



# Just Freedom: A Moral Compass for a Complex World (Norton Global Ethics)

By Philip Pettit

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**Just Freedom: A Moral Compass for a Complex World (Norton Global Ethics) By Philip Pettit**

**An esteemed philosopher offers a vision for the central role of one of our most cherished and controversial ideas.**

In this rigorous distillation of his political philosophy, Philip Pettit, author of the landmark work *Republicanism*, champions a simple standard for our most complex political judgments, offering a challenging ideal that nevertheless holds out a real prospect for social and democratic progress.

Whereas many thinkers define freedom as the absence of interference—we are left alone to do as we please—Pettit demands that in their basic life choices free persons should not even be subject to a power of interference on the part of others. This notion of freedom as non-domination offers a yardstick for gauging social and democratic progress and provides a simple, unifying standard for analyzing our most entangled political quandaries.

Pettit reaffirms the ideal, already present in the Roman Republic, of a free citizenry who enjoy equal status with one another, being individually protected by a law that they together control. After sketching a fresh history of freedom, he turns to the implications of the ideal for social, democratic, and international justice.

Should the state erect systems for delivering mandatory healthcare coverage to its citizens? Should voting be a citizen's only means of influencing political leaders? Are the demands of the United Nations to be heeded when they betray the sovereignty of the state? Pettit shows how these and other questions should be resolved within a civic republican perspective.

Concise and elegant in its rhetoric and ultimately radical in its reimagining of our social arrangements, *Just Freedom* is neither a theoretical treatise nor a practical manifesto, but rather an ardent attempt to elaborate the demands of freedom and justice in our time.

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### Editorial Review

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What principle can guide a politically divided world in resolving its most contentious issues? Pettit finds that principle in the ideal of universal freedom as nondomination. This understanding of freedom, Pettit argues, inheres in the republican tradition that emerged in the mixed constitution of ancient Rome, celebrated by Polybius, Cicero, and Livy, a tradition renewed in the post-Renaissance political philosophy of Northern Europe. Further analysis, however, reveals that modern thinkers such as Bentham, Paley, and Mill decisively broke with that tradition by defining freedom not as nondomination but rather as noninterference. In calling for a twenty-first-century rehabilitation of the republican understanding of freedom, Pettit advocates ambitious government efforts to protect all citizens from intimidation, give them resources to act on their free choices, and engage them in a broadly inclusive democracy. To pursue republican freedom in the global arena, Pettit outlines strategies for international agencies dealing with the prickly sovereignty of each nation and with glaring international disparities in resources. Sure to stir lively debate between progressives and conservatives. --Bryce Christensen

### Review

"Only Philip Pettit could offer us a 'moral GPS' that combines philosophical depth with practical advice for decision-making on issues ranging from taxation to social insurance to surveillance. I found *Just Freedom* to be a lively, compelling, and deeply useful book that opened my eyes to new ways of thinking from both an academic and a policymaking perspective."

- **Anne Marie Slaughter, president and CEO, New America Foundation, and Bert G. Kerstetter '66 University Professor Emerita of Politics and International Affairs, Princeton University**

"*Just Freedom* is a comprehensive vision of politics by one of the leading thinkers of our time. With great clarity and originality, Philip Pettit develops the idea of republican freedom as non-domination and pays close attention to what it means for institutions. To combine theory and practice in that way is a Herculean achievement."

- **Rainer Forst, professor of philosophy and political theory, Goethe University, and winner of the 2012 Leibniz Prize**

### About the Author

Philip Pettit is the L. S. Rockefeller University Professor of Politics and Human Values at Princeton University and Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the Australian National University. His many books include *Republicanism* and *On the People's Terms*.

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