

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT: STOIC  
LIBERAL-DEMOCRAT

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There has been in recent years a growing concern with the treatment of women in political theory and a growing awareness that we are not, after all, limited to the works of male theorists, that women themselves have indeed made a contribution to political thought. These two developments have been instrumental in renewing interest in Mary Wollstonecraft, for not only was she a (female) political theorist of note among the radicals of eighteenth century England, but also she dealt with the question of the status of women in theory and in society in a revolutionary way.

It is not surprising that most examination of Wollstonecraft's thought has been directed mainly to her discussions about women. She recognised the class status of women and understood that their dual roles as producers and reproducers are not incompatible. These are the significant contributions she has made to the question of the treatment of women in political theory. But her theory is valuable not only for what she did but for what she failed to do; it provides a model for strengths and weaknesses of political theory in its liberal-democratic form. She was less strong, for example, when she assumed a sentimental rather than a political view of women's reproductive role and when she failed to recognise the changes which must occur in society before women can become emancipated rather than merely equal.

This last point relates to more than her analysis of women's rights, for she fails to pursue fully her own recognition of the innate deficiencies of private property in so far as they relate to workers, as well. Thus important though her contribution has been in the area of women's rights, such a limited understanding of her thought has done her a disservice and has restricted the use of her work in our study of political theory generally: for in her political theory, she travels beyond an assessment of women's status to concern with the condition of both women and the poor within the broad framework of the impact of private property rights. My focus in this paper is not to analyse her views about women, but rather to establish her position in the history of political theory.

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### I

Crucial to the achievement of equality by women is the recognition that they can successfully integrate the private and public spheres — the relations of reproduction and the relations of production. But if they are to gain emancipation, that is, real freedom, then there must be a transformation of the relations of production, one which will eliminate relations of dominance and subordination for both men and women and which will also permit the integration of the two relations of production and reproduction for women.

It has been commonplace throughout the development of political theory that most theorists have failed to see — or to accept — the importance of either of these two prerequisites for women's emancipation. Generally there has been little analysis of the treatment of women in political theory<sup>1</sup>, although there have been various attempts to develop a political theory of women's liberation. What has been done in either respect, however, has tended to ignore or to deny women's dual role, a weakness which is apparent in some of the writings in the areas of the theoretical treatment of women and of women's liberation.

It is worth comparing, for example, two recent contributions to the body of scholarship on Plato, who (as a theorist who ostensibly promoted the equality of women) has encouraged rather more analysis on that question than most other theorists. Christine Allen's "Plato on Women"<sup>2</sup> is philosophical rather than political and that may explain why she fails to treat women in a class context. Arlene Saxonhouse<sup>3</sup>, on the other hand, has shown clearly how difficult it was for Plato to reconcile women's full participation in both spheres; as warriors they were expected to deny their sexuality while as philosophers, they were required to deny their political natures (as were also the male philosophers, of course). She also points out that Plato denied the political implications of the role of reproduction, that is, the continuation or preservation of the city.

Kate Millett's examination of John Stuart Mill's contribution to feminist thought<sup>4</sup> failed to take into account Mill's reluctance to allow integration of the two spheres as a normal experience for women: only "exceptional" women should be able to pursue a career and care for a family. Millett also did not seem to realise that Mill advocated that even these "exceptional" women should operate within a capitalist economy and thus would have, at best, a limited and relative freedom.

Shulamith Firestone's *Dialectic of Sex*<sup>5</sup> was one of the more significant and radical contributions to the development of a theory of women's liberation. She clearly recognised the need for dramatic changes in the relations of production but she wished to eliminate the area of reproduction from the female essence. Her reasons make sense: the biological division was the first division of labour and women will never be free until that division is transcended; yet that approach once again, surely, ignores the political implications of reproduction which Saxonhouse discusses briefly in her article on Plato.

