

Of Citizenship, Virtue, and the Administrative Imperative: Deconstructing Aristotelian Civic Republicanism

Over the years, the public administration literature has generated many different strands in the definition and conceptualization of citizenship. In theory and in practice, our understanding of what it means to be a citizen is in danger of being muddled amid the diversity of perspectives and the epistemological confusion generated in the contemporary discourse on the subject. My aim in this article is to clarify and elaborate a common thread that runs through our contemporary understanding of citizenship and to advance the general thesis that our brand of theorizing reflects an earlier tradition that embodies the conservative ethos of Aristotelian republicanism. Can such a tradition survive in modern American society?

A cursory glance at the voluminous literature on citizenship reveals a brewing crisis of definition and concept formation (Frederickson 1982; Bailey 1977; Hart 1984; Cooper 1984; Gawthrop 1984; McGregor 1984; Rohr 1984; Nigro and Richardson 1990). As a result, it has become difficult to initiate a common debate on a topic that is so crucial to human society, to the nation-state, and to scholarship in the field of public administration. Rather, we see that much of the contemporary debate on citizenship—either as a right, a virtue, or a community—has presented a moment of truth for neoliberal theorists (Kymlicka 1989, 1995; Miller 1992; Dworkin 1989; Rawls 1971; Gutmann 1992).

Citizenship as a value and a construct has been conceptualized variously as the *status* and *role* that define the authority and the obligations of individual members of a community (Cooper 1984); peers who share equally in the distribution of authority (Flathman 1981; Walzer 1970), political status, and role guaranteed in terms of qualifications, rights, and obligations by constitutions and statutes (Lowi 1981); man in society (Mosher 1941); a result of the interaction between the legal and ethical dimensions of the Constitution (Long 1981); an expression of one's membership in a political community (Kymlicka and Norman 1994); civil "temper" coupled with attitudes and values concerning the nature of political authority (Sniderman 1981); an institutional status from within which a

person can address governments and other citizens and make claims about human rights (Van Gunsteren 1988); an embodiment of virtue and moral character (Hart 1984); and an enhanced and ennobled public motivated by a shared concern for the common good (Frederickson 1991).

Since the 1970s, there has been an expanding interest and a gradual reconstruction of the concepts of citizenship as they are connected to both the theory and practice of public administration. Recently, much of this interest has been sparked by a number "of recent political events and trends throughout the world—increasing voter apathy and long-term welfare dependency in the United States, the resurgence of nationalist movements in eastern Europe, the stress created by an increasingly multicultural and multi-racial population in Western Europe, the backlash against the welfare state in Thatcher's England, and the failure of environmental policies that rely on voluntary citizen co-operation" (Kymlicka and Norman 1994). As was the case in the field's earlier years, the interest seeks an informed,

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active, and strong citizenry that participates in the policy process with administrators, legislators, and interest groups. Since then, “citizenship as direct involvement in collective public activity has gradually evolved to become citizenship as the connection between individuals and units of government—cities, counties, school districts, states, and the national government” (Frederickson 1997, 13). The modern development assumes that a vigorous citizenry is compatible with an effective public administration and that it is, in fact, essential to effective government (Frederickson and Chandler 1984). While citizenship is linked to the idea of individual entitlement on the one hand and the idea of attachment to a particular community on the other hand (excepting any contradiction), this arrangement imposes a *prima facie* obligation that requires one to be a “good” citizen, a “virtuous” citizen, a “responsible” citizen, or a “participatory” citizen.

Epistemological Contentions in Contemporary Discourse

The contemporary thrust of citizenship theory, as it is conceptualized in public administration, poses a danger because there are three different strands that sometimes are conflated in these discussions: “citizenship-as-legal-status, that is, as full membership in a particular political community; citizenship-as-desirable-activity, where the extent and quality of one’s citizenship is a function of one’s participation in that community” (Kymlicka and Norman 1994, 353); and citizenship-as-obligation, where citizenship is considered a matter of having paid one’s dues (by virtue of being a citizen), the failure of which will either impose sanctions or challenge the authenticity of one’s citizenship (sometimes considered *nonpatriotic*). By contrasting citizenship-as-activity with an alternate conception of citizenship-as-status, we prematurely limit the argument as to whether citizenship can be construed as a matter of rights, law, or of some kind of ethereal transcendental phenomena—that is, if we are able to stretch our imagination further.

