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978-1-107-03306-1 - Freedom and the Construction of Europe: Volume I: Religious and Constitutional Liberties

Edited by Quentin Skinner and Martin Van Gelderen

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Freedom and the Construction of Europe

VOLUME I

Religious and Constitutional Liberties

Freedom, today perceived simply as a human right, was a continually contested idea in the early modern period. In *Freedom and the Construction of Europe* an international group of scholars explores the richness, diversity and complexity of thinking about freedom in the shaping of modernity. Volume I examines debates about religious and constitutional liberties, as well as discussing tensions between free will and divine omnipotence across a continent of proliferating religious denominations. Volume II considers free persons and free states, examining differing views about freedom of thought and action and their relations to conceptions of citizenship. Debates about freedom have been fundamental to the construction of modern Europe, but represent a part of our intellectual heritage that is rarely examined in depth. These volumes provide materials for thinking in fresh ways not merely about the concept of freedom, but about how it has come to be understood in our own time.

QUENTIN SKINNER is Barber Beaumont Professor of the Humanities at Queen Mary, University of London. His publications include *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (2 vols., 1978), *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (1996), *Liberty before Liberalism* (1998), *Visions of Politics* (3 vols., 2002) and *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (2008).

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and MARTIN VAN GELDEREN



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Acknowledgements

While we were editing our earlier volumes on *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage* (van Gelderen and Skinner 2002) we came to see that there was a need for a work of comparable scope devoted to the theory and practice of religious and political liberty in early modern Europe. With this idea in mind, we held a meeting in 2004 with Annabel Brett, Richard Fisher and Iain Hampsher-Monk at which we agreed on the topics that such a study would need to encompass and drew up a preliminary table of contents. Following the model of our earlier volumes on Republicanism, we also agreed that the best way to bring together the latest research on the subject would be to hold a series of conferences out of which a book might eventually emerge.

We recognised that such a project would require large-scale funding, but this problem was solved when Quentin Skinner was awarded a Balzan Prize in 2006. After some discussion, the Balzan Foundation generously agreed to the following scheme: that we should assemble an international group of younger scholars, preferably at the post-doctoral stage of their careers; that they should be invited to attend a series of conferences at which their work would be presented and discussed; and that their conference papers should subsequently be revised and extended with a view to turning them into a book.

The project was advertised in the summer of 2007. After sifting a large number of applications we appointed twenty-eight members of a core group, all of whom delivered papers at a series of four conferences held at the European University Institute between July 2008 and September 2009. We also invited a number of senior scholars to speak at one or other of these meetings, and we are especially grateful to those who not only joined us but agreed to turn their papers into publishable texts.

x Acknowledgements

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The division of editorial labour between us has been as follows. Martin van Gelderen took responsibility for organising the series of conferences. He wishes to express his appreciation to Sergio Amadei and Nikki Koniordis for much indispensable practical help. Quentin Skinner edited the conference papers and negotiated with Cambridge University Press. After the reports of the Press’s referees were received, Quentin Skinner re-edited the revised chapters to produce the final version of our text. He wishes to acknowledge the extensive help he received from Tommaso Giordani, who ensured that the chapters were submitted in uniform style, and who created, edited and checked the bibliographies.

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We cannot speak too highly of the advice and assistance we have received from Cambridge University Press, and especially from Richard Fisher as our editor. He involved himself in our project from its inception, and gave us much wise counsel about how to shape and develop our work. Shortly before these volumes went into production he was appointed Managing Director of the Press. But he nevertheless continued, in spite of endless calls on his time, to oversee our project with his habitual generosity and effectiveness.

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