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Second, it is essential that women writers be taken seriously, that their works be discussed analytically, on their own merit, and not as an extension of their personalities. A classic statement of the "bitch as theorist" perspective is H.O. Pappé's *John Stuart Mill and the Harriet Taylor Myth*<sup>6</sup> which purports to be a defence of Mill's independence from Taylor's influence. Taylor's greater radicalism is blamed on her "masochism", fulfilling Deutsch's view that women who identify with the oppressed are doing so as an expression of opposition to their own role. Wollstonecraft herself has been subject to this type of pseudo-analysis. A reviewer of Claire Tomalin's biography of Wollstonecraft<sup>7</sup> described Wollstonecraft as "silly", "egotistical", "envious", "rancorous", and "meddlesome" and suggested that Tomalin intended to write about "the political radical, the pioneer of women's rights, and the compiler both of travel books and of treatises on the education of girls. But what she has in fact produced is something far more interesting. Mary's claim to public recognition tends to be pushed into the background, and what we read is a fascinating account of a twisted and difficult personality". Wollstonecraft's life *was* "fascinating" but why is it more interesting than her political role and why does her political role have to be diminished by attributing her political views almost entirely to her personality traits?

It is equally wrong to delimit a theorist because we want her to perform a certain function for us, because, in this case, she is useful to the "movement". The usual approach to Wollstonecraft's work, to concentrate primarily on her views on women<sup>8</sup>, has delimited her; it is important to see that the positive and negative aspects of her analysis of the position of women ran parallel to her analysis of the position of workers. Her theory shows us the consequence of not fully understanding the oppressed status of these groups.

## II

Wollstonecraft's attempt to treat in parallel terms the two relations existing between private property and the condition of the poor and between private property and the condition of women as a distinct class is the source of much that is exciting in Wollstonecraft's work; yet it also lays the grounds for that which is ultimately disappointing. A theoretical framework which associates *both* these major forms of oppression with private property has radical potential; yet Wollstonecraft failed to flesh the radical skeleton with equally radical content.

Her failure to achieve a full synthesis of these two relations can be blamed in part on an event which occurred just because she was a woman: her death in childbirth left her theory forever in its formative stages. Yet we must look elsewhere for the major reason and that is to the theory itself: Wollstonecraft

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was reluctant to depart sufficiently from the conventional view of property rights to ensure the transformation of society which she desired, in this she was foremost a liberal-democrat.

A brief examination of the more prominent and relevant of Wollstonecraft's works shows that while the tone and sophistication of her efforts may have changed over time, the political content followed a consistent pattern. She criticised the society, placed the blame for society's ills on private property, but then proposed only half-way remedies; she believed servants and workers to be treated deplorably but also believed them to be inferior and could not seem to conceive of a world in which no one was either servant or "mechanic"; she passionately condemned the futility of most women's lives — their oppression because of their sex — and called for all the opportunities of life to be opened to them, yet glorified motherhood to the extreme and in the end failed to bridge the gap between the economic classes.

Her views on women were, of course, most elaborately discussed in *Vindication of the Rights of Women* which appeared in 1792 and which is as passionate as it is analytically accurate. Yet her *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: with Reflections on Female Conduct, in the more Important Duties of Life* (that is, those duties which relate to the woman's roles as wife and mother), her earliest book, published in 1787, very much foreshadowed *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in its stress on the woman's role and on the need for education for women.

Her censure of property is mainly to be found in her *Vindication of the Rights of Men* which was published in 1790 and in her *Letters written during a short residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, published two years later. Although the *Vindication of the Rights of Men* was a highly political tract while the *Letters* was more a literary work, the two works share much in common: her dislike of inherited property and her proposals for remedy involving small farms under the supervision of a paternal steward occur in both. It is important to remember that the *Vindication* was a response to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*; thus although Wollstonecraft was concerned about making a universal statement about liberty and its suppression because of property, she was also dealing with a specific situation, justifying a specific revolution. This fact helps to explain her predominant emphasis on landed property and hereditary honours; but this is not to say that she ignored the emerging capitalist economy: she berated that system also for its lack of humanity and for the ills to which it had subjected the world as she knew it. This is evident, for example, both in her novel *Maria, or the Wrongs of Women*, published after her death, in which she condemned industrial society, and in the *Letters*, where she was highly critical of commerce. Furthermore, her ambiguous views on servants were much the same in the *Letters* of 1792 as they had been in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* in 1787.