We can further elaborate on Terry Cooper’s (1984) conception of citizenship as imposing three primary conditions: status (privileged or entitlement), role (functionality), and obligation (instrumentality). But what seems to be missing here is the normative dimension—whether, in fact, citizenship can be a value in and of itself without any condition attached to it. It seems to me that the primary cause of this epistemological confusion in conceptualizing a single construct is a general bias that views citizenship as non-value-neutral. The idea that the exercise of citizenship as a public office carries with it an obligation to consider the individual as well as the larger social and community interests suggests an intriguing question. What

happens to individuals who fail to fulfill this obligation? Do they retain or lose their citizenship rights? How can this obligation be accommodated within mainstream American socioculture, which emphasizes individualism, private property, due process, and a competitive free-market ethos that echoes Darwin’s survival of the fittest?

In this article, I argue this danger is mainly the result of the post hoc activism engendered by the Aristotelian tradition, which historically seems to be at the core of our understanding of citizenship theory and, at the same time, engenders a contradiction that is fundamentally opposed to our egalitarian liberal democracy. The tendency to view citizenship as a relative construct is elaborated by Kymlicka and Norman (1994) and Kymlicka (1995), whose discussions focus on an ideal of differentiated citizenship that not only recognizes cultural and economic differences (or inequalities), but also confers relative rights. In fact, their argument is more about relative rights (as opposed to dual obligations of citizenship), unequal access to public goods, and how one’s socioeconomic condition can single-handedly deny one the opportunity to exercise the full benefits of legal citizenship relative to others. For example, while most people pay taxes to fix public roads, they may not have enough money to buy the car that would enable them to drive on the roads. While most people pay taxes to build new airport facilities, they may not be able to afford the ticket that would allow them to make use of the airport.

The account presented here is not necessarily about the duality of obligation—one to the self and the other to the state. Rather, my emphasis is the fundamental dichotomy between the rights and obligations of citizenship. I argue that citizenship rights do not confer a unilateral or primal obligation to the state or community. Contrary to the Aristotelian tradition, which seeks an instrumental litmus test and in which one must participate in the polis in order to authenticate one’s citizenship—a view that is fundamentally similar to contemporary discourse and understanding of citizenship roles in our political system—this article argues that citizenship is a matter of rights, and individual obligation to the state (community) is a matter of discretionary choice. While communitarians (Sandel 1982; MacIntyre 1984; Taylor 1985) contend that civic roles (authenticating one’s citizenship) should be defined by the values and interests of the general community, we run into the same chicken-and-egg problem posed by the conservative Aristotelian civic ethos. Are you a citizen as an irrefutable condition, or are you a citizen after the fact? Citizenship as an *a priori* condition is not authenticated by a communally defined virtue, but is grounded in the very justification that embodies any universal expression of rights. By drawing on the contradictory role of citizenship in the liberal state, this article offers a two-dimen-

sional approach to citizenship: normative and instrumental perspectives grounded in political and economic rights, respectively.

Aristotle: Civic Republicanism as Political Morality

It would be a gross understatement to suggest that much of Aristotle's political inquiries were anchored in considerations of the relationship (or rather coexistence) between the *polis* (community/state), the *polites* (citizens), and *politeia* (the constitution). For the simple fact that Aristotle granted primacy to the citizen in relation to the state, it behooves us to consider whether the state should be obligated to the citizen, rather than the other way round. When we say that "a citizen is a member of a city, we are also asking the question as to what constitutes membership of a city?" (Aristotle 1962, 104). In Book III of *The Politics*, Aristotle defines a citizen as one who participates in judgment and "officially determined authority," that is, holding legal, political, or administrative office—a definition he considers more applicable to democracy than all other forms of government. For Aristotle, "citizen" is a species with distinct and recognizable marks—a particular class of men to which no one who is constantly engaged in commercial or manual labor can possibly belong. In this particular case, Plato's laborer class would not belong, perhaps the guardians, but neither would the slaves, as well as the youth—because they are not yet superannuated.

"As soon as a man becomes entitled (by carrying out some deserved act) to participate in authority, deliberative or judicial, we deem him to be a citizen of that state" (Aristotle 1962, 104). Aristotle's argument focuses on the functional and instrumental aspects of citizenship and essentially negates issues of rights. When he talks about entitlement, he discusses it as a status that is conferred after the fact, that is, after one has done something to contribute to the general welfare of the polis. In the Aristotelian republic, one's citizenship is relative to some concrete or "thick" measurement. The criterion of measurement is the extent of an individual's participation in the community or state, but in such a way that participation enhances the good life for all members (citizens) of the community. On this very account, expressions of individualism and self-interest deny one an account of his or her citizenship. To the extent that active participation in the polis exonerates one's citizenship, all considerations of citizenship must be done in lieu of the polis (state or community). The polis is a universal community, whereas citizenship reflects a universal activity. To construct a good polis, we need citizens who have the rational ability to control their passions and appetites. To the extent that the law helps to impart virtue

on the citizens, the project of the polis becomes one of *human flourishing* and virtue. Hence, a polity that tries to collapse the distinctions in human nature is going to be problematic.

