Introduction

The claim that important aspects of the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau influenced the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and the philosophical movement inspired by his Critical philosophy known as German Idealism, whose main representatives include Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, is not a new one. Whether it is taken to be a direct influence or an indirect one based on a common concern with certain key concepts and issues, Rousseau's influence on the development of Kant's Critical philosophy and on German Idealism is widely acknowledged.[1] Typically, the concept of freedom in particular is stressed, as when it is stated that Hegel's adoption of the 'positive' model of freedom, which identifies freedom with self-determination and self-realization, places him in a tradition that begins with Rousseau and continues with Kant and Fichte, and then culminates in his own theory of the state as the realization of human freedom.[2]

As correct as such claims may be, they do not by themselves amount to a systematic account of Rousseau's place within this philosophical tradition. They also suggest some kind of progression, in which Rousseau's achievements are eventually overshadowed by those of Kant, Fichte or Hegel. In this book, I set out to provide a more systematic exploration of the significance of some of the central features of Rousseau's writings in relation to these philosophers' own theories concerning the ethical, social and political aspects of human existence, by focusing on the following key concepts:

[1] Even when certain connections between Rousseau's writings and the philosophies of Kant, Fichte or Hegel are explored in some depth, the tendency has been to focus on Rousseau's relation to one particular philosopher among them. On Rousseau and Kant, see Cassirer, *Rousseau, Kant, Goethe*, Henrich, 'The Moral Image of the World', 10ff. and Velkley, *Freedom and the End of Reason*. On Rousseau and Hegel, see Fulda and Horstmann, *Rousseau, die Revolution und der junge Hegel*. There are some older accounts that consider Rousseau's writings in relation to more than one of the philosophers in question. Yet they amount to little more than brief summaries of various apparent connections that are not, however, analysed in any great detail. Cf. Fester, *Rousseau und die deutsche Geschichtsphilosophie* and Gurwitsch, 'Kant und Fichte als Rousseau-Interpreten'.

[2] Cf. Franco, *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom*, 30ff.

freedom, dependence and necessity. I show, moreover, that Rousseau poses certain challenges that none of these philosophers was fully able to meet, though this is not to deny the significance of their attempts to meet these challenges. I do not mean to claim that the concepts of freedom, dependence and necessity are the only ones that can be successfully employed to explore the importance of certain features of Rousseau's writings in relation to the philosophies of Kant, Fichte and Hegel. Nor do I wish to claim that Kant, Fichte and Hegel themselves understood their own responses to Rousseau's writings to be based on these three concepts, although in the case of freedom they arguably were highly conscious of their debt to Rousseau. This book does not, therefore, attempt to show how Rousseau directly influenced the development of Kant's Critical philosophy and German Idealism, though it clearly has some bearing on this issue. Rather, I focus on the three concepts in question because they seem to me to be highly relevant to our present-day situation at the same time as they help to explain, and also to call into question, some of the things that Kant, Fichte and Hegel have to say about Rousseau.

This is especially true of the concept of necessity, which appears to be opposed to that of freedom, while the concept of dependence already implies the notion of constraint and thus some form of practical necessity, inviting the question as to how freedom can be conceived as compatible with necessity. In highlighting the role of the concept of necessity, I show not only that this concept is integral to a fuller understanding of a number of central ideas found in the writings of Rousseau, Kant, Fichte and Hegel, but also that their writings provide some rich resources for comprehending the practical constraints, including less obvious ones, to which human beings are subject in so far as they stand in relations of dependence with each other. The existence of such constraints demands an account of freedom that adequately recognizes their reality and seeks to show how they can nevertheless be viewed as compatible with the concept of freedom. Since the importance of the concept of freedom is uncontroversial when it comes to Rousseau's influence on Kant and German Idealism, I shall first explain the significance of the concept of dependence and its relation to the concept of freedom.