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There is no gradual development towards a more progressive theory apparent in her works, but there is a *promise* in the theory she initially developed. Yet a significant element intervened to bend the flow of that initial development, an element which took the form of her use of the concepts "natural liberty" and "natural equality".

The intent of this article, then, is to defend the view that Wollstonecraft was a Stoic liberal-democrat through an analysis of the interaction among the variables most significant to her work: equality, liberty, reason and virtue, as they relate to workers and women.

Very clearly Wollstonecraft must be considered a liberal-democrat. She did not view the injustices connected with private property as unfortunate problems about which nothing could be done and which must be seen as merely a cost of the system of private property; rather, she shared the quandry of all liberal-democratic thinkers: she quite clearly saw the unequal distribution of resources among the members of society and made claims for rectifying that situation, but did not seem able to bring herself to carry that awareness through to a recognition of the necessary means of remedy. Her sympathies may have been for the servant "girl" and her condemnation reserved for the middle class woman; nevertheless, the force of her demand that women take their rightful position as equal members of society was severely diminished by the fact that within her scheme for reform, the servant remained servant and the mistress remained mistress. But Wollstonecraft cannot be explained simply by saying that she was a liberal-democrat. Her Stoic leanings must also be considered; her devotion to natural equality and liberty reduced the need, within her own framework, for her to resolve the conflict apparently inherent in liberal-democratic thought between commitments to both equality and private property.

### III

Wollstonecraft's use of the concepts of liberty and equality echoed a tradition of a natural liberty and a natural equality not requiring completion by civil counterparts which began in late classical thought.

The Stoics argued for a natural equality, rejecting the notion of a "slave nature", so much a part of Aristotle's thought, and postulating that in basic terms there was no difference between the slave and the freeman, the noble and the commoner. This view provided the basis for the belief that all people should be equal before the law which slowly began to emerge during this period.

Such a postulate was perhaps an inevitable consequence of what Sabine has described as "a self-consciousness, a sense of personal privacy and internality",<sup>9</sup> paradoxically combined with a greater sense of belonging to the human

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race, of universality. The Stoics argued that Virtue consisted in agreement with nature, an agreement of the internal aspects of a human being with the end for which human beings were intended: the exercise of reason.

This view of the importance of reason was an articulation of the difference between human beings and other animals: human beings were capable of reason while animals were not. In this sense, all human beings were considered to be more alike than dissimilar. This view, arising out of Stoic thought, permeated political theory and practice for centuries.

Internal liberty (or control) was thus highly prized, with the corresponding development that the effect of external factors was minimised: one could be put to death but one could die nobly, that is, rationally. The Stoics' argument that true liberty lay within, that right attitudes would render the effects of external pressures and dangers null, diminished the importance of worldly problems and civil inequality and in so doing removed the need for considering attempts to remedy civil inequality (even if such inequalities were recognised as undesirable). But it did suggest that in a world city (fully expected by the Stoics), citizenship would be open to all, since citizenship depended on the exercise of reason. And reason was the foundation of this natural equality and liberty.

The Romans responded in practical terms to these theoretical assumptions by instituting world-wide Roman citizenship and by employing such assumptions as a justification for the Imperial government of the Roman Empire. There was, however, no commitment to any kind of political or economic equality; all people were subject to the same law — but this was a law which distributed rights and demanded fulfillment of duties according to one's station in life.

The later liberals began to question even the extent to which everyone enjoyed the ability to reason, making it clear that there was no inconsistency between assuming that all human beings could — by definition — reason and the fact that all people did not enjoy the same social and economic benefits.