In his "Outline of a Theory of Citizenship," Bryan Turner (1990, 193) argues that a theory of citizenship must also produce a theory of the state. He points out that the state provides the principal element in the maintenance and development of social rights, as it is the political instrument through which political movements seek redress of their circumstances through the legitimization of their claims against society. While the idea of claims implies an expression of rights, the issue that Aristotle's republicanism raises is how these rights become legitimate or authentic, that is, granted some fundamental entitlements backed by law. In an Aristotelian world, the criteria for guaranteeing citizenship rights include wealth, property, and participation. The state exists for noble actions: "Those who do noble deeds are contributing to the quality of political association, and those who contribute most are entitled to a larger share than those who, though they may be equal or even superior in birth and family, but are inferior in noble deeds and so in the essential goodness they bring to the polis (community)" (Aristotle 1962, 121).

For Aristotle, the instrumentality of one's participation and contribution to the good life in the polis confers authentic citizenship not as a matter of right, but as a matter of doing that which brings the highest good (happiness) for the community. While he agreed that the nature of participation depends on the type of *politeia* that exists between the people and the state, he maintains that a certain level of superiority or nobility of action on the individual's part is a prerequisite for any claim to public office and privilege. Among the prerequisites are good birth and ownership of property, moral qualities (virtue), justice, courage, and a high level of culture and education. "Men are not equal in these respects and any state which ignores this fact and thinks in terms of absolute equality must be one of the wrong types of deviations—wrong types of constitutions" (Aristotle 1962, 127). Just like Plato before him, Aristotle recognizes and accepts that there is inequality in nature, and any state that aims to satisfy the essential purpose of providing the good life must recognize this inequality. To the extent that states are different, we can expect their conceptions of inequality, fairness, and justice to be different because these are relative to each given circumstance and for the persons concerned.

Again, the missing link here is that Aristotle does not consider equality, justice, or fairness in the practical sense of according to each the same amount of goodness that has been accorded to others. For him, these normative values—though worthy of pursuit by any responsible state—are relative based on individual capabilities as permitted

by natural possibilities. If we embrace the Aristotelian conception of citizenship—no matter how much we deny it—we necessarily embrace the implied inequality. The liberal argues that citizens have been treated as free and equal if they have been given equal amounts of all-purpose resources (Dworkin 1981), or if inequalities can be justified as being for the good of the worst off (Rawls 1971). On the other hand, Aristotelians “hold that citizens have been treated as free *only* if they have been given the necessary conditions for the exercise of choice and practical reason—among which will be education, political participation, and the absence of degrading labor” (Nussbaum 1990, 216). They have been treated as equals only if the whole life of each one of them has been considered with rich imagination (Nussbaum and Sen 1989) and, as a result, each one has been given whatever he or she needs to be in a position to live a rich and fully human life, up to the limit permitted by nature (Nussbaum 1990, 217).

Following Aristotle, Rousseau, and John Stuart Mill, many modern philosophers assume that political participation itself will teach people responsibility and toleration. They place their fate in the activity of participation as the means whereby individuals become accustomed to the duties of citizenship. They believe that as political participation enlarges the minds of individuals, familiarizes them with interests that lie beyond the immediacy of personal circumstances and environment, they will acknowledge that public concerns are the proper ones to pay attention to (Oldfield 1990). However, in light of the political realities of the modern state, political participation can hardly be taken for granted as a universally binding or desirable axiom. Political participation can be a result of the scope or nature of political or civil liberties granted to the citizens by the state. When these liberties are circumscribed—say, in an oligarchy, dictatorship, or other forms of authoritarian systems, or where severe discriminatory practices have become institutionalized—the vigorous exercise of political participation as a condition of authentic citizenship becomes inconsequential.

