

剑桥政治思想史原著系列（影印本）

CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

# 为男人的权利辩护和 为女人的权利辩护

*A Vindication of the  
Rights of Men and  
A Vindication of the  
Rights of Woman*

Mary Wollstonecraft

玛丽·沃尔斯通克拉夫特

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Edited by

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SYLVANA

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中国政法大学出版社

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MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

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为女人的权利辩护  
*A Vindication of the Rights  
of Men with  
A Vindication of the Rights  
of Woman and Hints*

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MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT  
*A Vindication of the Rights of Men*  
*with*  
*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*  
*and*  
*Hints*

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# 剑桥政治思想史原著系列

## 丛书编辑

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在政治理论领域，“剑桥政治思想史原著系列”作为主要的学生教科丛书，如今已牢固确立了其地位。本丛书旨在使学生能够获得从古希腊到 20 世纪初期西方政治思想史方面所有最为重要的原著。它囊括了所有著名的经典原著，但与此同时，它又扩展了传统的评价尺度，以便能够纳入范围广泛、不那么出名的作品。而在此之前，这些作品中有许多从未有过现代英文版本可资利用。只要可能，所选原著都会以完整而不删节的形式出版，其中的译作则是专门为本丛书的目的而安排。每一本书都有一个评论性的导言，加上历史年表、生平梗概、进一步阅读指南，以及必要的词汇表和原文注解。本丛书的最终目的是，为西方政治思想的整个发展脉络提供一个清晰的轮廓。

本丛书已出版著作的书目，请查阅书末。

CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE  
HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

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## Preface

The publication of *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, edited by Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, with the assistance of Emma Rees-Mogg (7 vols., London, William Pickering, 1989), has had a beneficial impact on the study of Mary Wollstonecraft's thought and writings. I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to the editors of this work. The same acknowledgement needs to be made to Eleanor Louise Nicholes for her facsimile reproduction of *A Vindication of the Rights Of Men (1790)* (Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, Gainesville, Florida, 1960).

I would also like to thank the editors of this series, Raymond Geuss and Quentin Skinner, as well as Richard Fisher and Catherine Max of Cambridge University Press, Susan James, Mark Goldie, Roy Porter, George St Andrews, and for their assistance in reading the typescript Jean Field, Una MacCormack and Nicholas Windsor. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Librarian and staff of Cambridge University Library.



## Introduction

Judging from the texts that follow, and others of her works, Mary Wollstonecraft disapproved of many things and a good number of people. She denounced astrology, trivial pursuits, inferior books, especially novels – though she did believe that it was better to read books of this kind than not to read at all – a standing army, monarchical rule, financial speculators, primogeniture, the entry of men into what were traditionally female occupations – like midwifery – the cult of sensibility, the practice of sending infants to be suckled by wet-nurses, pre-arranged marriages, conversations about fashion, and the maltreatment of animals. Some of these, as well as others of her criticisms, such as her condemnation of slavery, are not altogether surprising coming as they do from the pen of an Enlightenment thinker. Others are less predictable. Amongst these are topics which one might not have expected her to address at all, let alone feel strongly about. An instance of this is her finding physical intimacy between girls at boarding school offensive. On the other hand, several of her objections might seem familiar kinds of prejudice. She could not countenance effeminacy in men, for example; and although she might have admitted of some exceptions, she cared very little for Catholics and was suspicious of clergymen, generally speaking. Besides members of royal dynasties, she also spoke ill of aristocrats, courtiers, courtesans, and often also of servants and the French.

