The
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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CITIZEN? / *FALL 2008* / *REVIEWS*

A Bibliographic Review on the Meaning of Citizenship

It is evident, therefore, that we must begin by asking, Who is the citizen, and what is the meaning of the term? For here again there may be a difference of opinion.

—Aristotle, Book III, *Politics* (61)

It is no accident that the question of citizenship is intimately connected with the question of meaning. For Aristotle and the ancient Greeks, citizenship is synonymous with human flourishing. To be a citizen means to live the good life. Indeed, asking what it means to be a citizen is to ask the questions at the heart of human existence: Who am I? To what communities do I belong? To whom do I owe my loyalty? How am I to live my life?

While Aristotle answers these questions with reference to political community, oth- ers locate the good life elsewhere. The writer of the biblical book of Hebrews, for example, encourages Christians to remain steadfast in their faith, reminding them that their citizenship is not of this world, but the next. "For here we have no lasting city," the author writes, "but we are looking for the city that is to come" (Hebrews 13:14). Centuries later, Karl Marx envisions the good life primarily in the economic realm, where production enables human creativity and well-being. In contrast, the capitalist vision of the good life often has less to do with production and more with consumption: living well means choosing well. And, as twentieth-century resurgences of nationalism indicate, some conceive of the good life as that lived

among people with shared cultural and ethnic ties. Others, such as political philosopher Michael Walzer and Christian theologian Robin Lovin, suggest that the good life is not located exclusively in one realm.[1]

But even prior to the question of what it means to be a citizen is the question of identity: who is the citizen? In Aristotle's conception, only free, male natives were entitled to citizenship. Whole sectors of the population, including slaves, women, and foreigners, were excluded from living the good life. The modern era may have ushered in a universal conception of citizenship, but as U.S. history sadly demonstrates, "universal" citizenship often fails to guarantee equal citizenship rights to all people. Furthermore, even when equal, legal citizenship exists, the conditions that render it meaningful may not. Immigration and our increasingly global connections also confront us with the question of who counts as a citizen and what kind of citizens we are.

In the literature that follows, authors from a broad spectrum of disciplines tackle the question of what it means to be a citizen. Some contest the content and boundaries of citizenship in a postnational world. Others worry about the erosion of citizenship in the face of technological advances and economic changes, while still others see these developments as opening new avenues for even more robust conceptions of citizenship. Finally, several authors explore the fruitful and fraught ways that the religious, economic, and political realms inform our conceptions of citizenship. Regardless of their conclusions, however, each investigation recognizes that not merely citizenship, but human flourishing and the good life are at stake.

The History of Citizenship

Philosophical consideration of citizenship has a long and dynamic history. Nearly every political philosopher in the Western tradition, including Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Karl Marx, and John Stuart Mill, addresses the nature of citizenship and its significance. A fitting place to begin is the classical investigation in Book III of Aristotle's *Politics*, where he reflects on the identity, responsibilities, and moral virtues of the citizen as "one who shares in governing and being governed" (81).

An account of the trajectory of thought on citizenship from Aristotle onward can be found in the political writings of French thinker Benjamin Constant. In his 1819 speech delivered at the Athénée Royal, Constant reflects on the difference between ancient and modern conceptions of citizenship. Derek Heater provides more recent historical treatments of the concept of citizenship, surveying the idea of

citizenship from its origins to current theoretical discussions, while Rogers M. Smith provides a history of citizenship in the U.S., paying particular attention to those who have been denied full citizenship due to race, gender, or ethnicity.

Walter Berns and Paul Rahe also focus their historical investigations on the American development of citizenship as expressed in the republican tradition. Berns considers citizenship through the lens of patriotism from the ancient Greeks to the American republic, focusing on how patriotism has been and can continue to be fostered in the United States. Rahe traces the influence of ancient republican ideals in the creation of the American republic.

Susan Collins's work indicates that despite centuries of reflection on the question of citizenship, its meaning still demands articulation today. She returns to Aristotle's thought in an effort to confront the limits of liberal conceptions of citizenship. Both Wendy Brown and Dana Villa offer versions of a critical, Socratic citizenship. For Villa, Socrates provides a needed model for a philosophical citizenship that posits moral and intellectual integrity—more so than civic virtues—as central to citizenship. She questions the recent consensus that citizenship requires identification with a group, cause, or service. Her account traces the influence of Socrates' conception of philosophical citizenship in several modern thinkers, including Mill, Friedrich Nietzsche, Max Weber, Hannah Arendt, and Leo Strauss.