It is even more problematic when wealth and property are used as determinants for political participation and when inequalities are accepted as a matter of fact, as long as everyone has a fundamental *equality of opportunity*. The “paradox of the doctrine of equality of opportunity is that it leads to an inequality of consequences, and thus, is often held to be philosophically incoherent as a position. Given an ideology of personal achievement (individualistic ethic), the equalization of educational opportunities would give all children a basic education but would not eradicate inequality of outcomes in a situation which emphasized competitiveness and personal aspiration” (Turner 1986, 114).

Civic Virtue and the Administrative Warrant

The issue of virtue is central to the ideals of Aristotelian civic republicanism. Aristotle seeks to be the rational voice of the best citizens of the best city-state; he holds that the city-state is the unique political form in which the virtues of human life can be genuinely and fully exhibited. Human beings, like members of all other species, have a specific nature, and that nature is such that humans have certain aims and goals and move by nature towards a specific *telos*. Every activity, every inquiry, every practice aims at some good—that at which humans characteristically aim. For Aristotle, this is the “good”—which is located in and partially defined by the characteristics of the polis, and yet also cosmic and universal. He calls it *eudaimonia*—blessedness, happiness, and prosperity. It is the state of being well and doing well at being well.

The virtues are precisely those qualities that will enable individuals to achieve *eudaimonia*, and the lack of which will frustrate his movement toward that *telos*. What constitutes “the good” for man is a complete human life lived at its best, and the exercise of the virtues is a necessary and central part of such a life, not a mere preparatory exercise to secure such a life. Therefore, one can expect the immediate outcome of the exercise of virtue to be a choice that issues in the right action. It is the correctness of the end of the purposive choice that virtue causes. Taken together, virtues are dispositions not only to act in particular ways, but also to feel in particular ways. To act virtuously is not to act against inclination; it is to act from inclination formed by the cultivation of virtues. Intellectual virtues are acquired through teaching, and the virtues of character from habitual exercise. Therefore, each individual must act as an independent and responsible moral agent.

Thus, for Aristotle, virtue is a partnership of ruling and being ruled with others who must be as morally autonomous as oneself (Cooper 1984, 143). He seems to consider “goodness” and “virtue” in functional or instrumental terms, in terms of “what I can do,” not “what I am.” The founders were familiar with Aristotle’s argument that the “good man” and the “good citizen” are not necessarily the same, except in the ideal state, but they also understood his view that virtue—oral and intellectual ability—is a quality that is always needed for the exercise of power. The founders were also receptive to the idea of moral individualism because they “understood that the key to a successful democracy lay more in the quality of the citizens than in the quality of their leaders. Hence, we must seek virtue in our citizens and honor in our bureaucrats” (Hart 1984, 114).

As Hart (1984, 114) argues, “the primary responsibility of the virtuous citizen is to ascertain the truth about the

moral nature of the individual, to assimilate that truth to one's self (one's goodness), and then to cast it in terms of one's civic life (the goodness of the *polis*)." By "swearing" an oath to serve the United States and its citizens (an act of choice), the Constitution imposes an administrative imperative on public bureaucrats—to preserve the norms of the state and the values upon which it was built, to ensure equality of opportunity for all, meritocracy in service, due process, punishment conditional on intent, fairness and equity, public accountability, and political responsiveness. Virtue in the administrative context transcends civility, forbearance, moral philosophy, and, above all, a belief in the regime's values and the necessary sacrifices they entail. To the extent that administrators embody the regime's values in action, they become moral agents in the mutual encounter between bureaucrats and the citizenry.

Iterations in Citizenship Theory

As one of the early pioneers in citizenship theory, T.H. Marshall (1965, 117) cautions that the preservation of economic inequalities has been made more difficult by the enrichment of the status of citizenship. "Instead of accepting citizenship as a political and social status, modern conservatives have sought to reassert the role of the market (wealth and wealth creation) and have rejected the idea that citizenship confers a status independent of economic standing" (Kymlicka and Norman 1994, 357). At the heart of Marshall's account of citizenship "lies the contradiction between the formal political equality of the franchise, and the persistence of extensive social and economic inequality, ultimately rooted in the character of the capitalist market place and the existence of private property" (Turner 1990, 191). "Through education in its relations with occupational structure, citizenship operates as an instrument of social stratification" (Marshall 1965, 110).