Behind these various dislikes lies a system of thought which justifies their number and connects them to one another. This system is best understood by highlighting yet another of the objects

of her opprobrium, the most important of them all, but one which although encountered and despised often enough, is difficult to name without qualifications: self-love. Wollstonecraft herself called it 'blind self-love', 'doting self-love', and 'ignorant self-love', or, more exactly, she referred to 'the sordid calculations of blind self-love', 'complicated low calculations of doting self-love', and 'the cautious craft of ignorant self-love'. This love of self she distinguished from 'enlightened self-love' – the love and respect owed to oneself by virtue of being one of God's creations. She did not, however, analyse the concept in either its negative or positive form in any depth, possibly because she took for granted in her readers an intuitive grasp of what she meant. What she did was to try to show its various manifestations, enquire into the conditions under which it thrived, and study its causes as well as its consequences. Narcissism, vanity, being besotted with the reflection of oneself in the gaze of others, obsessive concern with one's appearance and the figure one cuts in society – she linked all these to unenlightened self-love and considered this selfishness not merely a despicable character weakness, but a source of great evil. For she understood the demands of this type of self-love to be insatiable and to subordinate all else to it.

Lacking any capacity to exercise self-denial, those prey to the relentless desire for self-gratification not only sacrificed the needs of those nearest to them, and all the more so, those of humanity at large, to their own pitiful whims, but ironically also failed in their essential duty towards themselves as God's creatures. Reason, the Maker's gift to mankind, remained undeveloped in them and was, therefore, unable to guide them through the stages of life. Such lives as they led, dominated as they were by the quest for one sign of superficial approbation after another, squandered the divine gift and spoiled the Deity's property.

Wollstonecraft's writings make it plain that certain categories of people, the rich, for instance, are more liable to idolize themselves. So are women. And, hence, upper-class women especially so. Yet, critical as Wollstonecraft was of the latter's style of life, her primary aim was not to address, much less change, them. The women she hoped to reach first and foremost belonged to the middle class. Her ambition was to stop them aping their social superiors, to divert their attention away from the world of fashion to that of

learning, and thereby to emancipate them from their dependence on the opinion of other vain and superficial beings. To achieve this required profound social changes. Education was an essential part of Wollstonecraft's proposals, but she never deemed it sufficient, unlike some Enlightenment writers, such as Helvétius. For Wollstonecraft's insights into the nature of the predicament of narcissistic women – and men, for that matter – led her to argue that the values of her society as a whole were at fault. Hers was therefore not a moral critique directed at various individuals or even at the female sex as a whole, but a more fundamental attack on the mores of her day and the institutions which she thought sustained them.

This said, there is more to Wollstonecraft than censure. For if her works give a plain enough picture of the kind of person she loathed – a married woman who divides her time between her mirror and fashionable society, consults astrologers and succumbs to every fad, is too afraid to tarnish her reputation by taking a lover, yet is flirtatious, and unfaithful in thought, if not deed, who having sent her infants to wet-nurses, takes little interest in them on their return home, who worries that her daughters might out-shine her when they come of age, cannot concentrate long enough to improve herself by reading, affects physical frailty, pretends to be ill whenever it suits her, lacks all reserve before her husband, children and servants, and fears not God, but dreads the loss of her looks more than anything else on earth – these works also give a very good picture of the kind of person she approved of. A mother who, having exerted herself to develop her mind and acquire an education before marriage, devotes her life to the upbringing of her children and attends to the needs of those in her household and community, is an interesting, trustworthy, and life-long companion to her husband, but would also be able to survive as a widow and provide for her children by exercising an honourable trade or skill – this is the kind of woman which emerges from Wollstonecraft's pages as most worthy of admiration. The social and political reality of Wollstonecraft's times militated, in her view, against this ideal of womanhood; it promoted all she detested instead. This explains in part a very striking feature of her writings, namely, that neither their tone, nor content, make her appear a friend to women. She vindicated women not, as most defenders

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had through the ages, by denying the charges against them, nor, as many scholars had, by compiling great inventories of illustrious exceptions. On the contrary, she tended to add to the misogynist's list of accusations and to belittle the great women in history. Still, Wollstonecraft knew women whom she did esteem. She herself bore some resemblance to the sketch she gave of her idealized conception of them; it is partly because she experienced some of the joys as well as the difficulties of a life ruled by the aspirations of such women that she was able to examine so lucidly its requirements as well as the impediments to it.

