



UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM

# AMSTERDAM CENTRE for POLITICAL THOUGHT

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## Freedom: Liberalism, Republicanism and Beyond

A Workshop in Honour of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Quentin Skinner's *Liberty Before Liberalism*

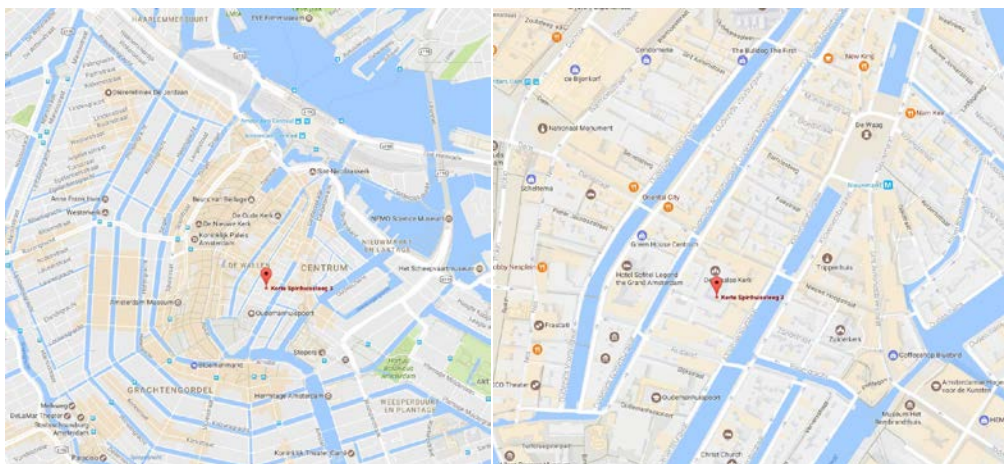
### Final program

**Date:** 23-24 May 2017

**Location:** Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study

Korte Spinhuissteeg 3

1012 CG Amsterdam



This Workshop is organised with funding generously provided by the [Vossius Center for History of the Humanities and Sciences](#), the [Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study](#), and the Programme Group Challenges to Democratic Representation @ the Political Science Department, University of Amsterdam.



## Freedom: Liberalism, Republicanism and Beyond

### Program, May 23<sup>rd</sup>

- 12.45PM - 1PM Welcome and opening remarks by Annelien de Dijn
- 1PM - 2.20PM
- Hilary Gatti, *Sapienza University of Rome*  
'The liberty discourse in early modern Europe: John Milton's *Areopagitica* in context'
  - Hannah Dawson, *King's College London*  
'Liberty before licence in late seventeenth century political thought'
- 2.20PM - 3.40PM
- Laurens van Apeldoorn, *University of Leiden*  
'Conquest and consent revisited: Hobbes on sovereignty'
  - Yiftah Elazar, *Hebrew University*  
'Self-government and the power of masters: Richard Price on the free state'
- 3.45PM - 4.15PM COFFEE BREAK
- 4.15PM - 5.35PM
- René Koekkoek, *University of Amsterdam*  
'Liberty, death, and slavery in the age of the Haitian Revolution'
  - Arthur Weststeijn, *Koninklijk Nederlands Instituut Rome*  
'Republican empire: Liberty & domination in early-modern Dutch colonialism'
- 7PM DINNER (location TBA)



## Freedom: Liberalism, Republicanism and Beyond

### Program, May 24<sup>th</sup>

- 9AM - 10.20AM
- Rachel Foxley, *University of Reading*  
'Hierarchy, gender and freedom in early modern republicanism'
  - Lena Halldenius, *Lundt University*  
'Republican freedom and human rights'
- 10.20AM - 11.40AM
- Martin van Gelderen, *Lichtenberg-Kolleg - The Göttingen Institute for Advanced Study*  
'Grotian subtlety: Moral claims and the freedom of will'
  - Felicity Green, *The University of Edinburgh*  
'Freedom without republicanism? The case of Montaigne'
- 11.40AM - 1PM
- LUNCH
- 1PM - 2.20PM
- Bruno Leipold, *Oxford University*  
'Chains and invisible threads: Marx on domination and republican liberty'
  - Matthijs Lok, *University of Amsterdam*  
'Counter-revolutionary liberty'
- 2.20PM - 3.40PM
- Annelien de Dijn, *University of Amsterdam*  
'Liberty and liberalism'
  - Christopher Hamel, *Université Libre de Bruxelles*  
'Liberty before liberalism beyond J.G.A. Pocock: Towards a genealogy of rights republicanism'
- 3.40PM - 4.15PM
- COFFEE BREAK
- 4.15PM - 5.15PM
- Keynote and Q&A
- Quentin Skinner, *Queen Mary, University of London*  
'Neo-Roman liberty in the English Revolution'
- Chair: Annabel Brett, *University of Cambridge*