Marshall sees citizenship as a shared identity that integrates previously excluded groups (especially in British society) and provides a source of national unity. He is particularly concerned with integrating the working classes (the same group that Aristotle excludes), whose lack of education and economic resources excludes them from the "common culture," which should have been a "common possession and heritage." Marshall's analysis is based on cultural factors (identity), class, and normative considerations. In most postwar political theory, "the fundamental normative concepts were democracy (for evaluating procedures) and justice (for evaluating outcomes). Citizenship was usually seen as derivative of democracy and justice—that is, a citizen is someone who has democratic rights and claims of justice" (Kymlicka and Norman 1994, 369). For Marshall, the fullest expression of citizenship requires a liberal democratic welfare state that can guarantee basic

civil, political, and social rights. "Where any of these rights is withheld or violated, people will be marginalized and unable to participate" (Marshall 1965, 78).

This is often called "passive" or "private" citizenship "because of its emphasis on passive entitlements and the absence of any obligation to participate in public life" (Kymlicka and Norman 1994, 354). Hence, "the challenge of contemporary advocates of citizenship theory is how to reconcile the passive acceptance of citizenship rights with the active exercise of citizenship responsibilities and virtues, including economic self-reliance, political participation, and even civility" (Kymlicka and Norman 1994, 355). In further exploring the active-passive trajectory of citizenship theory, I adopt a modified version of Richard Flathman's (1981) typology (table 1). In this regard,

[H]igh citizenship suggests that citizens are free, equal, and engaged with one another in pursuing matters of high and distinctive human import. As a distinctly human activity, citizenship thus becomes the most important feature of political society. In low citizenship, the ideal of "high citizenship" is unachievable and, hence, irrelevant to political life and practice in the modern nation-state. The continuous, intense, morally uplifting interactions that the ideal presumes can obtain, if at all, only among sub-groups within the large, complex, and impersonal societies of the modern world. Thus, citizenship is unlikely to be the primary identity or the consuming passion of men and women living in complex and highly differentiated societies, where politics competes for time and attention with class, ethnicity, religion, and family, and where these latter four do not draw people together but rather separate and divide them. (Walzer 1989, 218)

Simply put, "when the scale of political organization changes, unity and trust collapse and a different understanding of citizenship is required" (Walzer 1989, 214).

In citizenship studies, one of the most influential theorists of what is known as "cultural pluralism" (differenti-

Table 1 Comparative Assumptions on Citizenship, Authority, and Participation

	Objective	Subjective	
High Citizenship		Aristotle Pericles Rousseau Arendt Pateman Thompson Walzer	Active
	Schumpeter Downs Berelson Dahl Lipset Sartori		
Low Citizenship			Passive

ated citizenship) is Iris Marion Young. The general premise is that genuine equality requires us to affirm rather than ignore group differences. According to Young (1989), the attempt to create a universal conception of citizenship, which transcends group differences, is fundamentally unjust because it oppresses historically excluded groups. Hence, culturally excluded groups often have distinctive needs that can be met only through group-differentiated policies. While this view poses the challenge of how we go about creating a human community with a unified sense of purpose and mutual interest, it suggests that citizenship as a group construct is relative. If we reduce it to a moral imperative, then it becomes an entitlement that can be awarded on the basis of our differences rather than our commonalities. This brings us back to the issue of political participation as an instrumental part of the ideal of civic republicanism.

We know that Machiavelli's *Discourses* is a case study in civic Republican politics. To the extent that it encourages political participation (without the exclusionary clauses), it represents a wholesome expression of positive liberalism. Civic republicanism sees political participation as instrumental in bringing about political liberty—hence, participation is a good indication of virtue and people can find (discover) themselves through participation in politics. But the unanswered question remains, especially from the perspective of cultural pluralists, who advocate a kind of differentiated citizenship that caters to the unique realities and experiences of each group: How can I discover *myself* through political participation when the institutional context for participation is not structured to reflect what I consider to be the isolated circumstances of my own existence?

Citizenship in the Liberal State: How Paradoxical?

According to J.G.A. Pocock (1975, 462), “the American founders occupied a *Machiavellian Moment*—a crisis in the relations between personality and society, virtue and corruption—but at the same time stood at a moment in history when that problem was being either left behind or admitted insoluble.” By contrast, in the liberal order “government is segregated from society in order to serve it. One such control is transformed citizenship, where citizen is no longer the role you play in government but the role you occupy in the gap that has been created between society and government. While voting and advocacy—the primary mediating activities of liberal citizenship—are important, they constitute a complete definition of citizenship in neither theory nor practice” (Racine 1995, 446). They only reflect, in the Aristotelian tradition, the participatory or political aspects of citizenship.