Thomas Aquinas and John Locke agreed that "human being" was defined by reference to reason but they also agreed that differences in the capacity to reason or in the exercise of that capacity warranted elite rule. For Aquinas, this was in conformity to nature; it made sense that the most intelligent should rule. Locke associated the capacity to reason with property ownership and attributed the condition of the poor and of women to innate deficiencies in the reasoning ability.<sup>10</sup>

It remained to the liberal-democrats (the Diggers being perhaps the earliest and most radical example) to begin questioning this association between the exercise of reason and the ownership of property, at least for the poor and/or workers. Vividly denouncing civil inequality in all its forms, in a sense they turned Locke's argument around: civil inequality was not a proper consequence of varying rationality as manifested in private property ownership; rather

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private property ownership led to inequality. But when these liberal-democrats had finally to consider the solution to this unjust situation, they withdrew somewhat from their condemnation of private property. Their solutions involved various forms of control on private property, perhaps some redistribution or some reduction in amounts of property required for participation in the state, certainly some changes in the way the institution operates — but never its abolition.<sup>11</sup>

Wollstonecraft's interpretation of the concepts of liberty and equality was closely associated with reason, also. It was the capacity to reason, which all people shared, which differentiated human beings from the "brutes" and enabled them to improve themselves and their condition.<sup>12</sup> At this basic level, all people were equal. No one could properly treat another person as a non-equal in this metaphysical or natural sense: she asserted that a person "who can see a fellow-creature humbled before him" "has lost his heart of flesh", for both persons have "the same infirmities". Individuals engaged in relations of inequality are "radically degraded by the habits of their life";<sup>13</sup> indeed, "man [and woman] is always debased by servitude, of any description:..."<sup>14</sup> Thus all people share their status as human beings with all the frailties and benefits deriving from that status.

In particular, people were equally entitled to liberty, to rights which they "inherit at their birth, as rational creatures".<sup>15</sup> Resulting "from the eternal foundation of right — from immutable truth . . .", the rights constituting liberty could be overridden by earthly doctrines: civil law could not make people less entitled — in God's eyes — to liberty. Although Wollstonecraft termed this liberty "civil" and "religious", it seems evident that a more appropriate label would be "internal" or "natural" liberty, similar to that natural equality she referred to in the comments cited above. Yet although all people were entitled to natural liberty, they did not automatically possess it, for while reason did indeed lead to liberty, it did not lead *necessarily* to liberty; reason had to be activated through the medium of labour, through the quality of one's labour — through the attainment of Virtue.<sup>16</sup> Virtue derived from doing one's job — whatever it was — well; and liberty was not possible without virtue. Thus we have a sequence of reason leading to liberty through the medium of virtue: a sequence of means to ends equally available to all.

Again, however, this was equal liberty of a special kind: the Stoic inner freedom which all can enjoy regardless of external conditions. Neither natural equality nor natural freedom necessitated an equal political or economic liberty and Wollstonecraft did not really claim either of these kinds of freedoms for all strata in society. In fact, the notion that "God" considered all people equally provided a fine rationale for condoning or at least diminishing the effects of worldly inequalities.

Simply, it is not clear when Wollstonecraft meant natural liberty or natural

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equality or when she actually was referring to, for example, economic equality. When she claimed that everyone was entitled to liberty, what kind of liberty did she mean: an inner freedom arising out of self-control or a freedom which came from not being dominated by the owners of property? This is the crux of the difficulty. Consequently, her natural versions of the two concepts tended to veil the significance of the civil inequality and lack of civil liberty; they permitted her to rationalise the most salient ramifications of the lack of political, economic, and social equality and liberty, a lack of which she was certainly well aware.