## Abstracts

### **Hilary Gatti, 'The Liberty Discourse in Early Modern Europe: John Milton's Areopagitica in Context'**

This paper aims at placing Milton's *Areopagitica* of 1644, the first full-length plea for freedom of the press, within the wider context of the liberty discourse in Early Modern Europe. In the first place, however, the *Areopagitica* is considered in the light of a major re-evaluation of Milton's works in prose that took place in the second half of the 20th century as an aspect of Quentin Skinner's work on early modern republicanism. The paper then addresses an alternative line of thought that criticizes the limits Milton places on his idea of liberty, questioning whether he is interested in liberty at all. In defence of Milton, particular emphasis is placed on the religious wars and Inquisition that characterized so much of the first half of 17th century Europe. Attention to Milton's complex relationship to Counter Reformation Italy, and his strong condemnation of all forms of religious persecution, Catholic or Protestant, are brought to light in defence of the power and modernity of his idea of liberty. Milton is pleading for freedom of thought and expression for the individual citizen within a self-governing, republican idea of the state. The paper ends by emphasizing how, in 1644, Milton presents London, under the sway of the Long Parliament, as an idealized city engaged in the pursuit of his idea of liberty.

### **Hannah Dawson, 'Liberty before licence in late seventeenth century political thought'**

TBA

### **Laurens van Apeldoorn, 'Conquest and consent revisited: Hobbes on sovereignty'**

In this paper I wish to defend, with a number of qualifications, the contention that Hobbes took sovereignty or the right to rule as equivalent to having pre-eminent coercive power. This 'de facto-ist reading' was forcefully put forward by Quentin Skinner in a number of influential articles that traced the reception of Hobbes's views in the context of the engagement controversy after the execution of Charles I. Skinner shows that de facto theorists such as Marchamont Nedham and Anthony Asham read Hobbes as endorsing many of their positions, including the view that sovereignty can be established by 'conquest' if it is not derived from 'institution' by means of an agreement.

Commentators have generally rejected the de facto-ist reading of Hobbes. They have emphasized that even when he allows for sovereignty by conquest, he is adamant that the obligation to obey the usurper is the result of voluntary submission in a contract. Skinner himself also has accepted this particular conclusion in reissued versions of the original articles.

I shall argue that Hobbes did initially hold, in *The Elements of Law* (1640) and *De Cive* (1642, 2nd ed. 1647), that sovereignty could be established on the basis of conquest alone. He



maintained that sovereignty simply consists in pre-eminent power or strength (although it is, in the case of sovereignty by institution, transferred by means of a contract). While Hobbes later changed his mind, and emphasised in *Leviathan* (1651) the importance of consent in direct opposition to Nedham and Asham (as Kinch Hoekstra and Noel Malcolm have argued), my interpretation helps explain why these de facto theorists were nevertheless so confident, as Skinner has shown, that Hobbes defended the view that they themselves also adhered to.

### **Yiftah Elazar, 'Self-Government and the power of masters: Richard Price on the free state'**

Richard Price's theory of civil liberty as self-government offers one of the most sophisticated articulations of the neo-roman theory of free states that Quentin Skinner has recovered in *Liberty before Liberalism*. This chapter reconstructs and reconsiders Price's idea of civil liberty, demonstrating that it was far more coherent than the "hash of nonsense and contradictions" that Jeremy Bentham described in his critique of it. More particularly, it clarifies how Price combined the idea of constitutional freedom from "the power of masters," more recently described as non-domination, with the idea of popular government.

The core of Price's theory of civil liberty was his original analysis of the idea of self-government into three distinct and complementary aspects, which can be described as internal self-determination, internal self-control, and external non-domination. Extracted from the examination of individual liberty, using the Newtonian method of analysis, this tripartite structure was applied to the idea of the free state, which combined, on Price's understanding, popular determination, constitutional self-control, and imperial non-domination.

Indeed, neither non-domination nor self-government is necessarily a democratic ideal. A crucial and controversial aspect of Price's theory is the argument that neither of the two can be realized without the establishment of a government combining constitutional liberty with popular power. In such a government, every free agent is able to participate in determining and controlling the will of the state. Conversely, on Price's account, the sphere of non-domination constituted by the free and self-governing state can be understood as the external, politically constructed aspect of the individual power of self-government possessed by each of its members.

