This book attacks the assumption found in much moral philosophy that social control, as such, is an intellectually and morally destructive force. It replaces this view with a richer and deeper perspective on the nature of social character, aimed at showing how social freedom cannot mean immunity from social pressure.

The author demonstrates how our competence as rational and social agents depends on a constructive adaption of social control mechanisms. Our facility at achieving our goals is enhanced, rather than undermined, by social control. The author then articulates sources and degrees of legitimate social control in different social and historical settings.

Drawing on a wide range of literature in moral and political philosophy, law, cognitive and social psychology, and anthropology (not to mention some very perceptive readings of novels by Henry James), Professor Schoeman shows how the aim of moral philosophy ought to be to understand our social character, not to establish fortifications against it in the name of rationality and autonomy.
Privacy and social freedom
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For Sara Ann Schechter-Schoeman
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Acknowledgments

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