Mary Wollstonecraft and Richard Price: The Theological and Philosophical Foundations of Freedom as Independence

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Abstract

In Wollstonecraft's early writings, she articulates the foundational theological and philosophical principles that would underpin her work throughout her career. One difference between her early and later work lies in the way that the values to which she refers are combined. Whereas Wollstonecraft at first appeals to the separate ideals of independence, equality, and virtue, from the 1790s onwards she integrates these into a characteristic republican framework that was in common use amongst dissenting theorists at the time. The set of values on which Wollstonecraft draws, and the version of the republican framework that she develops, closely resemble those of Richard Price with whose work she was familiar. Examining the structural similarities between their respective models, I argue, gives us an insight into the systematic manner of aspects of Wollstonecraft's own thought. It also allows us to see how Wollstonecraft goes beyond the republicanism of Price and others as she develops her own feminist solutions to the problems of structural domination.

Keywords

Mary Wollstonecraft; Richard Price; Freedom as Independence; Women in the History of Philosophy

One of the earliest pieces of advice that we have from Mary Wollstonecraft was given when she was 22 years old, in which she urged her childhood friend Jane Arden to "struggle with any obstacles rather than go into a state of dependence", adding that she herself had felt its weight.[1] The ideal of independence would become a lasting preoccupation for Wollstonecraft, both as a personal value that she sought to secure for herself and her sisters, and as a theoretical concept that provided the basis for her moral and political philosophy.[2] In the 1790s, when she began to write more overtly political work, Wollstonecraft makes use of a rigorous and formal notion of independence understood as idea of freedom that is connected with equality and virtue. The foundations for this concept, however, can be found in her earliest work, including *Thoughts for the Education of Daughters* (1787) and *Original Stories from Real Life* (1788) on which I shall draw heavily. Although Wollstonecraft develops her own distinctive insights on what independence requires, her model shares several structural similarities with the version used by Richard Price, with whose ideas she was well acquainted. The concept of independence, as we shall see, brings together a number of core theological and philosophical commitments, including the nature and implications of God's benevolence and of human reason and

virtue. Accordingly, analysing how Wollstonecraft's understanding of independence both resembles and departs from other thinkers of her time offers us a valuable perspective from which to assess her own contribution and innovation.

The position that I shall advance in what follows is this. Although the focus of Wollstonecraft's writing seems to change between the 1780s—in which she is often concerned with individual behaviour, particularly in her conduct books aimed at young women and children—and 1790s—when her work becomes more overtly social and political—this does not reflect any significant change in the underlying moral and religious principles on which she draws. Values such as virtue, equality, the role of reason, and a commitment to community provide a platform for her arguments throughout her work. However, while she treats these as separate, if often interconnected, values in her early writings, in her later work they are brought together into a tight philosophical framework centred around the concept of freedom as independence. Although this shift is entirely consistent, Wollstonecraft does not offer any explicit rationale or account for it. We can, however, gain some possible insight into her position by considering an argument made by Richard Price in 1787, in which he starts from a similar set of principles to Wollstonecraft to provide a justification for the centrality of freedom as independence in which equality and virtue are given as necessary auxiliaries that resembles the account of independence that Wollstonecraft employs in her later work.

I shall not make any specific claims about any direct influence by Price on Wollstonecraft, although it is very likely that his ideas had an impact on her thinking. When Wollstonecraft moved to Newington Green, a village in what is now North London, she was in her mid-twenties and had not yet embarked on her literary career. Price, the local non-conformist minister, was at the time a widely-published, highly-respected scholar and political activist still at the height of his fame. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society for his mathematical work, had been an intellectual leader of the American Revolution having published his *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* in 1776, and had a strong reputation as a moral philosopher through his *Review of the Principal Questions in Morals*—the corrected and expanded 3rd edition of which was soon to be published (1787) and which is still regarded as one of the finest statements of rational intuitionism.[3] Wollstonecraft and Price formed a close personal and intellectual relationship with Wollstonecraft sometimes attending Price's sermons at the Newington Green Meeting House even though she remained formally within the Anglican church.[4] Wollstonecraft was certainly aware of many of Price's theoretical positions. In 1789, for example, she wrote an informed review of Price's *Discourse on the Love of Our Country*—the sermon that would prompt Burke to write his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790)—in the *Analytical Review* in which she notes his emphasis on universal benevolence and includes a long extract dealing with the values of "Truth, Virtue and Liberty, as the chief blessings of human nature".[5]