Freedom and dependence

In Rousseau's writings the idea of freedom is closely connected with the issue of dependence, for, as we shall see in Chapter 1 especially, he views the question of freedom largely in terms of the dangers posed by a condition

in which one human being is dependent on another human being. This concern with dependence and the question as to how it can be reconciled with the idea of freedom is an essential feature of Rousseau's republicanism. The connection between freedom and dependence is likewise central to neo-republican attempts to provide an alternative account of freedom to the 'negative' one associated with liberalism by means of an appeal to classical republican sources. Rousseau, however, highlights a feature of human dependence that in my view is insufficiently acknowledged and developed in neo-republican accounts of freedom, which tend to avoid any appeal to Rousseau's particular form of republicanism because of its association with the 'positive' model of freedom.[3] These neo-republican accounts of freedom consequently employ the concept of dependence, which is claimed to be largely neglected in modern political theory but is integral to classical republican accounts of freedom, in such a way that they themselves neglect an essential aspect of one important earlier account of this concept. I here have in mind the broader notion of dependence as a threat to freedom that we encounter in Rousseau's writings as compared to the narrower notion of dependence employed by neo-republicans.

Neo-republican accounts of freedom depend on a distinction between liberal freedom and what is alleged to be a distinctively republican form of freedom. Republican freedom is understood to consist in freedom from dependence on the arbitrary wills of others, whereas liberal freedom is understood to consist simply in freedom from interference of an intentional, and typically coercive, kind. A person can be free in the liberal sense when no actual interference occurs but the constant possibility of its occurring nevertheless exists. For neo-republicans, by contrast, it is not only the fact of being coerced or suffering some other form of intentional interference that results in the loss of freedom. Rather, the mere possibility of being subjected by others to coercion or some other form of interference on an arbitrary basis is enough to render people unfree because of

[3] For neo-republicans republican freedom is held to be essentially different from the positive model of freedom associated with the idea of obeying laws that we have ourselves approved. This idea is exemplified by the democratic freedom which Rousseau is said to endorse. Rousseau is accordingly treated with some suspicion by neo-republicans in so far as he is associated with the idea of democratic self-rule and with the populism that they tend to associate with the positive model of freedom. See, for example, Pettit, *Republicanism*, 19 and 30. However, as we shall see in Chapter 4, Hegel employs a positive conception of freedom which involves distinguishing between constraints that are merely alien, external ones, and constraints that do not need to be viewed in this way because they can be recognized as conditions of our own freedom, but does not require the direct approval of these constraints in a democratic assembly. The positive model of freedom does not, therefore, appear to be inextricably linked to a vision of democratic self-rule. Indeed, in Chapter 3 Rousseau's own commitment to democratic self-rule will be shown to be conditional in certain respects.

the potential for domination contained in such a situation. The classic example is that of the slave whose master just happens not to practise interference on an arbitrary basis but could, nevertheless, do so at will and with impunity if he wished to do so.[4] Conversely, a person can lack freedom in the liberal sense because he or she suffers interference, while remaining free in the republican sense of non-domination, as when just laws or other constitutionally circumscribed forms of interference aimed at preventing dependence on the arbitrary wills of others constrain people's actions.[5] In such cases, the constraints in question, as conditions of freedom, cannot be viewed as constraints that violate individual liberty.[6]

For neo-republicans, then, freedom essentially consists in the absence of domination. In this respect it remains a 'negative' account of freedom. Republican freedom does not, however, consist in the absence of all forms of constraint. Rather, some forms of constraint are considered to be compatible with the idea of freedom because they serve to guarantee freedom, if only in the negative sense of preventing unjust interference on the part of others, which includes being subject to the arbitrary will of another person as well as more direct, coercive forms of interference. As we shall see, Rousseau holds the same view because for him securing freedom in the negative sense of making oneself independent of the arbitrary wills of others requires submitting oneself to laws that are equally binding on all the individuals concerned. What Rousseau also recognizes, however, and what I think neo-republicans largely miss, is the way in which this solution to the problem of the way in which dependence on others threatens to make one person subject to the arbitrary will of another person is itself made to appear incomplete by the existence of a particular form of dependence. I shall refer to this form of dependence as dependence on other human beings *as mediated by dependence on things*. The essential nature of this form of dependence, together with the way in which it allows one human being to dominate another human being, will be discussed in Chapter 1. Recognition of this form of dependence is admittedly not entirely lacking in neo-republican accounts of freedom, at least in so far as they view solving the problem of dependence as an economic and social matter as well as a civil and political