Thus two schools of political theory blend in the theory of Mary Wollstonecraft: she is, we may say, a Stoic liberal-democrat. Her "deviance" from this tradition is, of course, the important place women assumed in her work, a place almost totally lacking in previous analyses: but in a sense that is all her analysis of women remains — a deviance — for in the end, she held true to the tradition, and in so doing, failed to bring either women or workers to their rightful position.

### IV

Wollstonecraft knew that various classes and the two sexes enjoyed different degrees of political and economic freedom and that the amount of freedom one enjoyed was related to the amount of property one possessed.

She perceived and deplored the wretchedness of the lives of the mechanic and servant, the lack of economic equality. The poor were the real victims of the property ethic which pervaded society, for they had to contend with unemployment and misfortunes which were "not to be warded off". The evils which she saw around her, she said, are "more gigantic than any of the infringements of property".<sup>17</sup>

The only property workers had — the ability to labour (the mechanic's "property is in his nervous arms") — was subject to the command of the rich. The necessity of the workers to alienate their ability to labour meant that they also had to give up their liberty. Here Wollstonecraft drew an insightful connection between property and liberty: control over one's property, at least of one's labour power, is a requisite of liberty *in the economic sense*.

The workers were also unequal socially, and this inequality Wollstonecraft did not seem to find unacceptable. She cautioned children not to show "cruelty to . . . inferiors" and to exhibit "condescension to inferiors";<sup>18</sup> there were, then, some people (servants, for example) who were not viewed as equal to other members of society (their employers, for instance): they were so clearly unequal that even children knew who they were. This could only mean that there was a generally recognised and accepted social inequality.



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The source of these civil inequalities and the lack of civil liberty was to be found in property. The "demon of property" had prevented the full development of liberty and had distorted it to mean the protection of property. The following passage vividly illustrates Wollstonecraft's belief that most injustice in her society arose out of the existence of private property and hereditary rank:

From the respect paid to property flow, as from a poisoned fountain, most of the evils and vices which render this world such a dreary scene to the contemplative mind . . . .

One class presses on another: for all are aiming to procure respect on account of their property: and property, once gained, will procure the respect due only to talents and virtue . . . .

[W]hat but habitual idleness can hereditary wealth and titles produce? For man is so constituted that he can only attain a proper use of his faculties by exercising them, and will not exercise them unless necessity of some kind first set the wheels in motion.<sup>19</sup>

Both classes were corrupted because "respectability is not attached to the discharge of the relative duties of life, but to the station": that is, it was status or position, not the quality of labour as it ought to have been that determined the worth of an individual.

Women had difficulties related to property which were peculiar to them. Regardless of class, they possessed no property rights: the men with whom they were associated were assumed to be the possessors of any fortune which may have come to the women and they could employ any means to obtain it. Because they did not own property, in disputes with their husbands, women were always in the wrong. Even more significant is the fact that women were actually as much men's property as were their animals, and just as men could treat their property in land or animals as they pleased, so could they treat their wives.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, women were given homage just because they were women, deterring them from their roles as mothers and "useful members of society".<sup>21</sup>

### V

It is surely not unreasonable to expect that Wollstonecraft's condemnation of private property's consequences would have led her to recommend abolition of private property and of wage labour. Yet the proposals she made did not

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tend in this direction. Her recommendations for bettering the conditions of servants were designed to achieve her ideal of a benevolent, almost parental, relation between employers and servants. The employer, she believed, had a trust in regard to his servants and, although the servant's lack of education precluded equality (meaning, in this case, social equality), he should treat them with kindness: "how pleasing it is," she suggested, "to be consulted when they are at a loss, and looked up to as a friend and benefactor when they are in distress."<sup>22</sup>

The law of nature would have been better served by having farms scattered throughout the great estates and then "instead of the poor being subject to the griping hand of an avaricious steward, they would be watched over with fatherly solicitude, by the man whose duty and pleasure it was to guard their happiness."<sup>23</sup>

She favoured a redistribution of property (which she defined as the ownership of the fruits of one's own labour and the right of bequest), the breaking up of large accumulated estates into small farms. Property, she argued, should be "fluctuating", that is, divided more equally among the children (of those who have property) in order to prevent ever-increasing accumulation.<sup>24</sup>

Wollstonecraft was prepared, then, to restrict private property but not to abolish it, preferring instead a system of small but private agrarian holdings. Liberty was not to be found in all people's sharing property but rather in each owning a small amount. This would have helped to prevent the overaccumulation by the rich which had led to the constriction of liberty and equality.