### **Rene Koekkoek, Liberty, death, and slavery in the age of the Haitian Revolution**

The vexed question how to reconcile demands for political liberty, on the one hand, and maintain a system of chattel slavery, on the other, was perhaps never more pressing than in the years surrounding the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). It has often been argued that the widespread existence of chattel slavery contradicted the ideals of the Age of the Atlantic Revolutions. This paper, however, suggests that two central lines of reasoning about political liberty articulated in the Age of Atlantic Revolutions actually helped to justify chattel slavery. The first line of reasoning basically suggested that political liberty resulted from virtue – from the

act of resistance and a willingness to risk one's life for liberty. The other line of reasoning supposed that political liberty required a certain level of 'enlightenment'. These conceptions of liberty enabled revolutionaries to legitimate slavery, while at the same time propounding an ideology that served their own revolutionary objectives.

**Arthur Weststeijn 'Republican Empire: Liberty & domination in early-modern Dutch colonialism'**

Throughout history, from Ancient Rome to the contemporary USA, republican polities have been remarkably eager to expand their rule overseas, combining liberty at home with domination abroad. One of the most significant of such "republican empires" was the early-modern Dutch Republic, which succeeded in maintaining its liberty and independence in an essentially monarchical age, at the same time as building a global colonial empire. In my paper I aim to discuss some of the possibilities and pitfalls of writing an intellectual history of this Dutch republican empire. To do so, I will explore the conceptual difficulties of researching early-modern Dutch ideas of "empire", as well as the possible sources that could be used for such a research. I hope to argue that through an inclusive conceptual approach and a wide selection of sources, a variety of debates can be uncovered that show how liberty and domination interacted in the intellectual history of the Dutch republican empire.

**Rachel Foxley, 'Hierarchy, gender and freedom in early modern republicanism'**

This paper will explore the contexts in which claims about 'neo-Roman' liberty were made in early modern English republican texts. The notion of 'freedom from the will of another' was enmeshed with ideas both of equality and of inequality. The frequent assertion that one should be free from the arbitrary power of one's 'equal or inferior' had a double effect, as it both posited realms of significant equality within which non-dominating and non-arbitrary relationships were a reciprocal expectation, and suggested the potential persistence of relationships of inequality within which the inferior party could not appeal to this notion of liberty in their defence against arbitrary power. In this paper I will consider how these concepts of equality and inequality operated in republican texts, including in relation to gender, and ask whether the link between persistent hierarchies within republican texts and the concept of neo-Roman liberty is merely historically contingent, or whether it should trouble those using the neo-Roman concept as a foundation for modern republican political theory.

**Lena Halldenius, 'Republican freedom and human rights'**

This presentation proceeds from dissatisfaction with mainstream human rights philosophy in two intertwined respects. One concerns the conception of the person; the other concerns the capacity – or lack of it – of human rights philosophy to address current political challenges. I will argue that if human rights protection is to be strongest for those who are weakest – which it should be – human rights philosophy needs to rid itself of its preference for associating





personhood with cognitive and emotional capacities, and instead focus on social and political vulnerability as ground for rights possession. I will also argue that by using human rights as an individualized and “local” principle of justice rather than a systemic one, human rights philosophers make human rights incapable of addressing crucial matters of political injustice. The example used will be the steep increase in global economic inequality. Human rights philosophy has an uncanny tendency to stay clear of the most pressing political challenges of our time. Using a “republican” conception of freedom as non-domination, I will try to show that this is at least partly due to a preoccupation with the morality of the person rather than the reality of institutionalized oppression and vulnerability.

**Martin van Gelderen ‘Grotian Subtlety: Moral claims and the freedom of will’**

TBA

**Felicity Green, ‘Freedom without republicanism? The case of Montaigne’**

To what extent is the neo-Roman account of freedom as non-domination predicated on a republican theory of government? In *Liberty before Liberalism*, Skinner is careful to describe the neo-Roman theory of liberty as a ‘theory of free states’, and not as a specifically republican theory: while all early modern republicans were neo-Romans, not all neo-Romans were republicans. But can freedom be achieved outside the constitutional framework of the free state altogether? This paper explores this question through an analysis of Montaigne’s reflections on freedom. Montaigne was neither a republican, nor even a political theorist, and yet his understanding of freedom is recognizably neo-Roman in its emphasis on the vicissitudes of dependency. For Montaigne, I argue, freedom is to be secured not through political participation in a free state, but through a personal practice of self-regulation allowing us to preserve our will from subjection and expropriation. This shift of focus from civil to personal liberty and from constitutional to ethical issues opens up wider questions about the characteristics of neo-Roman freedom. Does all dependency involve domination, or are some forms of dependency more compatible with freedom than others? The second half of the paper seeks to address this by exploring the limits of freedom for Montaigne – particularly in the contexts of the mutual dependency represented by friendship, and of the dependency of all human beings on God.