Mary Wollstonecraft was born the second of seven children on 27 April 1759 in a house in Primrose Street, Spitalfields, London. She could have known a comfortable existence, as her paternal grandfather had grown affluent as a silk manufacturer, and could style himself 'Edward Wollstonecraft, Gentleman' when he came to lease a large house in Hanbury Street in 1756. But this was not to be. Her grandfather's will made provision only for her elder brother, Ned, and her father, Edward, who sought to become a gentleman farmer in different parts of the country, and squandered his share of the inheritance. He was a tyrannical man, and his Irish wife, née Elizabeth Dixon, could protect neither herself nor her children from his brutality. Mary hated the one for his cruelty, despised the other for her submission, and deeply resented both for their partiality towards her brother Ned. He was the only child to receive a complete education; he became an attorney.

Wollstonecraft determined to live, as her circumstances seemed to dictate she had to, by her wits, although she held several positions before writing became her sole source of income. In 1778, she was engaged as a companion to a Mrs Dawson and lived at Bath. She returned home to nurse her mother in the latter part of 1781. After Mrs Wollstonecraft's death, in the spring of 1782, Mary lived with the Bloods, the impoverished family of her dearest friend, Fanny. She left them in the winter of 1783 to attend to her sister Eliza and her newly born daughter. Eliza had married Meredith Bishop the previous year, and was suffering from a breakdown following the birth of her daughter. Bishop called on Mary's assistance. It is difficult to establish the exact circumstances which prompted Mary to intervene as decisively as she did in her sister's marriage, but in the course of January 1784, Mary took her sister

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away and the two women went into hiding, leaving Eliza's baby behind. Eliza was never to return to her former home. Her infant daughter remained in Bishop's care, but died the following August.

By February of that year, the two sisters were already planning to establish a school with Fanny. Mary's other sister, Everina, joined in the project a little later. They first set their sights on Islington, then moved to Newington Green, where Mary met the Reverend Richard Price, head of Newington's thriving dissenting community, and heard him preach. It was through her connections to members of this community that she was to gain an introduction to her future publisher and friend, Joseph Johnson.

In November 1785, Wollstonecraft set off on what was to be a very unhappy trip to Lisbon, where Fanny, who had married Hugh Skeys in February, was expecting her first child. Fanny suffered from tuberculosis and very much needed help. On board the ship was a consumptive man whom Mary attended day and night for nearly two weeks. This, together with other experiences her stay in Portugal afforded her, made for the setting and much of the content of her first novel, *Mary, A Fiction* (1788). Neither mother nor child survived more than a few days following the delivery. After a few weeks, which were to fuel her perception of the Catholic Church as corrupt and of Portugal as a land of superstition and absurd mores, Wollstonecraft sailed home in the new year.

On her return, she found her school in complete disarray. She was in serious financial difficulties and unable to assist those who had come to rely on her support. An advance on her first book, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: With Reflections on Female Conduct in the More Important Duties of Life* (1787), which she then wrote very quickly, enabled her to pay for the passage to Ireland of Fanny's parents.

Published by Joseph Johnson and consisting of no more than two or three pages apiece on topics such as 'Moral Discipline', 'Artificial Manners', 'Boarding-Schools', 'The Benefits Which Arise From Disappointments', 'The Observance of Sunday', and 'On the Treatment of Servants', this short book reveals the profound influence of John Locke's writings, in this particular case of *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), on Wollstonecraft's conception of morality and the best manner to inculcate it in individuals at the earliest possible age. Its opening paragraph speaks of the duty

parents have to ensure that 'reason should cultivate and govern those instincts which are implanted in us to render the path of duty pleasant – for if they are not governed they will run wild; and strengthen the passions which are ever endeavouring to obtain dominion – I mean *vanity and self-love*' (*Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, in *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, with Emma Rees-Mogg (assistant editor), 7 vols. (London, 1989), vol. IV, p. 7, my italics).