But what about wage labour? Wollstonecraft had argued that as long as the workers had to give up their labour power, they gave up their (economic) liberty. Despite her own contention, she did not propose the abolition of the servant class (as a single woman writer with a child in the eighteenth century, such a proposal would have represented a remarkable transcendence of her own condition) or of a wage class generally.

Wage labour, then, would continue to exist. Thus it is necessary to discover to what extent membership in the wage class would be likely to be permanent: was it possible for people to "climb out" of that class? Social mobility requires, in part, equal access to the educational system. To some extent, Wollstonecraft did advocate equal education for both classes and sexes; however, she proposed that at the age of nine, those children "intended for domestic employments, or mechanical trades" should be sent to the appropriate schools where the two sexes would be separated in the afternoons; the children of "superior abilities, or fortune" would be taught other subjects, boys and girls together.<sup>25</sup> It is significant that before the age of nine, students of "all classes" studied together; after that age, we have to assume that the classes would have been separated. Nevertheless, there is still the implication that class would not have had a part to play in this division (ability is stated as a criterion determining the

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kind of education a child would have); presumably, on the other hand, those children of superior *fortune* would not have had to possess superior abilities to attend the second type of school. There was also no guarantee that steps would be taken to ensure that any latent ability in children of workers be developed.

Even if we accept — for the sake of argument, for obviously Wollstonecraft qualified equal education both in terms of sex and class — the position that her comments did intimate that she did not view the class structure as static, that she did not expect that servants' children would necessarily have been servants or that the children of the wealthy would have remained wealthy, the fundamental question remains: is it really sufficient that the membership in the classes changes if the classes themselves remain?

### VI

When we examine Wollstonecraft's thought, we find that she considered property to be undesirable because it made people act in nasty ways; it had bad effects on the family; "benevolence, friendship, generosity, and all those endearing charities which bind human hearts together . . . are crushed by the iron hand of property".<sup>26</sup>

This state of affairs bothered her more than the innate subordinate-dominant nature of the wage relation. We must ask, therefore, how serious Wollstonecraft thought the civil inequalities really were — did they matter if "friendly" relations could exist between economic unequals who were in another sense natural equals? In fact, her main concern seemed to be to establish a society in which people were nicer to each other; just how one would have exhibited this "niceness" seemed to depend on one's station in life. It would seem that she believed that the distribution of natural equality and liberty — for her, the more important forms of the two concepts — was virtually in direct contrast to the distribution of civil equality and liberty. For despite some ambiguity, we can conclude that she did believe that workers and women were able to reason and thus enjoy natural equality and that if they did their jobs well, could attain virtue and natural liberty, while people who owned property may have enjoyed natural equality — and economic, political, and social superiority — but not necessarily natural liberty.

It is true that she described servants as mean, vulgar, and cunning, as well as ignorant and thus provided possible substantiation for civil inequality. It is perhaps more profitable, however, to examine the issue of the relation between reason and independence, an independence that we can relate to internal or natural liberty.

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She asserted that the degree to which one exercised reason determined the extent of one's independence; presumably, then, people who did not exert reason, whatever the cause, were dependent on others: but was this the only reason for dependence? In other words, did she assert a necessary relation between dependence and an inability to exercise the capacity to reason?

