Introduction

The following chapters stand in little need of introduction, since they are all the work of recognised experts on the history and theory of European republicanism. A word does need to be said, however, about the editorial decisions we have made in respect of the topics we have chosen to cover and the chronological limits of our coverage.

Chronologically our two volumes focus on the period roughly extending from the mid-sixteenth to the late-eighteenth century. This reflects our sense that the earlier history of republicanism in the Renaissance, and the later fortunes of the movement in the nineteenth century, have both been better served in the existing scholarly literature. In particular, it is worth noting that several contributors to these present volumes took part in the production of *Machiavelli and Republicanism* (1990), in which the origins and influence of the Florentine model of the *vivere libero* were extensively surveyed. The basic decision we made in setting up our more recent network was that the period most in need of further study was the one following the demise of the Renaissance city-republics and preceding the recrudescence of republican theory and practice in the era of the French Revolution.

A word next needs to be said about the specific themes on which we have chosen to concentrate. These reflect our sense of how the values and practices associated with European republicanism can most illuminatingly be made to fit together. We accordingly begin, in Part I of Volume I, with the rejection of monarchy. Whatever else it may have meant to be a republican in early-modern Europe, it meant repudiating the age-old belief that monarchy is necessarily the best form of government. We already find this assumption implicitly questioned in some Huguenot political writings of the French religious wars, and we encounter a far more explicit challenge among the enemies of absolutism in eastern Europe, perhaps above all (as Chapter 3 reveals) in

Poland. But it was in the Netherlands, and later in England, that the repudiation of monarchy assumed its most dramatic forms. The Dutch abjured their allegiance to their overlord, Philip II, in 1581 and went on to fight successfully for the establishment of a federated republic, while the English executed their lawfully anointed king, Charles I, in 1649 and set up 'a Commonwealth and Free State'. Chapters 1, 2 and 4 of Part I examine the rôle of anti-monarchical sentiment in the unfolding of these unprecedented events.

We turn in Part II of Volume I to the figure of the citizen, the figure whom we take to be pivotal to the republican politics of early-modern Europe. One crucial fact, duly emphasised by all the contributors to this section, is that the image of citizenship projected by the republican writers of our period was largely drawn from classical and 'civic humanist' sources. This generalisation is shown to hold across much of the European map, from England (Chapter 5) and the Netherlands (Chapter 6) to Germany (Chapter 7) and Poland (Chapter 8).

According to the classical authorities beloved of early-modern republicans, the essence of what it means to be a *civis* or citizen is to be in possession of one's liberty as opposed to being a slave. This assumption not only underlies much of what our contributors have to say about the concept of citizenship in Volume I, but resurfaces in Part I of Volume II in the discussions of freedom (Chapter 1) and its connections with empire (Chapter 2). The predicament of the slave, as we learn from the rubric *De statu hominis* in the Digest of Roman Law, was held to be that of someone condemned to living *in potestate domini*, within the power and hence at the mercy of a master possessed of arbitrary powers. As Hobbes was to complain in *Leviathan*, the republican and 'democratical' writers proceeded to extend this definition in such a way as to argue 'that the Subjects in a Popular Common-wealth enjoy Liberty; but that in a Monarchy they are all Slaves'. If we live as subjects of rulers with arbitrary or prerogative powers, they claimed, we are living at their mercy and hence in a state of servitude.

Hobbes was only the most prominent among numerous defenders of monarchy who raised an obvious objection to this line of argument. How can the mere fact of living under a monarchy limit our options and thereby deprive us of liberty? The answer drawn by the exponents of republicanism from their classical and 'civic humanist' authorities was that slavery inevitably breeds slavishness; that those condemned to a life of servitude will find themselves obliged to cultivate the habits of servility. As Sallust and Tacitus had warned, no deeds of manly courage or greatheartedness can ever be expected from such abject peoples. They will be too fearful of attracting