The principle underlying citizenship in the modern liberal state is increasingly one of equality in principle, if not in fact, and which provides legitimate warrant for citizens to invoke specific right claims against the state. But it becomes problematic when one has to re-earn those rights by engaging in acts that accord primacy to the interest of the state or community. In this particular case, the idea of equality and the concept of rights become conditional, some citizens having more than others and some less than the rest. While all citizens retain their basic constitutional rights (that is, civil liberties as granted in the Bill of Rights), the structure of society engenders a level of functional inequality that opens up more possibilities for some to excel more than the rest and in many fundamental ways. I propose that in liberal societies, two strands of citizenship explain this phenomenon: normative and instrumental citizenship (table 2).

Table 2 A Typology of Relative Citizenship: Normative and Instrumental Dimensions

	Political	Economic
Normative	David Hart H.G. Frederickson Emmanuel Kant Terry Cooper John Rohr John Rawls	T.H. Marshall Louis Althusser Antonio Gramsci Karl Marx Michel Foucault
Instrumental	Aristotle Machiavelli Hobbes Walzer	Plato Iris Marion Young

Normative citizenship is driven by natural law and is encapsulated in the political and constitutional origins of the state. The natural act of being born in a particular state, being naturalized, or being born of a certain parentage confers an irrefutable right of citizenship. While these are generally political rights, they reinforce irrevocable conditions that cannot be challenged, no matter how evolving social and economic arrangements distort or magnify differences and inequalities in society. As socioeconomic status reclassifies society into upper-income, middle-income, and lower-income classes, the U.S. Bill of Rights remains (or ought to remain) a fundamental anchor that equalizes social differences both in the eyes of the law and in the distribution of public goods or other economic benefits of citizenship. If we agree that the pursuit of justice is a virtue that any good society should embrace, we also should recognize that as economic inequality disengages individuals from one another, normative citizenship binds and sustains them in the same political estate.

As Brian Cook (1998, 226) points out, public administration as a political institution helps to lend a regime its distinctive character. But in carrying out the law, administrative agencies often create particular categories or classes of citizenship and define the proper relations among those

classes. In doing so, public administration also shapes behavior, the perceptions that citizens hold of one another, and the experiences they have in specific contexts (for instance, between employer and employee). To the extent that “citizen preferences and the continually evolving dynamic of relations among them influence the expression of collective purposes both directly and indirectly through the various avenues available in a democracy” (Cook 1998, 225), “the role of liberal justice, therefore, should be to find principles appropriate for a society in which people disagree fundamentally over many questions, including such metaphysical questions as the nature and character of personal identity” (Gutmann 1992, 126).

Instrumental citizenship, on the other hand, is driven by a person’s socioeconomic and political status. It is anchored in an economic and political foundation. Wealth, education, and other perquisites generally associated with upward mobility engender an individual’s or group’s access to economic and political opportunities that are not generally available to all. It creates unequal possibilities for access to many public and social goods, including the opportunity to participate, directly or indirectly, in processes that shape the nature of political discourse and public policy outcomes. To the extent this participation and access is not possible for all, instrumental citizenship creates as well as reinforces social inequalities. While our liberal economic system supports individual effort, private ownership, individual freedom, and a free-market system, the inherent contradiction lies in its individualist and reductionist emphasis. As communitarians preach community, our liberal system preaches individualism. While the “egalitarian provision of social rights involves an individuation of the population in order to achieve adequate administrative and bureaucratic conditions for social justice; it is the notion of *equality of outcome* which appears to be incompatible with individualism as the expression of autonomy” (Turner 1986, 121). We may profess equality of citizenship in theory, but in practice, it is the *inequality* of citizenship that we seem to experience. How to reconcile these two contrasting themes is the central dilemma facing contemporary discourse on citizenship.

Of Obligation, Self-Interest, and the Common Good

The tendency to view citizenship as an instrumental outcome reinforces the class-based nature of society. While it creates a distinction between “good” and “bad” citizens based on some abstract criteria that may be relevant to the community, the problem is, how does one go about being a good citizen, and when is being a good citizen relevant or rewarding? Therefore, it is necessary to ask, if citizenship imposes an obligation, what kind of obligation does it

impose? There are two possibilities here: normative and political obligation. Normative obligation is a matter of personal choice to know the difference between what is right and what is wrong—to exercise free will, value judgment, “love thy neighbor as thyself” (in the Christian admonition), and to safeguard and respect life for its own sake. Political obligation means the external requirements and demands imposed on members of the political community, such as voting, paying taxes, going to work, driving on the right side of the road, obeying traffic conventions, joining the army, and being a good person for the sake of others.