Nevertheless, whether or not we can trace any particular points of influence by Price on Wollstonecraft does not bear on my argument and I do not pursue this matter. While such speculations may be of biographical interest, philosophically it is the use to which ideas are put and their relation to other ideas in a system that is of far greater relevance. In any case, Wollstonecraft drew on several other philosophers—such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Catharine Macaulay, both of whom are directly referenced in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*—who also made use of values related to the concept of independence, and Wollstonecraft's own philosophy likely reflects a distillation of many related influences infused with her own innovations and insights. My purpose here is only to note the points of similarity between Price and Wollstonecraft and to suggest that Price's argument for the priority of independence as a unifying concept is both available to Wollstonecraft and makes sense in the context of the trajectory of her developing ideas.

It may seem strange to some scholars to treat Wollstonecraft's early writing philosophically, and on a par with her later work in this respect, particularly as her early texts take the form of personal letters, conduct books and fiction which were not written as treatises and do not exhibit a careful, systematic method. Setting aside the compounding objection that arguably none of Wollstonecraft's work meets this latter bar, and fully accepting that care must be taken when appraising sources, it is now a well-established principle that the sustained and serious study of women's presence in, and contribution to, the history of philosophy requires us to reconceptualise and expand our notions of what constitutes a philosophical text.[6] Apart from the fact that women often lacked both the status and the education be taken seriously in academic debate, social conditions often dictated that the writing of certain kinds of literature, such as morality tales, educational tracts or novels may have been the most viable, or acceptable, means by which a woman could record her voice. Within the parameters of these genres, in many cases—and I would certainly include Wollstonecraft amongst them—we find a rich set of concerns, ideas and principles that allow us to reconstruct philosophical arguments and systems with which we can engage today.

I have chosen to discuss Wollstonecraft's philosophy through the concept of independence. In part, this is because the idea is so prominent in her work, and serves as a reference point for several of her principal concerns. My choice was also made in part because the eighteenth-century term 'independence' can be confusing to modern readers. In political discourse independence was often used interchangeably with 'freedom' or 'liberty', indicating the protection against arbitrary forms of controlling power. Just as independence connoted freedom, so its antonym—dependence—was often used synonymously with slavery. Independence was one of the fundamental principles in what is often referred to today as the republican tradition of political theorising, though this is a present-day label that should be used with caution.[7] For republicans, independence serves as a central value to which

other ideals—especially equality and virtue—within a system that emphasises the role of rational debate and the common good. The ideal of independence was widely used by Protestant dissenters, including by Richard Price who is, today, considered a leading republican as well as dissenting theorist. Although there is no necessary connection between republicanism and religious non-conformity, several factors combine to make the two traditions a good fit. These include a shared a heritage from the upheavals associated with the English Civil War and its aftermath, a focus on the use of reason, and a deep suspicion of established institutional power. Price's support for the American and French Revolutions, on the one hand, and his condemnation of the Test and Corporations Acts which restricted the freedom of Christians who worshiped outside of the Anglican church on the other, are both couched in terms of republican independence.

Wollstonecraft's Early Theoretical Foundations

When Wollstonecraft moved to Newington Green in 1784, it was to open a school with her two sisters and her close friend, Fanny Blood. At this time, Price had been long established as one of the central figures in the intellectual life of the community, having been minister of the local dissenting chapel since 1758. Price's reputation was such that he attracted a wide circle of the leading radical, often dissenting, thinkers of his time, many of whom would become part of Wollstonecraft's life, including Joseph Priestley, Thomas Paine and Anna Laetitia Barbauld. Wollstonecraft and Price had a warm and affectionate relationship. William Godwin, who later became Wollstonecraft's husband, recalls in his memoir, "the regard conceived by these two persons for each other, was mutual, and partook of a spirit of the purest attachment".[8]

Wollstonecraft's immediate objectives at this stage of her life were practical rather than intellectual. Godwin picks out two particular goals from this period—a determination to be independent and useful.[9] Wollstonecraft herself reiterates these goals in a letter to her editor, Joseph Johnson, in 1789. "I must", she wrote, "exert my understanding to procure an independence, and render myself useful", adding that "to make the task easier, I must store my mind with knowledge".[10] In this letter, then, she adds a third aspiration. In her case, at least, her ability to become independent and useful are enabled or enhanced by the development of her mind. This makes perfect sense for a writer whose trade derives from her mental abilities. At the same time, it provides a small illustration of a broader characteristic of Wollstonecraft's early thought. Independence, usefulness and the need for training or personal development are all important but treated as distinct values. Although Wollstonecraft makes connections between them—knowledge can improve one's ability to act independently, independence can increase one's usefulness and prevent one from becoming a burden—she does not yet organise the separate values she invokes into a larger overall framework, in

which each particular principle is related in specified ways to the others, as she would in her more political work in the 1790s.

