

An Introduction to Liberty as Independence

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What does liberty entail? How have concepts of liberty changed over time? And what are the global consequences? This book surveys the history of rival views of liberty from antiquity to modern times. Quentin Skinner traces the understanding of liberty as independence from the classical ideal to early modern Britain, culminating in the claims of the Whig oligarchy to have transformed this idea into reality. Yet, with the Whig vision of a free state and civil society undermined by the American Revolution of 1776, Skinner explores how claims that liberty was fulfilled by an absence of physical or coercive restraint came to prominence. *Liberty as Independence* examines new dimensions of these rival views, considering the connections between debates on liberty and debates on slavery, and demonstrating how these ideas were harnessed in feminist discussions surrounding limitations on the liberty of women. The concept of liberty is inherently global, and Skinner argues strongly for the reinstatement of the understanding of liberty as independence.