the envious attention of their rulers and thereby bringing ruin instead of glory upon themselves. Nor can they be expected to benefit themselves and their country by winning great fortunes from daring ventures of exploration or commerce. Since they know that whatever gains they accrue will always be subject to arbitrary confiscation with impunity, they will scarcely trouble to take the risks or expend the energies required. It accordingly became a trope of republican writing to claim that nothing but torpor and sullen acquiescence can be expected from the subjects of absolute monarchies. We must expect to find them – as a revealing series of neologisms put it – discouraged, dis-heartened, dis-spirited. By contrast, the freedom of the republican citizen was taken to consist essentially in being secured against such arbitrary domination or interference. The republican citizen was consequently said to enjoy something far more substantial in the way of *libertas* than mere *de facto* absence of constraint. He was said to enjoy protection from the possibility of suffering such constraint. Republican citizens could be governed, but not mastered. This was taken to be the most precise way of distinguishing between genuine citizens and mere subjects. The espousal of this exacting vision of civil liberty brought with it some fundamental questions about forms of government. What type of constitution is best suited to upholding both the liberty of citizens and the stability of commonwealths? Under what form of constitution, in other words, will it be possible to ensure that the laws are duly enforced but that citizens are at the same time immune from arbitrary domination or interference on the part of their government? These are among the issues to which our contributors turn in Part III of Volume I, our section entitled 'The Republican Constitution'.

As one might expect, many republicans took it to be obvious that, whatever else is true of such constitutions, they must eschew any vestiges of monarchical authority. This was because, as the English Act of 1649 abolishing kingship put it, there is an inherent tendency for regal power 'to oppress and impoverish and enslave the subject'. Paradoxically, however, the upholding of civic liberty was not invariably taken to require a republican constitution in the strictest sense. Sometimes it was conceded that, if one could have a Doge-like monarch, subject to election and bereft of prerogative powers, this might offer the best prospect of assuring the right combination of public order and civil liberty. This paradox echoes throughout the early-modern period. We encounter it in Machiavelli's question as to whether a *republica* can be sustained 'per via di regno', and we hear it again in Hume's suggestion that the progress of the arts and the maintenance of liberty may often fare better under 'civilised monarchies'.

Whatever view was taken of this issue, it was generally agreed that, in order to avoid the dangers of tyranny, it will always be essential to prevent our rulers from imposing their wills on us arbitrarily and without check. This was taken to follow from the cardinal assumption that subjection to unchecked power is equivalent to servitude. These commitments help in turn to explain why so many republican theorists – as we learn from Part III of Volume I – were preoccupied by two constitutional problems above all. One was the question of how best to frame a mixed constitution, a *respublica mixta*, in such a way as to deploy power to balance power. The other was the associated question of how to ensure that the people are able to make their voice heard – at least by representation – in the process of law-making, so that whatever laws are enacted may be said to reflect their wills as opposed to being arbitrarily imposed upon them. As a number of chapters in Part III of Volume I reveal, these problems were eclectically solved by reference to whatever sources seemed most serviceable, including local custom, classical theory and the exemplary instance of the Jewish commonwealth, a constitution widely believed to reflect God's own political preferences. Republican writers generally agreed that, so long as arbitrary power is duly outlawed and representation assured, we can legitimately claim to be living in 'a free state'. As this terminology reveals, the republicans took as seriously as possible the alleged analogy between natural and political bodies. Just as natural bodies are said to be free if and only if they are moved to act by their own wills, so too with political ones. To live in a free state is to live under a constitution in which the body politic is never moved to act except by the will of the citizen body as a whole.

If we have the good fortune to live under such a constitution, this will not only have the effect of securing our civil rights; it will also emancipate us from the servility that comes of living under any form of absolute government. To put the point another way, the liberty enjoyed by republican citizens was at the same time held to be an inducement to civic virtue. Freed from the dread of the mighty, we can hope to undertake great and courageous deeds. Freed at the same time from any fear that our property may be taken away from us with impunity, we can likewise hope to pursue our fortunes without anxiety and thereby benefit our community as well as ourselves. Just as the subjects of arbitrary power become disheartened and discouraged, so the constitution of a free state helps to hearten and encourage its citizens to expend their best energies in their own and the public's interests. One consequence of these assumptions was that many defenders of free states became proponents of expansionist policies, seeking in James Harrington's words