What the relationship is between Wollstonecraft's early writings—including those produced at Newington Green—and her later work, is the subject of much debate.[11] This is a more involved question than I can explore here. I shall only make two points of my own. The first is fairly innocuous, concerning subject matter and scope. Whereas Wollstonecraft's first two non-fiction books were concerned with personal conduct, and at least one prominent theme in her novel is the individual self-education of a young woman, her later books tackle more expansive social, political and historical issues. The second claim is somewhat stronger, that the fundamental philosophical principles to which Wollstonecraft appealed remained more or less constant throughout her career. Space does not permit me to trace Wollstonecraft's underlying principles across her work, though I defend this position elsewhere.[12] This said, there is no need to agree with my claim, so long as one accepts that the specific ideals I discuss below play a continued part in her thought. For my own part, I see no sharp break between her early and later work. Although she will focus on different questions, Wollstonecraft neither repudiates nor contradicts the ideas presented in her first publications. Instead, my claim shall be that the later Wollstonecraft develops her ideas based on the values and principles in play from the outset. Since my focus is on Wollstonecraft's development of a framework built around the concept of freedom as independence, the underlying values that are of most interest here are those which will eventually form part of that model, such as independence itself, equality, virtue, community, and reason.

Wollstonecraft opens her first publication, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, with an appeal to the idea that humans are rational creatures with the power to reflect on their behaviour to curb the passions and so to develop a virtuous disposition. The resulting advice that she gives throughout the book is written in this light. By developing our reason, we may control our emotions and develop our reason. Virtue is something that is universal in scope, and owed not only to all people but to all creatures.[13] Virtue also entails not only courteous behaviour and a concern for the wellbeing of others—benevolence being "the first, most amiable virtue"—but it is also underpinned by "a love of truth", which she identifies as "the foundation of virtue".[14] Wollstonecraft also repeats the warning we noted at the start about the dependence inherent in jobs such as being a lady's companion or governess. "Being dependant on the caprice of a fellow-creature", she writes, "is yet a very bitter corrective, which we would fain shrink from", emphasising the inherent inequality of status entailed.[15] In *Original Stories from Real Life*, Wollstonecraft says a little more about what independence entails, tying it to reason—"for it is the proper exercise of our reason that makes us in any degree independent".[16] Here, we can see how Wollstonecraft will link the ideals of independence and virtue.

Virtue is grounded in truth, where truth is rationally determined rather than imposed by some other authority, and so both independence and virtue have reason as their foundation.

Though Wollstonecraft couches independence and virtue in the context of their benefits for social life, her focus is, nevertheless, on the implications for personal conduct rather than political organisation. It is, she argues, part of Providence's design—God's arrangement of the nature of things to work in our human best interests—that relationships of mutual interdependence will tend to increase virtue and foster community. "One being is made dependent on another", she argues, "that love and forbearance may soften the human heart, and that linked together by necessity, and the exercise of the social affections, the whole family on earth might have a fellow feeling for each other. By these means we improve one another; but there is no real inferiority".[17] The context here is of children, who have not yet developed the reason that can make them independent, being under authority of servants who act for the acknowledged good of the children. This kind of constrained dependence contrasts with the bitter corrective that Wollstonecraft experienced as a lady's companion. The difference is that in the former case, the authority is based on the interests of those who are subject to it, with strict limits being placed on how those in power may act, in contrast with the latter case where the imbalance of power exists for the benefit of the employer who need not consult the interests of her companion. This second relationship is one of 'arbitrary' power which corrupts rather than builds up virtue. This distinction will play a major part in Wollstonecraft's analysis of the destructive nature of patriarchal power over women in the *Rights of Woman*.