Women and workers (servants and mechanics) were all dependent on someone. Were they dependent because they were unable to reason, because they lacked the opportunity to reason, or for some quite distinct cause? Wollstonecraft would have answered that women were reasonable creatures and that their apparent failure to exercise reason was a consequence of environmental rather than biological factors. As for servants, she stated explicitly that they "act from the dictates of reason, and [their] understandings are arrived at some degree of maturity".<sup>27</sup>

Women and workers could exercise reason; they enjoyed natural equality. The next step was the attainment of virtue. The workers did have one advantage; they were already engaged in labour, the only means by which potential reason could become actual reason and virtue. As for women, she recommended that they be free to engage in employment. She suggested that women become doctors and midwives as well as nurses; they might "study politics" and "enter business of various kinds".<sup>28</sup> There was more "virtue" in poor women (who had the opportunity to exhibit excellence in their work) who had to maintain their families than in "gentlewomen" who were more concerned with their dress and other frivolous pursuits.

From the opposite perspective, "vulgar" was a term she used to describe not only the working class who had insufficient time "to cultivate their minds" but also "those who, born in the lap of affluence, have never had their invention sharpened by necessity".<sup>29</sup> The problem was that people were unlikely to labour unless they were forced to do so by need. This principle lay at the base of Wollstonecraft's aversion to wealth, for the rich, not needing — and, therefore, not desiring — to labour, could not attain virtue or, of course, liberty in the natural sense.

What all this means is that class was irrelevant for Wollstonecraft in relation to natural liberty and equality. Everyone possessed natural equality because they all — property-owners, the poor, and women — had the capacity to reason. Not all people possessed natural liberty, however; this was not because of class as much as it was a consequence of personality or of conditions which could be remedied without *fundamental* changes in the class structure. Women needed only to be given the opportunity and the rich needed only to exert themselves more, spurred on by a *reduction* of their riches and the abolition of hereditary honours. The essence of the wage relation was quite compatible with the extension of natural liberty.

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### VII

We are confronted in Wollstonecraft's work by condescension mixed with pleas for recognition of equality among all members of society. The confusion in her work can be disentangled if we conclude that her primary notions of equality and liberty owed more to natural influences than to political and that this enabled her to accept a class-divided society as long as it was recognised that all members of all classes are equally members of the human race. "Good" servants were equal to "good" employers and all those who were virtuous could rejoice in an internal freedom which was quite independent of economic or social liberty and equality. In taking this position, Wollstonecraft obscured the fact that one person is a servant — subservient through necessity — and the other is an employer — dominant through choice. The changes she proposed for women<sup>30</sup> would simply bring them full membership in this kind of relation. Wollstonecraft was, indeed, arguing for a "better" society, but it is still one in which some people must submit to others for their mere existence.

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### Notes

1. A listing of courses on women or sex roles illustrates this point. One such listing includes none on political theory and only one on "Women and the Political Economy": it includes only references to socialist theory in a course on "Sexual Division of Labour in Industrial Society": *Canadian Newsletter of Research on Women*, vol. v (February 1976), pp. 55-75.
2. Allen, Christine Garside, "Plato on Women", in *Feminist Studies*, vol. 2 (1975), pp. 131-38.
3. Saxonhouse, Arlene W., "The Philosopher and the Female in the Political Thought of Plato" in *Political Theory*, vol. 4 (May 1976), pp. 195-212.
4. Millett, Kate, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Avon, 1970), esp. 88-108.
5. Firestone, Shulamith, *The Dialectic of Sex* (New York: Bantam, 1972), especially her "Conclusion".
6. Pappé, H.O., *John Stuart Mill and the Harriet Taylor Myth* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1960), esp. pp. 25-29. Cf., however, Gertrude Himmelfarb's "Introduction" to *Essays on Politics and Culture: John Stuart Mill* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1973); she comments negatively on Taylor's character but does not connect her theory with that character.
7. Cobb, Richard, "Claire Tomalin: *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft*", in the *Times Literary Supplement* (September 1974), pp. 441-44.
8. See Todd, Janet M., "The Biographies of Mary Wollstonecraft", in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 1 (Spring 1976), pp. 721-34.
9. Sabine, George H. and Thomas L. Thorson. *A History of Political Theory*, 4th ed. (Hinsdale, Illinois: Dryden Press, 1973), p. 142.
10. On Aquinas, see d'Entreves, A.P., ed. *Aquinas: Selected Political Writings* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), p. 3 and p. 101 and on Locke, see Laslett, Peter, ed., *Two Treatises on Government* (London: The New English Library, 1955), *Second Treatise*, sect. 61; W. von Leyden, ed. *Essays on the Law of Nature* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958), Essay I, p. 115; "The Reasonableness of Christianity, as Delivered in the Scriptures", in Cranston, Maurice, ed. *Locke on Politics, Religion, and Education* (New York: Collier Books, 1965), p. 122 and p. 231.
11. See, for example, T.H. Green, *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* (London: Longman's Green and Co., 1931), p. 218 and pp. 224-5; and J.S. Mill, *Principles of Political Economy* in Robson, J.M., ed. *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. II (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), esp. Bk. II.