Based on the two conceptions of obligation, one could argue that an adequate conception of citizenship must require a balance of rights and responsibilities between individual choice and societal demands within the context of mutual discourse. If moral beliefs depend on supporting social practices for their validity, then we have more reason to believe in a liberal politics of rights than in an Aristotelian politics of the common good (Gutmann 1992, 128). While the Aristotelian method of discovering the “good” by inquiring into the social meaning of roles is of little help in a society where most roles are not attached to a single “good” (Gutmann 1992, 129), an overemphasis on political obligation may mean fewer safeguards for an individual’s obligation to one’s self. While “individuals have a responsibility to cooperate with public officials by providing an enabling environment for the execution of public mandate, they at the same time have a right to equitable representation in the decision-making concerning public affairs as well as the distribution of incentives and benefits of cooperation” (Kymlicka and Norman 1994, 360).

Citizenship as dual obligation should be situated at the intersection where self-interest touches but does not overtake the public interest. There must be a renewed emphasis on what the modern state should rightly demand of its citizens, and what citizens should expect from the state they are a part of. The pursuit of self-interest is not necessarily evil. Even Kant himself thought that “the problem of good government can be solved even for a race of devils” (Galston 1991, 25). He argued that “even if each person pursued his/her own self-interest, without regard for the common good, one set of private interests would check another set of private interests” (Kymlicka and Norman 1994, 359). The real meaning of citizenship first demands the affirmation of rights as an irrefutable condition, and second, a reciprocal obligation founded on mutual interest.

Postmodern Contentions

The concept of citizenship faces a crucial challenge in the postmodern era. Beyond the ontological debate, it has

become obvious that the cultural and demographic diversity of the modern state, the dynamism of global trade and Internet communications have almost eliminated the relevance of physical distance in the relationship between societies. Some have even begun to mute the idea of borderless communities and global citizenship. While the orthodox school holds that “effective public administration of the future should be intimately tied to citizenship and to the effectiveness of public managers who work directly with the citizenry” (Frederickson 1982, 501), others argue that citizenship is unattainable in the complex and dynamic structure of contemporary American society (Gawthrop 1984). “To the extent that it is irreversible, the level of complexity—currently evidenced in our society can only be managed but not controlled—hence the future purpose of the craft of administrative management is the revitalization of the character of citizenship and the meaning of citizen” (Gawthrop 1984, 103).

There is an ongoing debate as to whether public administrators should behave and operate as administrative entrepreneurs in the market sense of the term (Osborne and Gaebler 1992), or as administrative conservators (Terry 1990) of the regime norms and sociocultural values upon which the United States was built. But the idea of treating public bureaucrats as entrepreneurs, which also suggests that citizens should be treated as customers, is highly problematic. We run the risk of changing the moral and social values on which our constitutional democracy is based. In the conventional sense, while entrepreneurs produce and sell goods and services, customers make choices and bargain with entrepreneurs over how much the goods and services will cost. But if we are talking about publicly provided goods and services, the conferring of rights and privileges, as well as their protection, must take precedence over cost and entrepreneurial efficiency. “When organizations are appropriated for narrow corporate interests, they effectively impede the broader liberal society from performing essential cultural and political functions” (Stever 1993, 429). The public domain is an ambiguous arena that does not offer many concrete choices that are generally available in the traditional market domain.

Conclusion

In this project, I have attempted to reinforce and broaden three sets of arguments: citizenship as a normative right and citizenship as an instrumental outcome. I have also highlighted the dual nature of obligation and how it is first a matter of choice rather than a response to some external commandment. The thread offered here is that, as a matter of first principle, right confers obligation to oneself more than it confers the right to be obligated to the state. The dichotomy between good and bad citizenship is a misno-

mer because, as a matter of right (entitlement), further qualifications of merit are unnecessary. When we demand that citizens be patriotic, are they obligated to do so, or is it a matter of choice? Can we force obligation? In everyday experience, we have our heroes as well as our villains, but when we extol and classify citizenship in terms of what a person does or does not do, citizenship becomes instrumental and thus negates the normative aspect.