The invoking of Providence is significant. Wollstonecraft not only draws on theological principles in developing her philosophical ideas, she also imbues her theoretical model with an active and forward-looking character grounded in her religion. In a letter written in 1787, Wollstonecraft wrote to her sister with the following advice: "Providence has given you to be *improved*—our whole life is but an education for eternity—virtue is an *acquirement*—seek for the assistance of Heaven, to enable you *now* to be wise unto Salvation".[18] Some scholars have detected an otherworldly character to remarks such as this (and in *Thoughts* and *Original Stories*, as well as in *Mary*), suggesting that Wollstonecraft was sceptical about the possibility of successful political reform in this period and placed her hopes for justice and happiness in the next life rather than in this one.[19] I take a different view. Though preparing ourselves for a future state is clearly one of Wollstonecraft's principal concerns at this time, as it would remain throughout her career, this does not contrast with striving to bring about worldly change so much as motivate it. "In order to please God", Wollstonecraft has the character Mrs Mason argue in *Original Stories*, "we must do good", adding that "what we call virtue, may thus be explained:—we exercise every benevolent affection to enjoy comfort here, and to fit ourselves to be better angels hereafter".[20] The future to which Wollstonecraft looks is both on earth

and in heaven. Since benevolence is the prime virtue, which is owed universally, the comfort to which we aim is not private but collective. One of the purposes of human life, for which we have been given in addition to our ability to reason our driving passions and appetites, is to make ourselves "sociable beings; as in society virtue is acquired".[21] While this does fit us for the next life, given the extent of unhappiness in this life we also have, by implication, strong duties to help others in our earthly existence, too.

Though Wollstonecraft did not directly address the broader social and political issues that would preoccupy her in her later years, in the 1780s she was already using the moral, philosophical and theological principles upon which she would later draw. She also had an optimistic outlook that stemmed from her doctrine of human perfectibility—the belief that people both had the capacity and the moral duty to improve themselves and their society—which combined with the importance she placed on being useful to give her philosophy a practical focus directed at bringing about change. She valued "active virtue" that not only fitted us for society with each other as well as with more exalted beings, and which manifested itself in philanthropy.[22]

Price and the Centrality of Freedom

Beginning with the publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), Wollstonecraft's work took on an overtly political focus. At the same time, she made use of a much more rigorous and tightly-arranged framework of ideals. This was the republican framework characteristic of dissenting thought that is built around the central ideal of freedom conceived as independence from arbitrary controlling power. Though Wollstonecraft does not give any formal rationale for adopting this framework, it is a development that is consistent with the principles and ideals she was already using. It may be that Wollstonecraft simply adopted this framework ready-made from others in her intellectual circle. This would, in my view, be an unduly hasty conclusion. In her early work, Wollstonecraft derived the principles she used from her theological commitments and had started to make connections between them. Since she retains both the theology and the principles in the later stages, it seems reasonable to look for a rationale that might underpin her adoption of the republican structure.

A possible form of argument that is available to Wollstonecraft is given by Price. Price makes use of the same set of core republican values as Wollstonecraft—independence, equality and virtue—and he derives these from a similar underlying rational theology. A clear statement of Price's argument is found in a sermon given at the Old Jewry Meeting House in London in 1787, on "The Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement of Mankind". This future period is the coming of God's kingdom promised in scripture, to which Christians look forward. One of the purposes of Price's address is to show that, if we are committed to an ideal of God's Providence and human perfectibility, then we must

play our part in bringing this improvement about through the exercise of our reason. This is not just an individual effort but requires the coordination of our efforts through an ideal sort of government—one which prioritises freedom, where both equality and virtue are necessary conditions of that freedom. This is the republican ideal of freedom as independence that Wollstonecraft also espouses.

Price's opens his sermon with a quotation from the Lord's Prayer: "Thy Kingdom Come. Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven".[23] This, he argues, is the most important desire a Christian can have, one which will result in the "enjoyment of the highest blessings that can be communicated to the world". Prayer, however, is not a merely passive activity. We do not simply await the coming of the kingdom, but must play our part in bringing it about. Although Price does not directly specify these, two motives underpin his argument. The first comes from the virtue of universal benevolence. "'Tis our duty to exclude, as far as we can, all vice and sufferings from the world", he writes in his collection of essays on theological themes.[24] The second is that the means that God has planned to bring about the improved future state is through our actions ("the Divine scheme is, plainly, that events shall, to a certain degree, be what created agents make them").[25] Positive motives aside, the very act of praying is said to place us under an obligation to play our part in its being answered. We are, Price argues, "bound by our use of that part of the Lord's Prayer… to employ all the means in our power to cause the kingdom of God to come, and his will to be done".[26] These sentiments fit with Wollstonecraft's theology, both in her early and late periods, and in *Original Stories*, she includes a similar argument about the self-obligating nature of prayer ("when we pray to God", Mrs Mason warns, "we offer an affront to him, if we do not strive to imitate the perfections He displaces every where for our imitation, that we may grow better and happier").[27]