**Bruno Leipold, ‘Chains and Invisible threads: Marx on domination and republican liberty’**

In *Capital* vol. I (1867), Karl Marx writes that while the ‘Roman slave was held in chains; the wage labourer is bound to his owner by invisible threads.’ This is one of countless examples where Marx uses ideas and language that we associate with the neo-roman republican tradition; including domination, dependency, slavery and servitude. The fact that Marx does this has been noted in passing by several scholars of republicanism, but has (until very recently)



received very little sustained examination. This paper attempts to address that gap and will make three broad arguments: (1) that Marx does indeed display and invoke many classic tropes of the neo-Roman republican tradition in his criticism of how the capitalist personally dominated the worker, (2) that Marx was not the first to do this and that republican language is sometimes even more prominent in the criticisms of several of his 19<sup>th</sup> century socialist and republican contemporaries, and (3) that Marx's real originality in comparison to these contemporaries lies in his account of the structural domination of capitalism. I end with some tentative suggestions for how this final feature should be incorporated into contemporary republican discussions of domination

### **Matthijs Lok, 'Counter-revolutionary liberty'**

Most research on the history of the idea of freedom focusses on the liberal and revolutionary tradition, as well as the pre-revolutionary republican tradition. In my paper I will explore the uses of the concept of freedom in an intellectual tradition often overlooked by scholars of political thought: the Counter-Enlightenment and, to a certain extent its successor, the Counter-revolution. My main case study will be the *Journal Historique et Littéraire*, edited between 1773 and 1794, by the former Jesuit François-Xavier de Feller (1735-1802). Feller as well as many other critics of the enlightened philosophy, believed that the philosophes propagated a false idea of liberty that would eventually lead to despotism as well as chaos. The events of the French revolution confirmed the suspicions of many anti-philosophes. Instead counter-revolutionaries pointed to a 'just and true' idea liberty that was the result of a historically grown and divinely sanctioned European constitution. The war between revolution and counter-revolution was also a struggle between two competing notions of liberty.

### **Annelien de Dijn, 'Liberty and Liberalism'**

In his seminal work 'Liberty Before Liberalism' and in other contributions, Quentin Skinner has unearthed an unfamiliar way of thinking and talking about freedom, alternatively described as the 'neo-Roman' or 'republican' conception of freedom, in which freedom is typically identified with popular self-government. According to Skinner's account, this way of thinking about freedom was ultimately replaced with a very different understanding of freedom, associated with the liberal tradition, in which freedom is identified with the absence of interference. But when and how did this shift in the history of freedom take place? Why did people stop talking about freedom as self-government and start talking about freedom as noninterference? Those are the questions addressed in this paper. In order to answer them, I will focus on the nineteenth-century debate about freedom.

### **Christopher Hamel, 'Liberty before liberalism beyond J.G.A Pocock : Towards a genealogy of rights republicanism'**





This paper claims that Q. Skinner's Liberty before liberalism has paved the way for a straight shift in republican studies, since it showed that the widely accepted Pocockian paradigmatic opposition between rights and virtue was irrelevant to, and even misleading for, the understanding of the Neo-Roman theory of individual and collective freedom. Except for Harrington – a telling exception when one recalls his role in Pocock's model – most of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries Neo-Roman authors identified by Q. Skinner had fastened their conception of civic virtue and their concern for corruption to a natural rights account of the origin of political society.

Now this encounter of rights and virtue is far from a short-lived anomaly, as can be seen for example from R. Hammersley's work on the XVIIIth c. French reception of XVIIth c. English republicanism, or from V. Ferrone's book on G. Filangieri. As a result, it should call for reassessing both the meaning of these concepts in the works of these authors and the purported autonomy of the political languages to which these concepts are associated. It seems that one of the reasons why Q. Skinner has not himself followed this route, however, is his (Pocockian-flavoured) choice to contrast the Neo-Roman or republican "vision of politics", that "assigns priority to the duties of citizens", with that of Hobbes, which assigns priority to "their rights" (*Visions of politics, General Preface, p. viii*) – although Hobbes is arguably more of a republican enemy than a paradigmatic theorist of citizens' rights. By contrast, I suggest that a most fruitful enterprise consists in trying to examine the diverse but strikingly consistent ways early-modern republican authors conceptualize natural rights and civic virtue.

### **Quentin Skinner, "Neo-Roman liberty in the English Revolution"**

The lecture begins by tracing the emergence of a neo-Roman way of thinking about individual and civic liberty as one of the leading vocabularies of opposition in pre-revolutionary England. It is then argued that, once the centrality of this understanding of what it means to be a free person is recognised, it becomes possible to suggest some fresh answers to three major questions about the revolutionary decade of the 1640s. Why did England slide into civil war in the summer of 1642? What was at stake in the Leveller debates about the franchise in 1647? And how was the rule of the Commonwealth government legitimised after the abolition of the monarchy in 1649?