In the American liberal state, for instance, we might consider two methods of recruitment into the armed forces. One is the volunteer system (by choice), and the other is the draft (by mandate). But experience informs us that in a situation in which one refuses to answer to the draft or flees to another country by absconding from an obligation to the state, the person essentially loses the fabric (self-regard) of what it means to be a citizen. We normally explain this behavior as being unpatriotic, selfish, and amoral. While this type of attitude is not suggested here, nor should it necessarily be condoned, it should be recognized only as an affirmation of right rather than a denial of citizenship. In the very difficult process of balancing fundamental rights with self-interest and obligation to the community, the concept of rights should be set apart as a moral category. In the normative sense of the term, the draft dodger is a tragic hero: Though his behavior may invoke the free-rider problem, he nonetheless remains a citizen with no less entitlement than all others who chose otherwise. Even when we deny him the right to vote, that should not be construed as an impediment to his citizenship, but as a punitive sanction meant to deter, as well as to affirm an acceptable social convention.

The same principle should apply to people who are not able to pay their taxes, either because they are poor or because there are other incumbent priorities that deny them the opportunity to pay their debts to society. Though they make no instrumental contribution to the welfare of society, and though their inability to pay seems to protect their self-interest more than the public good, they are still citizens to the best of that definition. Given the choice, “individuals are thus in both accounts primary, and society secondary, and the identification of individual interests is prior to and independent of the construction of any moral or social bonds between them” (MacIntyre 1992, 58). As Emile Durkheim suggests, all aspects of social phenomena and life tend toward an independent existence: “While laws are embodied in codes; the currents of daily life are recorded in statistical figures and historical monuments; fashions are preserved in costumes; and taste in works of art” (Durkheim 1994, 440).

Conversely, if we take Aristotle’s contention that a person’s citizenship is manifested through political participation and working for the good of the polis (the state), then citizenship can be affirmed to the extent that one does

something to advance the general interest of the polis. While this reinforces the class-based nature of society, it also conceives of citizenship as a means to an end rather than as an end in itself. Though this seems to be the dominant theme in the contemporary literature and discourse on citizenship, this article argues that the above conceptualization negates the normative aspect of citizenship, which should remain irrefutable. As a society, we must seek to revitalize the civic equalitarian possibilities that are implicit in our liberal tradition, but which are fading in our time. Experience confirms that in circumstances in which our administrative practices have not been known to correspond to our constitutional foundations, inequality prevails and our sense of communal citizenship dissipates.

It will require the role of legislators in reinforcing the laws or even making new ones where necessary, and the action of public bureaucrats as both moral and cultural agents of change and citizenship. Inequalities in socioeconomic status engender inequalities in access to political and economic opportunities. Thus, we must rely on our legislators and bureaucrats as “defenders of the faithful” to transform our society and its institutions in pursuit of the normative ethos. This can be done only if they aspire to bear objective witness to the sanctity of the equal protection clause and the due process provisions of the Fifth and Fourteenth amendments, respectively, as well as the horizontal privileges and immunities granted in Article IV of the U.S. Constitution.

From a “perspective that takes into account the essential nature of political institutions—that they are both instrumental to and constitutive of the regime—the normative implications are particularly deep and far-reaching for the theory and practice of public management” (Cook 1998, 227). The issue of access to health care has remained a Herculean task to reconcile among our public policy makers. Should we have a universal health insurance (as a right of citizenship), or should we resort to the instrumental opportunities provided by the market system? Today, about 35 million Americans do not have health insurance, and if we add those who may be in a transitional state, the figure may reach 60 million at any point in time. The irony is that

if we rely on everyone obtaining insurance coverage through his or her employment or paying out of pocket, this possibility can hardly come true. Alternatively, if we abandon those who cannot pay to their own fate, then the demand on indigent care will continue to increase dramatically, at a greater cost to society. While it might be permissible to state here that policy controversies signify disputes among institutional actors who sponsor conflicting frames, seemingly intractable policy controversies, such as we have in our health care system, can be bridged by refocusing our policy priorities to serve the normative imperative as a matter of first principle grounded in the incontrovertible right of citizenship.

“A central responsibility thus of all political leaders (including public administrators) is to reconcile the constitutive (the whole in the parts) and the instrumental or at least to hold the tension between them to tolerable levels. This tension is more acute in the public management realm because the public manager is inexorably drawn, in the search for efficacious organizational arrangements and policy designs, into actions that have the effect of establishing public aims and shaping citizen relations” (Cook 1998, 227). “Democracy and justice are compelling ideas, and many people wish to be associated with those organizations and institutions that provide for democracy and justice. Public institutions and organizations have the highest of purpose—the people’s purpose, hence the job of public administration is to make the organized achievement of these purposes possible” (Frederickson 2000, 52). By reinforcing the normative aspect of citizenship, public bureaucrats would have laid the basis for reducing the economic and political inequalities engendered by the instrumental alternative.

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