and more relevant to contemporary politics. Pigeonholing canonical theorists as proponents of either "positive" or "negative" liberty is historically inaccurate, she demonstrates, because theorists deploy both conceptions of freedom simultaneously throughout their work.

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