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12. Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (Gainesville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1960 [1790]), p. 71 and p. 96.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 156 and p. 149.
14. Wollstonecraft, Mary. *Letters written during a short residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (London: J. Johnson, 1796), p. 176.
15. Wollstonecraft, Mary. *Rights of Men*, p. 8 and p. 22.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 29 and pp. 103-105.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153; also see *Posthumous Works of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, vol. I (Clifton: Augustus M. Kelley, 1972 [1798]), pp. 40-43; pp. 46-67 and pp. 78-127: here Wollstonecraft uses Jemima, a servant in a private madhouse to dramatise the double bind of women — as servants and as women.
18. Wollstonecraft, Mary. *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: with Reflections on Female Conduct in the more important Duties of Life* (Clifton: Augustus M. Kelley, 1972 [1787]), p. 15 and p. 21.
19. Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1967 [1792]), p. 212 and p. 217. Wollstonecraft includes overenthusiastic commercial enterprises in her censure of wealth generally; she assails commerce as being against the "most sacred principles of humanity and rectitude: and she warns that while "England and America owe their liberty to commerce, which created a new species of power to undermine the feudal system", they must be aware of the consequences; the tyranny of wealth is still more galling and debasing than that of rank". (*Letters*, p. 157 and p. 170).
20. Wollstonecraft, *Posthumous Works*, pp. 40-47.
21. Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Men*, p. 54. This is, of course, a problem faced only by middle and upper class women; the woman in the working class was not allowed to sit on the pedestal — she would be too busy cleaning it.
22. Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, p. 123 and p. 120.
23. Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Men*, p. 145.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 50, also see *Letters*, pp. 75-76 where she describes what she sees as the beneficial effects of small farms in Norway. The right of bequest, one of the elements of private proper-

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ty, provides a means to the accumulation of property other than that derived from one's own labour; necessitating the receipt of the bequest, it can easily lead to the idleness Wollstonecraft deplors. Her reaction to this problem is to propose some limitation on the freedom of bequest (but not to eliminate it — to do so would also mean the end of private property) and redistributing large estates, as she suggests here, would aid in achieving this end.

25. Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, pp. 25-51.
26. Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Men*, p. 50 and p. 52.
27. Wollstonecraft, Mary, *Original Stories* (London: Henry Frowde, 1906), p. 51.
28. Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 126 and pp. 221-22.
29. Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Men*, p. 28.
30. As already mentioned, she advocates greater access to education (to make women better mothers and better companions for their husbands since they will be able to be more independent) and increased occupational opportunities; in addition, she indicated a desire to extend the suffrage to women: although critical of the electoral process because of its excesses and the fact that it is a formality and not a real exercise of choice (*Rights of Men*, pp. 84-85), she nevertheless advances the notion that women ought to have representatives — I take this to mean the suffrage (*Rights of Women*, pp. 220-21) (this passage may also be *liberally* interpreted to mean that suffrage should also be granted to the workers).