In using human beings to bring about future improvements, Providence has equipped us with the requisite faculties, notably reason.[28] As created beings, however, we are subject to the limitations of our finite nature. Accordingly, Price argues, human progress—in common with other natural processes—tends to occur in small, incremental changes. "Almost every object in nature", he observes, "grows up gradually from a weak and low to a mature and improved state of being".[29] It is in this manner that civilization, agriculture, forms of government, and in particular, scientific and philosophical knowledge have developed. The conceptual nature of these last two kinds of knowledge serves to slow down the rate at which they can be improved, absorbed and disseminated. Philosophical knowledge, Price observes, requires many layers of incremental improvement, as "a Bacon was followed by a Boyle, and a Boyle by a Newton", each preparing the way for the next building the capacity of each generation to receive and digest new ideas.[30] In singling out certain key figures such as Newton, Price does not imply that the path to improvement comes from the efforts of select or particular individuals. On the contrary, this is very much a collective enterprise — "every one of us

ought to co-operate with his neighbours in this great work".[31] Wollstonecraft, too, describes the arc of scientific improvement with reference to "great men" such as Newton and Descartes in her later work, although as with Price, both context and her internal logic indicate that this is a collective process.[32]

From this basis, which Wollstonecraft shares, Price goes on to argue for a form of government that will best foster the development of scientific and moral knowledge, allowing it to spread and become established. This government prioritises the ideal of freedom, with virtue and equality being necessary supporting values, arranged in the republican fashion.[33] "Free governments", for example, are said to "exalt the human character", thereby not only stimulating collective virtue but reinforcing the institutions that preserve our freedom.[34] In addition to the moral benefits of free government, however, there are epistemological gains. A free state is accountable to the citizenry and must serve their common interests. These interests are not determined by the government but are discovered and agreed upon through public deliberation and popular representation. So long as there is an "open field for discussion", which means that incumbent powers with vested interests in maintaining their influence—what Price calls "slavish and antichristian hierarchies, referring principally to the established church although the principle can be generalised—must be constrained, leading to a much more egalitarian society.[35] As with freedom and virtue, there is a positive feedback between freedom and equality. Indeed, even in a flawed nation like England, Price believed that Providence was already hastening the demise of entrenched hierarchies, "not by any methods of violence; but by the diffusion of knowledge, and the quiet influence of reason and conviction".[36]

A free, and therefore egalitarian, state has the best chance to be virtuous on Price's account. If this condition is to be attained, and maintained, then alongside the appropriate institutions of government and lack of social hierarchy, an effective system of education is required. This education both equips citizens to think rationally and independently—and so contribute to the goal of moving towards a future improved state—and, crucially, instils in them a sense of virtue. "The best education", he argues, "is that which… impresses the heart most with the love of virtue and communicates the most expanded and ardent benevolence; which gives the deepest consciousness of the fallibility of the human understanding and preserves from… vile dogmatism so prevalent in the world".[37] The emphasis on developing both reason and virtue through education was present in Wollstonecraft's early work, and is addressed more explicitly in the *Rights of Woman*, where she explicitly places this in the context of increasing independence ("the most perfect education, in my opinion, is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to… enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent").[38]

Concluding Remarks—Going Beyond Price

Wollstonecraft's moral and political philosophy in the 1790s exhibits this republican structure, bringing together independence, equality and virtue. In the first paragraph of the preface to *Rights of Woman*, for example, Wollstonecraft describes independence as "the grand blessing of life, the basis of every virtue".[39] In the next sentence she argues that this not only entails a general commitment to equality—"it is, then, an affection for the whole human race that makes my pen dart rapidly along"—but that it specifically includes women's equality—"my opinion, indeed, respecting the rights and duties of woman, seems to flow so naturally from these simple principles" (namely independence, virtue and equality). Although I have argued that Wollstonecraft develops her conception of independence in a Pricean fashion, starting from similar moral and religious commitments and arriving at a comparable position, we should end by noting how Wollstonecraft takes the implications of this republican structure further than Price. In so doing, she makes what I consider to be a significant contribution to republican political philosophy today, anticipating contemporary discourses on structural domination and relational autonomy.[40] I explore this contribution in detail in several places but in these final remarks I can only give a brief outline.[41]