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The Changing Face of Democratic Citizenship

Much of the literature on democratic citizenship focuses on what good citizens look like: what qualities they possess and how they are formed. William A. Galston and Richard Dagger, for example, discuss the virtues citizens must have for the healthy functioning of contemporary democracies, while Eamonn Callan and Stephen Macedo focus on the role of education in creating good citizens.

But with the creation of the European Union and pressing immigration issues in the United States, a critical question for democratic citizenship is not only *how* good citizens are created but *who* qualifies as a citizen. Ruth Rubio-Marín argues in favor of full citizenship for all those who reside within liberal democratic states. Peter H. Schuck and Rogers M. Smith explore the case of illegal aliens in the U.S., and Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal considers how guestworkers in Europe challenge traditional, national conceptions of citizenship.

While immigration challenges the traditional boundaries of citizenship—changing the actual, physical face of citizenship in different nation-states—another change for democratic citizenship occurs less through encounters with other faces than with inter- faces. New digital technologies, such as the internet, are reshaping traditional forms of civic participation available to citizens. Cass R. Sunstein, Mark Tremayne, and Stefanie Sanford all consider the various ways new technologies shape citizens and the future of civic discourse.

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Cosmopolitan Citizenship

As citizens, where should our allegiance lie? Are we citizens of groups and nation- states, or citizens of the world? What bearing does our conception of citizenship have on our ability to pursue ideals such as justice and equality? How does our conception of citizenship impact policy decisions and political deliberation? Are local allegiances at odds with universal commitments?

As early as the fourth century B.C.E., the Cynic philosophers initiated discussion of some of these questions by challenging the view of citizens as *politēs*, those who owed loyalty to particular city states. Rather, they declared themselves "citizens of the cosmos" or cosmopolitans. Contemporary treatments of citizenship continue this discussion, exploring the meaning of citizenship with an eye to the different communities to which we belong and the moral ramifications of those identifications.

Martha Nussbaum, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and Seyla Benhabib offer varying accounts of cosmopolitan citizenship. *For Love of Country?* presents wide-ranging responses to Nussbaum's cosmopolitan position as articulated in "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" (included in the volume), where she highlights the dangers of patriotism and argues that our primary loyalty should be to the community of humankind. Respondents include Appiah, Richard Falk, Amy Gutmann, Judith Butler, and Charles Taylor. Appiah refuses to choose between local and world citizenship, developing a "rooted" or "partial cosmopolitanism" that draws on the metaphor of conversation to strike a balance between particular and universal identities, values, and responsibilities. Benhabib addresses the difficulty of enforcing universal human rights norms when political legitimacy resides in national governments. In *Cosmopolitics*, the contributors push the Nussbaum debate further, examining the relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism.

The continuing importance of national citizenship has also received significant attention. Nussbaum's position is, in part, a response to that of pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty who encourages patriotism among the American left with the aim of reinvigorating its social and political agenda. On the social science front, Craig Calhoun warns against the dangers of a cosmopolitan politics that aims to transcend the nation, arguing that nations are critical for creating identities, establishing democratic

institutions, and mobilizing political action. Will Kymlicka's work offers a liberal multiculturalist perspective that recognizes the assimilative power of the nation-state and advocates legal frameworks that ensure cultural rights and autonomy to ethnic minorities within nation-states.

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Religious Citizenship

As sociologist José Casanova notes in *Public Religions in the Modern World*, there is nothing new about religion being public. But the forceful and simultaneous reassertion of religion's public presence across the world—from Islamic fundamentalism to Catholic liberation theology—demands a new look at the relationship between religion and modernity. Before Casanova's re-evaluation of secularization theory, most scholars assumed that religion was on its way out, if not already dead. But the past few decades have provided a growing body of work that examines the role of religion in public life, including the relationship between political life and the religious belief of citizens.

One of the most significant of these discussions focuses on the place of religious discourse in the political arena. Should religious citizens be able to support their political views with religious reasons or should they, as the political philosopher John Rawls suggests, be held to the standard of "public reason," ensuring their speech is accessible to all? Robert Audi defends a Rawlsian position, while Nicholas

Wolterstorff argues that placing restraints on religious reasons cannot be justified epistemologically and violates the central values of liberal democracy: liberty and freedom of conscience. Similarly, Christopher Eberle argues that in a liberal state that values liberty of conscience, there is no moral alternative to allowing citizens to support coercive laws, even if they can only do so with religious reasons.