[4] Cf. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 22f., 31ff. and 63f.; Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, 39ff.
[5] Cf. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 5, 35ff. and 65f.
[6] See, for example, the statement that 'classical republican writers have never claimed that true political liberty consists of the absence of interference, since they believed that restraint or interference which the law imposes on individual choice was not a restraint on liberty but a brake, an essential limitation intrinsic to republican liberty'. Viroli, *Republicanism*, 47.

one.[7] The neo-republican account of freedom as independence of the arbitrary wills of others nevertheless tends to view the main threat to freedom almost exclusively in terms of direct, typically interpersonal forms of dependence, in which one agent is in the power of another agent, whether this agent is a personal, corporate or collective one, with the agent in question *consciously* exercising domination on the basis of the superior power that it enjoys.

Rousseau, by contrast, recognized the existence of indirect forms of dependence that pose an equal threat to human freedom while being the result of largely impersonal forces. In the case of the type of threat posed to freedom by this form of dependence, it is possible to conceive of the person who dominates another person as not consciously and intentionally doing so. Rather, he or she may be caught up in a process in which unequal relations of dependence are spontaneously generated, with the practical constraints to which these relations of dependence give rise leading people to behave in certain ways almost as a matter of necessity. Although this type of process generates outcomes that leave some people with the power to dominate others without their originally having intended this result, these people may come to realize how greatly existing conditions benefit them in relation to others, and they will consequently develop an incentive for sustaining and perpetuating these same conditions.

One response to the claim that relations of dependence generated in this way present a problem for a neo-republican account of freedom might be to draw a firm distinction between two kinds of interference that dependence on others tends to generate: interference on an arbitrary basis which is of an intentional kind and interference which is of an unintentional kind. It could then be said that the failure to maintain this distinction undermines the important distinction between 'securing people against the natural effects of chance and incapacity and scarcity and securing them against the things that they may try to do to one another'.[8] Yet the point that Rousseau makes is not simply that individuals are dominated by an impersonal process over

[7] As when it is said that the need exists 'to ensure all citizens the social, economic, and cultural conditions to allow them to live with dignity and self-respect'. Viroli, *Republicanism*, 66. Viroli locates Rousseau's distinctive contribution in the idea of social equality as expressed in the principle that no one in a republic should be so poor as to be forced to sell himself or so rich as to be able to purchase the obedience of other citizens. According to Viroli, this requires ensuring that 'everyone has the right to work and the social rights that will keep him or her from hitting bottom when misfortune strikes' (67). See also Pettit's account of the importance of personal socio-economic independence in *Republicanism*, 158ff. This raises the question as to what it really means to guarantee the rights that Viroli mentions and the kind of socio-economic independence envisaged by Pettit. I explore this issue in Chapter 3 in connection with Rousseau's and Fichte's views on property rights.

[8] Pettit, *Republicanism*, 53.

which they seemingly have no control, in which case, as indicated above, the interference that they suffer, in the form of the constraints generated by such a process, could still be regarded as unintentional in kind. Rather, he recognizes that those who happen to gain from this type of process, in so far as it generates relations of dependence and differences in power that make it possible for one person to dominate another person, will have an interest in sustaining and perpetuating the outcomes of this process. In acting in accordance with this interest, these people may be thought to endorse, if only tacitly, a condition in which the fundamental interests of others are harmed, even if they do not directly intend this particular outcome but are instead simply concerned with securing and furthering their own interests. In other words, the unintentional and the intentional forms of interference generated by relations of dependence and by any differences in power based on such relations cannot be easily disentangled once we begin to think, as Rousseau does, in less static terms, by treating these relations of dependence and differences in power as the products of an ongoing process, in which human beings continuously interact both with nature and with each other.

The type of dependence-generating process which I have in mind can, in fact, be viewed as in some sense a matter of free choice, even when both it and its particular outcomes are not consciously intended. This is because this process and its particular outcomes can be regarded as the cumulative results of countless individual acts of free choice that were consciously intended. The fact that this process and its particular outcomes are the unintended, cumulative results of countless acts of free choice and are, therefore, ultimately of a contingent nature, is something which the idea that reform of existing conditions is possible appears to presuppose, whereas the possibility of reform is difficult to comprehend if the type of process in question and its particular outcomes are taken to be completely determined by factors that lie beyond all conscious human control. Such reform may involve encouraging people to make different choices or, more typically, imposing constraints on the choices that they may legitimately make. As we shall see, although Rousseau held out the possibility of reform, he was also acutely conscious of the difficulties involved in reforming conditions in the face of the kind of spontaneous dependence-generating process which he describes, and whose particular outcomes include differences in power based on material inequality and the potential for domination created by such differences in power.