On the republican structure outlined by Price above, abolishing or constraining the slavish and antichristian hierarchies should bring about sufficiently egalitarian conditions to allow free and rational deliberation to take root among the people. This was the purpose of his argument, since "it is the blessing of God on the disquisitions of reason and the labours of virtue, united to the invisible directions of his Providence" that brings on the period of improvement.[42] Price's idea of equality is, however, fairly limited, focussing primarily on the kinds of political and economic concerns that were fairly standard in political theorising at the time such as constraining the political power of the monarch, disestablishing the church and avoiding large concentrations of wealth. Without these kinds of distortions, the playing field will, he argues, be sufficiently level to allow fruitful, open discussion. While this argument is made here in the context of a future improved state of society, it also plays a vital role in the republican model of freedom. This is because republicans rely on an ideal of the common good—an ideal that must reflect the perspectives and interests of the entire population—as the focal point for determining how the law should be framed and applied.[43]

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance to republicans that citizens are both capable of, and willing to, engage in reasoned discussion about what is in their shared interests. On this question, Wollstonecraft takes a far more extensive, subtle, and insightful view of the kinds of obstacles and inequalities that can undermine public deliberative reason. Framing her arguments in the context of the patriarchal nature of society, she shifts the focus of her republican model from political and

economic threats to the power inherent in social structures. Social structures are, of course, often the result of political and economic inequalities. However, once established they penetrate deeply into the culture of a society, pervading its norms, traditions, practices and values, thereby constraining the ability of citizens to think impartially and for themselves. Wollstonecraft gives several reasons for this, but one important factor is that people's minds come to be restricted by the conceptual limitations of their society which reflects the ideals and perspectives of the privileged and powerful elites. The effect on the public use of reason, however, is devastating. "Deeply rooted prejudices have clouded reason", she argues, so that "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", with the result that "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".[44]

Wollstonecraft's analysis shows that no process of political or economic reform will be effective if public reason remains corrupted. The oppression of women, then, is not an issue that affects only women but is fundamental to the health of the whole political community. In the context of Price's argument that independence is necessary for its effect on knowledge, Wollstonecraft shows that under the prevailing social conditions that keep women subject, this objective cannot be achieved. Their continued subjection, she argues, will "stop the progress of knowledge" for everyone, "for truth must be common to all".[45] Although this remark is couched in terms of the education of women, the rest of the *Rights of Woman* makes clear that both sexes are affected adversely by the biases and prejudices that pervade society and their mutual elevation must be the goal in any successful remedial policy programme. Price's argument for the priority of liberty, within a republican structure of independence, equality and virtue, then, cannot succeed without wholesale social reform. The prejudices affecting women can only be broken down by a wholesale reconceptualisation of gender relations—social, economic, legal, political and moral. This is the "revolution in female manners" with which Wollstonecraft ends the *Rights of Woman*.[46]

[1] Letter dated April 1781. Wollstonecraft, *Collected Letters* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 2003), 29.

[2] While accepting that there are many viable and helpful ways in which to frame Wollstonecraft's philosophy, I have set out in several places the reasons underpinning my own interpretation built around her understanding of independence, e.g., "Mary Wollstonecraft, Freedom and the Enduring Power of Social Domination", *European Journal of Political Theory* 12, no. 2 (2013): 116-35, and *Mary Wollstonecraft* (Oxford: Polity, forthcoming). See also Lena Halldenius, *Mary Wollstonecraft and Feminist Republicanism* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2015).

[3] Coffee, Richard Price, *Encyclopedia for Law and Social Philosophy*, edited by Mortimer Sellers and Stephan Kirste (New York: Springer, 2020): 2829-34.

[4] Godwin, "Memoirs", 18.

[5] Wollstonecraft, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*. Edited by Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler. 7 volumes. Volume 7 (London: Routledge, 1989), 186. Wollstonecraft also refers briefly to Price in both *Vindications* although without engaging in any specifics of his position.