to establish commonwealths not merely 'for preservation' but 'for increase'. As we learn from a number of the contributions to Volume II, however, the question of empire always remained for republicans a vexed and difficult one. On the one hand, a number of free states, including the Netherlands after independence and Britain in the 1650s, took the view that liberty at home should be matched by greatness abroad, and turned themselves into enthusiastic and successful imperialists. But on the other hand, many republicans feared that the acquisition of an overseas empire might undermine the conditions of virtuous citizenship at home. They were worried about the large armies needed for policing extended frontiers, partly because such forces undermined the traditional identity between soldier and citizen, but even more because they offered governments a tempting means of seizing absolute power. But they also feared moral contamination at the hands of the conquered, a fear as old as Sallust's concern that the introduction of what he called 'Asiatic habits' might bring about the corruption of European *mœurs*. We are left pondering the various ways in which early-modern republicans conceived of the relationship between the values of the *patria* and those of other and wider communities.

A further important topic raised in Part I of Volume II concerns the character of the virtuous citizen. As constructed by the theorists of free states, the republican citizen was undoubtedly a figure of powerful energies and commitments. His concern for liberty made him a vigilant critic of governmental encroachment (Chapter 1), while his belief in the equal standing of citizens made him at least potentially a friend of religious toleration (Chapter 3). By the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, we find his limitations as a moral exemplar increasingly exposed to criticism and even ridicule. His vaunted free-speaking and contempt for courtliness were both challenged by new ideals of politeness and urbanity (Chapter 5), while his fierce insistence on the need for independence was overtaken by new conceptions of civility and sociability (Chapter 6).

We bring our volumes to a close by considering in greater detail the two most important limitations of the republican citizen and his system of values. One stemmed from the fact that his virtue was very much the classical *virtus* of the *vir civilis*, and was consequently viewed as an eponymously male attribute. A construction of masculinity undoubtedly underpinned the ideology of 'civic humanism'. What place did this leave for women in the republic? How was the public space of the republic gendered? These are the questions addressed in part II of Volume II, in which we examine the confrontation between the republican image of virtue and the demand for greater sexual

equality. The other limitation on which we focus arose in a similar way from the classical sources of republican thought. As we have seen, the ancient moralists believed that freedom acts to release all kinds of energies, including those which enable prudent and courageous men to amass fortunes for themselves. But they also believed that the highest duty of the *vir civilis* is to employ his energies for the good of his community, whether in a civil or a military capacity. This latter commitment prompted most republicans to insist on honour and glory as the proper goals of the *vir civilis*, and this in turn frequently prompted them to speak disparagingly of the acquisition of wealth as a base and even an unpatriotic pursuit.

The ambiguous implications of this inheritance for the relationship between republicanism and the rise of commerce form the subject of our concluding section in Volume II. We end with the figure of Adam Smith, and with the confrontation between republican principles and commercial realities. With Smith's reflections on our theme, we begin to move away from early-modern debates about virtue and commerce and to enter a more recognisably modern world.

One question that cannot be ignored in discussions about our republican heritage is how far we are confronting a usable past. In our own case these discussions gave rise to a further editorial decision which the present volumes reflect. We resolved to exclude such questions as far as possible, and we further resolved to consider them at a separate conference and, eventually, in a separate book. As we note in our Acknowledgments, this additional *convegno* duly took place, and a volume arising from it has already been published. By contrast, our aim in the present volumes has been to stand back from the politics of republicanism and to produce a series of purely scholarly studies aimed at furthering an historical understanding of this aspect of our intellectual heritage.

Part I

Republicanism and Political Values

1

Classical Liberty and the Coming of the English Civil War

QUENTIN SKINNER

A good place to begin this chapter – and indeed this entire volume on republican values – is with the rubric *De statu hominis* from the opening of the *Digest* of Roman law, perhaps the most influential of all the classical discussions of the concept of civil liberty. There we read that 'the fundamental division within the law of persons is that all men and women are either free or are slaves'.[1] After this we are offered a formal definition of the concept of slavery. 'Slavery is an institution of the *ius gentium* by which someone is, contrary to nature, subjected to the dominion of someone else.'[2] This in turn is said to yield a definition of individual liberty. If everyone in a civil association is either bond or free, then a *civis* or free subject must be someone who is not under the dominion of anyone else, but is *sui iuris*, capable of acting in their own right.[3] It likewise follows that what it means for someone to lack the status of a free subject must be for that person not to be *sui iuris* but instead to be *sub potestate*, under the power or subject to the will of someone else.