In Chapter 1, this process will be shown to be driven by the formation of needs and by the attempts made by human beings to satisfy their needs

by means of material objects. A condition of interdependence based on need-generation and need-satisfaction, which no single individual or group of individuals intended to bring about, is then shown by Rousseau to be a primary source of domination. This is why he tends to treat the potential for domination generated by material inequality in a condition of human interdependence as the model of a situation in which dependence on others poses a severe threat to freedom. Rousseau's recognition of the way in which certain forms of domination are not of a directly interpersonal kind, since they are mediated by material objects that have come to form essential elements in a complex system of need-generation and need-satisfaction, renders more difficult the task of explaining how a condition of human interdependence can be organized in such a way that it does not generate relations of domination. One of the main claims of this book will be that Kant, Fichte and Hegel also recognized the reality of human interdependence and that each of them in his own way sought to explain how this interdependence could be viewed as compatible with the idea of freedom despite the constraints that it imposes on human beings. These philosophers thus came to wrestle with a particular problem that Rousseau identifies. As I show in Chapter 1, this problem concerns the relation of freedom in the form of the human will to the necessity that characterizes economic and social relations in a condition of interdependence. This brings me to the concept of necessity.

Necessity

While freedom forms a staple topic of modern political philosophy as does, if to a lesser extent, the concept of dependence given its centrality to neo-republican accounts of freedom, the same cannot be said of the concept of necessity. Yet the existence of objective conditions over which individuals have limited control implies the existence of some significant constraints on human agency. These constraints constitute a practical form of necessity in the sense that agents are forced to recognize them when forming ends and, more especially, when seeking to realize these ends in relation to the natural and the human environments confronting them. Another central aim of this book is to show that emphasizing the concept of freedom when discussing Rousseau's writings in relation to Kant, Fichte and Hegel threatens to obscure the equally important, if less explicit, role that the concept of necessity plays in these philosophers' writings, as well as in Rousseau's own writings.

In its most obvious form, practical necessity consists in being compelled to do something against one's own will by means of force, whether through the actual use of force or through the threat of it. As Rousseau puts it, yielding to force is 'an act of necessity, not of will [*un acte de nécessité, non de volonté*]; at most it is an act of prudence' (OC III: 354; PW2: 44). He cannot comprehend, therefore, how the exercise or the threat of force can give rise to any genuine moral obligations, for such obligations consist in the duty to obey even when one is not forced to do so. As we shall see, there are some less obvious forms of practical necessity, such as the ones described by Hegel in his account of civil society (*die bürgerliche Gesellschaft*), which I discuss in Chapter 4. Here we encounter two distinct forms of practical necessity: a social form of necessity which involves having to conform to social norms and take into consideration the views of others in order to realize one's own ends within a condition of human interdependence, and an economic form of necessity which consists in one's thoughts and actions being determined by the limits imposed by the 'laws' of a market economy, with these laws being regarded as operating with a quasi-natural necessity and consequently as largely beyond human control. Although the idea of necessity as a matter of force easily finds its place both in liberal and in neo-republican accounts of freedom, because it implies a direct, coercive form of interference, the other forms of practical necessity that I have mentioned do not, given their impersonal nature.

By the term 'necessity', I should be taken to mean one or more of the following things depending on the context:

(1) Natural necessity. This type of necessity concerns self-preservation and, therefore, the basic material needs that must be satisfied if human beings are physically to survive, both as individuals and as a species. These natural needs themselves and the means of satisfying them may become increasingly more refined, generating ever more complex relations of interdependence among human beings and correspondingly higher, if less obvious, levels of constraint.

(2) Necessity in the sense of being compelled to do something against one's own will, either by the actual use of physical force or by the threat of force or some other sanction whose effectiveness ultimately depends on the exercise or the threat of force, as in the case of being subjected to a fine or to imprisonment.