[6] Karen Green and Ruth Hagengruber, "Cutting Through the Veil of Ignorance: Rewriting the History of Philosophy", *Monist* 98 (2015): 34-42; Sarah Hutton, "Blue Eyed Philosophers Born on Wednesdays: An Essay on Women and History of Philosophy", *Monist* 98 (2015): 7-20; Bergès and Coffee, "Introduction", *The Social and Political Philosophy of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 1-13.

[7] Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Coffee "Women and the History of Republicanism", *Australasian Philosophical Review* 4, no. 1 (2019): 361-9.

[8] William Godwin, "Memoirs of the Author of a 'The Rights of Woman'" in *Godwin on Wollstonecraft*, ed. Richard Holmes (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), 18.

[9] Godwin, "Memoirs", 17.

[10] Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 159.

[11] See, for example, Vivien Jones, "Mary Wollstonecraft and the literature advice and instruction" in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Claudia Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 119-40.

[12] Coffee, *Mary Wollstonecraft* (Oxford: Polity, forthcoming).

[13] *Thoughts*, 91, 32-3.

[14] *Thoughts*, 137, 13.

[15] *Thoughts*, 71.

[16] Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories from Real Life: with Conversations Calculated to Regulate the Affections and Form the Mond to Truth and Goodness* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1796 [1788]): 90.

[17] *Original Stories* 90-1. This argument must be handled with some care. In most of her work, Wollstonecraft emphasises the destructive nature of dependent relationships that corrupt rather than promote virtue. This is a major theme in all her later work, from the *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) onwards but also appears in *Thoughts*, earlier (the same principle is, for example, at work in Wollstonecraft's discussion of the tendency for submissive women to tyrannise their servants [63] and in the treatment of servants [121]). From the context here in *Original Stories*, Wollstonecraft's point concerns the God's providential use of constrained independence and mutual interdependence to enhance virtue. I discuss this in detail Chapter 4 of *Mary Wollstonecraft*.

[18] *Collected Letters*, 104 (Wollstonecraft's italics).

[19] For an important version of this position, see Eileen Hunt, "The Family as Cave, Platoon and Prison: The Three Stages of Wollstonecraft's Philosophy of the Family", in *Review of Politics* 64, no. 1 (2002): 81-119.

[20] *Original Stories,* 12-13.

[21] *Original Stories,* 68.

[22] *Thoughts*, 66-7.

[23] Richard Price, *The Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement in the State of Mankind* (London: J. Johnson, 1787), 1.

[24] Price, *Four Dissertations* (London: A. Millar and T. Cadell, 1767), 69. See also 184-5. Universal benevolence is also given as a foundational motivational principle in *Discourse on the Love of Our Country*.

[25] *Four Dissertations*, 97.

[26] *Evidence*, 50.

[27] Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories*, 14-15.

[28] While Wollstonecraft certainly emphasises God's endowing of humans with reason, she differs from Price in also including the passions as part of a more rounded account of human mind and motivation. Price by contrast only rather grudgingly concedes that God may use the error produced by the passions to bring about good (*Evidence*, 26). See Coffee, forthcoming (chapter 5).

[29] *Evidence*, 11.
[30] *Evidence*, 15.
[31] *Evidence*, 28.
[32] *French Revolution*, 237.
[33] Republican is used in a philosophical sense here. Price himself makes clear that politically he prefers Britain's 'mixed' constitution comprising a limited monarchy, and the houses of Lords and Commons (*Evidence*, 30-1).
[34] *Evidence*, 29.
[35] *Evidence*, 31-2.
[36] *Evidence*, 33.
[37] *Evidence*, 41.
[38] *Rights of Woman*, 47.
[39] *Rights of Woman*, 21.
[40] Catriona Mackenzie, "Mary Wollstonecraft: An Early Relational Autonomy Theorist?", in Bergès and Coffee, *Social and Political,* 67-91; Coffee, "Independence as Relational Freedom" in *Women Philosophers on Autonomy*, edited by Sandrine Bergès and Alberto Siani (London: Routledge, 2018), 94-111, and "Mary Wollstonecraft and Relational Autonomy", in *Routledge Handbook of Autonomy*, edited by Ben Colburn (Abingdon: Routledge), 65-74.
[41] Coffee, "Enduring Power" and *Mary Wollstonecraft*.
[42] *Evidence*, 28.
[43] Coffee, "Enduring Power" and Skinner, *Liberty*.
[44] *Rights of Woman*, 38.
[45] *Rights of Woman*, 22.
[46] *Rights of Woman*, 224. See Coffee, "Enduring Power", 129.