The supremacy of reason over the appetites and passions could only be secured in children of a sound constitution, the foundation of which lay in mothers breast-feeding their infants. Wollstonecraft was to take up this theme again in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). She also continued to insist on both the importance of establishing early habits of reading and writing and the need to keep dress simple and manners as unaffected as possible. Other continuities between the two works include her repeated warnings against the harmful influence of ill-educated and devious servants, her preference for an education conducted at home, and her emphasis on the necessity for women (perhaps more than men) to have what might be called 'inner resources' to make themselves interesting, not so much to others as to themselves. Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts* also contains the expression of one of her deepest convictions, namely, that universal benevolence is the first virtue. Finally, Wollstonecraft's faith in a Providentially ordained universe demarcates from the outset the framework within which all her publications have to be considered. Concluding the chapter entitled 'Unfortunate Situation of Females, Fashionably Educated, And Left Without A Fortune', Wollstonecraft wrote:

The main business of our lives is to learn to be virtuous; and He who is training us up for immortal bliss, knows best what trials will contribute to make us so; and our resignation and improvement will render us respectable to ourselves, and to that Being, whose approbation is of more value than life itself. It is true, tribulation produces anguish, and we would fain avoid the bitter cup, though convinced its effects would be the most salutary. The Almighty is then the kind parent, who chastens and educates, and indulges us not when it would tend to our hurt. He is compassion itself, and never wounds but to heal, when the ends of correction are answered. (*Thoughts on the Daughters, Works*, vol. IV, p. 27)

It would be wrong to think that these are words of resignation, indicative of a meekness which Wollstonecraft had to outgrow before she could embark on either of her vindications. What she enjoined upon the readers of her *Thoughts*, as of all her subsequent publications bearing on education (and they more or less all did), was to ensure that they made their children as resilient as they could be to face life's inevitable vicissitudes. She was already all too well placed to know that strength of character and a philosophy extending beyond the self were the only things that could help one endure drastic changes in circumstances or bereavements. However, none of her writings gives the slightest indication that resignation and unquestioning acceptance are the morally fitting response to human institutions which prevent us from pursuing 'the main business of our lives' – namely, the acquisition of virtue – or which impair our capacity to survive personal tragedies.

With the collapse of the school, Wollstonecraft followed the path which most women in her predicament and of her background tried to take: she became a governess. Whatever her views of the aristocracy by the time she arrived at her place of employment in Ireland, there is little doubt that they were not improved by spending a year in Lady Kingsborough's household as governess to her daughters. Wollstonecraft, on the other hand, was not much liked either, and was dismissed during the family's stay in Bristol in 1787. Henceforth she was to live by her pen, though she continued to benefit from, as well as to need, the generosity of some of her friends.

She had finished *Mary, A Fiction* in Ireland and on her return to London Joseph Johnson gave her employment. In 1787, she also began, but never completed, *The Cave of Fancy. A Tale*. It opens with this caution: 'Ye who expect constancy where every thing is changing, and peace in the midst of tumult, attend to the voice of experience, and mark in time the footsteps of disappointment; or life will be lost in desultory wishes, and death arrive before the dawn of wisdom' (*The Cave of Fancy, Works*, vol. 1, p. 191). That same year, she wrote *Original Stories from Real Life; With Conversations, Calculated to Regulate the Affections, and Form the Mind to Truth and Goodness* (1788); it appeared in two other London editions in her lifetime (1791 and 1796), the last of which was illustrated by William Blake. In it, two girls, Mary and Caroline,