While this summary was exceptionally influential, we already encounter a very similar analysis at a much earlier date among the historians and philosophers of ancient Rome, and especially in the writings of Cicero, Sallust, Livy and Tacitus. Anyone in late-sixteenth- or early-seventeenth-century England who had received a university education would have been required to study

1. Mommsen and Krueger (eds.) 1970, I, v, 3, 35: 'Summa itaque de iure personarum divisio haec est, quod omnes homines aut liberi sunt aut servi.' (Note that, in this and all subsequent quotations from the *Digest*, I have made my own translations.)
2. *Ibid.*, I, v, 4, 35: 'Servitus est constitutio iuris gentium, qua quis dominio alieno contra naturam subicitur.'
3. *Ibid.*, I, VI, 1, 36: 'Some persons are in their own power, some are subject to the power of others, such as slaves, who are in the power of their masters' ['quaedam personae sui iuris sunt, quaedam alieno iuri subiectae sunt . . . in potestate sunt servi dominorum . . .'].

these texts in their original Latin (Feingold 1997, esp. pp. 246–56), but it is worth recalling that it was exactly at this period that all these writers also became available in English for the first time. Nicholas Grimalde's translation of Cicero's *De officiis* was issued as early as 1556 (see Cicero 1556), but it only became a best-seller when it appeared in a dual-language version in 1558, after which it went through at least five editions before the end of the century.[4] Meanwhile Henry Savile's translation of Tacitus's *Historiae* and *Agricola* had been published in 1591, with Richard Grenewey's versions of the *Annals* and *Germania* following in 1598.[5] Two years later Philemon Holland issued his enormous folio containing the whole of the extant sections of Livy's *History* (Livy 1600; cf. Peltonen 1995: 135–6), while in 1608 Thomas Heywood published his translations of Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* and *Bellum Iugurthinum*.[6]

Among these writers, it is Cicero who is most interested in formal definitions of *libertas* and *servitus*, freedom and servitude. The fear of enslavement figures as a running theme of his speeches denouncing Marcus Antonius as a public enemy of Rome's traditional *civitas libera* or free state (Cicero 1926: III, 6, 14, p. 202). These so-called *Philippics* became one of the most popular of Cicero's works in the Renaissance, with a dozen or more editions appearing by the middle of the sixteenth century.[7] Cicero repeatedly exhorts the Roman people to reassert the *libertas* they had lost when they fell under the domination of Julius Caesar, and violently attacks Antonius for aspiring to reduce his fellow citizens to a renewed condition of slavery. Not only does Cicero organise his argument around the contrast between freedom and servitude, but he emphasises in a much-cited passage that liberty is forfeited not merely by actual oppression but also by conditions of domination and dependence:

> Do you call servitude peace? Our ancestors took up arms not only to be free, but also to win power. You think that our arms should now be thrown away in order that we should become slaves. But what cause of waging war can be more just than that of repudiating slavery? For the most miserable feature of this condition is that, even if the master happens not to be oppressive, he can be so should he wish.[8]

4. See Cicero 1558. This dual-language version was reprinted in 1568, 1574, 1583, 1596 and 1600.
5. See Tacitus 1591 and 1598 and cf. Peltonen 1995: 124–35 on these translations and their influence.
6. Sallust 1608. But Sallust's *Jugurtha* had already been translated by Alexander Barclay in 1557.
7. Information from British Library catalogue.
8. Cicero 1926: VIII, 4, 12, p. 374: 'Servitutem pacem vocas? Maiores quidem nostri, non modo ut liberi essent, sed etiam ut imperarent, arma capiebant; tu arma abicienda censes, ut serviamus.