On a broader level, are the demands of faith somehow at odds with the obligations of citizenship, as Nancy L. Rosenblum's collection puts it? The essays gathered here—from Ronald F. Thiemann, Michael McConnell, and Kent Greenawalt, among others—examine the complex relationship between church and state in religiously plu- ralistic democracies. J. Caleb Clanton addresses this issue philosophically, proposing his own deliberative democratic model that accommodates religious and non-religious citizens alike. Thiemann argues that the metaphor of the separation of church and state that has guided our thinking about the relationship between religion and public life— especially in the Supreme Court's legal reasoning—is confusing and obscures the underlying values of equality and liberty at the core of the First Amendment, as well as the variety of ways religion and government interact. He argues that religion helps shape pluralistic citizens and stipulates norms for their discourse, including public accessibility, mutual respect, and moral integrity.

It may be the case that the demands of faith enrich democratic citizenship, but are the obligations of citizenship good for faith? Charles T. Mathewes and Stanley Hauerwas address this question from a Christian theological perspective. Mathewes offers an Augustinian account of public life, arguing that the public engagement of Christian believers enriches not only public life but also Christian citizens' faith. In contrast, Hauerwas and co-author William H. Willimon argue that by virtue of baptism, Christians' citizenship is transferred from this world to the kingdom of heaven, and Christians are to live as resident aliens amidst the foreign culture that is democratic liberalism. Jason C. Bivins explores "Christian anti-liberalism" as it appears in Christian citizens' protests against the government. His work includes case studies of Catholic activists Daniel and Philip Berrigan, the Home School Legal Defense Association, and the evangelical Sojourners Community.

Significant social scientific attention also focuses on the impact of religious citizens' action in the public realm. David E. Campbell's collection examines how religious citi- zens' faith influenced their voting in the 2004 American presidential election. It looks specifically at the roles of Catholics, Evangelical Protestants, Latinos, the black church, and the religious Left. Christian Smith's volume offers a look at the impact of religious citizens' faith as it manifests itself in social movements. His study includes chapters on the black church in the Civil Rights Movement, the Iranian Revolution, the Solidarity Movement in Poland, and political insurgency in Nicaraguan and Salvadorian churches. Steven M. Tipton provides a major review of the role of religious citizens' activism through mainline Protestant church lobbies in Washington over the past three decades.

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Consumer Citizenship

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, many Americans wondered how they might be of service to their fellow citizens and their country. In a speech later that day, President Bush assured Americans that their response would be critical and that citizens could best contribute to the common good by going shopping. While the President's advice no doubt seems strange to some, it points to one of the central dis- cussions regarding citizenship: the relationship between citizenship and economics. Is the shopping mall really the new voting booth? Does the price of patriotism register in dollars and cents? Money talks, but can it say the pledge of allegiance? Recent literature on these questions suggests that, for better or worse, what it means to be a citizen has much to do with what it means to be a consumer.

Several studies document the increasing centrality of economic citizenship to poli- tics in the U.S. Lizabeth Cohen details how mass consumption has become central to American citizenship since World War II, rendering synonymous notions of the good consumer and the good citizen. With class, race, and

gender in mind, she evaluates the claim that a "consumer republic" would lead to increased economic and political prosperity and a more egalitarian society. Meg Jacobs's political and social history of economic citizenship challenges the view that increased material prosperity necessarily leads to a decline in political consciousness. She maps the relationship between ordinary consumers and policy-making elites in government, showing how "purchasing-power" or redistributive economic policies have been at the center of American politics in the twentieth century.

For others, the merging of citizen and consumer identities portends the decline of citizenship and civil society. Matthew A. Crenson and Benjamin Ginsberg argue that the government's day-to-day operations happen increasingly without active participation from its citizens, reducing citizens to customers. Joseph Turow examines how advertising media divide Americans into marketing categories that we come to identify with ourselves, leaving us less and less likely to engage with those in different categories. The morality of consumption is explored in Martin Daunton and Matthew Hilton's collection of essays on the relationship between citizenship and material culture, while Wendell Berry questions the U.S.'s preference for industrialization over agrarian economics and reflects on the moral ramifications for human life.

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