are left to the management of servants, 'or people equally ignorant', until their mother dies and they are placed 'under the tuition of a woman of tenderness and discernment, a near relation' (*Works*, vol. iv, p. 361). *Original Stories* endeavours to show how such a woman succeeds in teaching contemptuous Mary and vain Caroline to avoid anger, exercise compassion, love truth and virtue, and respect the whole of God's creation. Wollstonecraft's anthology, *The Female Reader; Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose and Verse; Selected from the Best Writers and Disposed under Proper Heads; For the Improvement of Young Women* (1789), which she compiled in the same period and published under the name of 'Mr. Cresswick, teacher of Elocution', reflects similar concerns and contains excerpts mostly from the Bible and Shakespeare's plays, as well as many by various eighteenth-century authors, such as Voltaire, Hume, Steele, Charlotte Smith, Mrs Trimmer, Mrs Chapone, and Madame de Genlis.

Many of these works provided source material for Wollstonecraft's political writings, and *The Female Reader* as a whole gives some indication of the range of books she was most familiar with. To gain further insight into her frame of reference, however, it is well to bear in mind that her talents extended to translating and reviewing, and that these two activities, quite apart from her own intellectual curiosity, acquainted her with vast tracts of Enlightenment literature. To think of her in this way ensures that she is remembered not just as an English woman engaging in a narrowly English set of responses about events at home and abroad, but as an intellectual whose awareness was shaped by partaking in the Scottish, German, and French Enlightenment debates. Her writings were informed by those of the Scottish school of moral philosophy and history, especially David Hume, Adam Smith, and William Robertson, the works of the *philosophes* and their circles – Rousseau, of course, but also many lesser-known writers, especially travel writers – and the theories of German-speaking philosophers from Leibniz to Kant, but not excluding such authors as Lavater.

She translated Jacques Necker's *De l'importance des opinions religieuses* (1788) (*Of the Importance of Religious Opinions. Translated from the French of Mr. Necker* (1788)). In a lengthy review, deemed to be by Wollstonecraft herself, she justified the liberties taken by the translator on account of the author's uneven style and ingenuity, but added that 'few [of his fellow-creatures] can peruse this pro-



duction without feeling the necessity of practising the virtues he so earnestly recommends, – without perceiving the simple, yet sublime harmony of that system which unites men to each other, and to that Being who is the source of all perfection' (*Analytical Review*, January 1789, *Works*, vol. VII, p. 66). If Wollstonecraft thought Necker unequal to the task he set himself, his topic was clearly close to her heart. This is true also of the subject-matter of the two other books she translated: *Elements of Morality, for the Use of Children; With an Introductory Address to Parents. Translated from the German of the Rev. C. G. Salzmann* (1790, 1792, and 1793), and *Young Grandison. A Series of Letters from Young Persons to their Friends. Translated from the Dutch of Madame de Cambon with Alterations and Improvements* (1790). As she explained in a preface to her rendition of Salzmann's *Moralisches elementarbuch* (1782), she would not have proceeded with the translation had she not approved of its content, the aim of which was to give children a 'good disposition'. Moreover, in all three cases the texts were her own, not just because she agreed with their original authors, but because she more or less re-wrote them. The Reverend Salzmann, for one, cannot have resented this, as he translated both *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and William Godwin's *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798) into German.

Throughout the period covered by these translations Wollstonecraft also wrote for the *Analytical Review*, which her publisher, Joseph Johnson, together with Thomas Christie, started in May 1788. She was involved with this publication either as a reviewer or as editorial assistant for most of its relatively short life: her last review was dated May 1797, whilst the final issue of the journal appeared in June 1799. Reviews were anonymous, but although establishing the identity of their authors is not an entirely straightforward matter, and some of the attributions to Wollstonecraft are contested, there is no doubt that she reviewed a great number of books. The first, in June 1788, was of a sentimental novel, and in neither this nor the many subsequent reviews of books of this genre did she mince her words: 'The Happy Recovery is an heterogeneous mass of folly, affectation, and improbability' (*Analytical Review*, June 1788, *Works*, vol. VII, p. 19). Like many other moralists in the eighteenth century, she genuinely feared the