(3) The necessity exhibited by impersonal economic, legal and social forces together with any general process shaped by these forces. Necessity here exists in the sense that these forces or processes confront individuals as something given which they are largely powerless to

change, even when the force or process in question may, in fact, have arisen through various arbitrary acts or through the concatenation of other contingent factors and could, therefore, be otherwise than it is. This type of necessity need not, therefore, be regarded as fully objective, though it may strike individuals as being so because it constrains them to act in certain ways. One example of this type of necessity is provided by law in general, which as a system of positive laws confronts individuals as something given which constrains their actions. Yet law is equally the product of human consciousness and will, and in this respect it is subject to change and amenable to reform. Another example is provided by the law-like regularities governing relations of production and exchange in a condition of human interdependence. In this case, individuals will be confronted with something given which appears to have arisen spontaneously and which determines their thoughts and actions. At the same time, however, these relations can be thought to be contingent in the sense that they are the cumulative, but unintended, results of countless conscious acts, so that they could, in principle, be other than they are. Also, although some of these relations will be based on the natural necessity associated with material needs, many of them may be based on artificial needs which, as we shall see, may exhibit a subjective necessity while not being objectively necessary.

(4) Necessity in the form of the practical constraints that natural necessity, that is, necessity in sense (1), or the kind of impersonal force or process associated with necessity in sense (3) may generate. This form of necessity concerns, in short, the particular practical constraints to which human beings are subject as opposed to the general sources of these particular constraints. For example, people are not directly subject to law in general but to particular positive laws; physical survival may demand that human beings accept a particular set of mutual constraints on their actions; getting the object that one wants in order to satisfy a particular need may require cooperating with others in specific ways, and this cooperation will have certain implications with respect to one's actual ability to do as one wants to do; one's choice of livelihood may be severely constrained by the economic conditions brought about by market forces.

As I show in Chapter 1, Rousseau was well aware of the problems faced by his own attempt to bring the necessity at work in society under conscious human control, so as to overcome the threats to freedom that he associates with dependence on other human beings. Broadly speaking, these

problems concern the question as to whether the idea of human freedom can be maintained in the face of the economic or social forms of necessity that arise spontaneously in a condition of interdependence and come to form objective conditions that constrain people's actions while producing outcomes (for example, the rise of material and political inequality) that may, in the first instance at least, be regarded as unintended ones. The same type of problem appears in different ways in Kant's philosophy of history and in Fichte's attempt to apply his theory of property to existing conditions.

Kant presents us with a spontaneous process by means of which individuals come to accept certain constraints on their actions. To this extent, the constraints in question can be viewed as self-imposed ones, rather than being simply a matter of force. This spontaneous process is seen by Kant to have certain beneficial, though unintended, consequences with respect to the idea of freedom, namely, the emergence of civil and political freedom, on the one hand, and the development of culture and morality, on the other. Here the idea of necessity is invoked to explain the possibility of collective human progress viewed in cultural, legal, political and moral terms. In Fichte's case, by contrast, the human will is accorded the task of imposing order on the spontaneously generated forces governing society in the name of equality and freedom. Once again the notion of collective human progress is at work, though this time such progress is held to depend on subjecting the forces shaping society to effective conscious human control. The human will is therefore assumed to possess the capacity to act effectively in the face of the necessity confronting it. We are thus presented with two distinct approaches, both of which seek to explain the possibility of human progress: one of which views certain human goods as arising spontaneously, rather than as the result of an attempt to impose order on a potentially recalcitrant material, while the other approach involves seeking to reform existing conditions in accordance with certain ideas concerning how economic, legal, social and political relations must be organized if they are to realize particular values, namely, equality and freedom. I argue that Hegel adopts a position which partakes of both these approaches. I identify problems with all three of these approaches. These problems are ones that Rousseau had already identified in his own account of the relation of the human will to necessity. Indeed, these problems manifest themselves in Rousseau's own writings in so far as he himself is concerned with explaining the possibility of human progress. This brings me to another theme which is especially important when it comes to assessing one of the main ways in which Rousseau's relation to Kant in particular has been interpreted. This