

What is Needed in a Citizen: Citizenship and Western Political Philosophy

Michael Coulter Ph.D.

There is, according to political theorist Judith Shklar, “no notion more central in politics than citizenship.”¹ Perhaps this is because the scope of citizenship is potentially limitless, as all political problems ultimately relate to the citizen. There are two main senses in which citizenship can be considered: citizenship as a desirable quality and citizenship as a legal status. Shklar, in *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion*, considers both of these dimensions, but her primary concern is with citizenship as a desirable quality, by which she means the character of the individual and the relationship of that individual to the political order. She says: “Whether in private or in public, the good citizen does something to support democratic habits and the constitutional order.”² Moreover, she asserts that proper citizenship was and is needed in ancient and modern forms of politics, although citizenship in the modern world is less stringent and allows an opportunity for “self-ownership,” by which she means a greater sphere of privacy and personal autonomy.³ A look at the classics of Western political philosophy supports Shklar’s assertion about the importance of the citizen. This paper will review some key authors and texts in the history of Western political philosophy and consider how those authors treated the qualities and importance of the citizen.

Classical Political Philosophy and Citizenship

For Plato and Aristotle, as well as for other writers of classical antiquity such as Cicero, the whole political order is never good or well-ordered without the component parts, i.e., the

¹ Judith N. Shklar, *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 1.

² Shklar, *Citizenship*, 6.

³ Shklar, *Citizenship*, 36.

citizens, also being good or properly-ordered.⁴ For example, Plato's *Republic* gives great attention to the formation of citizens. In Plato's *Republic*, the interlocutors set about the task of forming a city in speech wherein they might discover justice. The first city presented is the "city of utmost necessity," which is a city consisting of four or five men where each man performs a specific task. The next city presented is the feverish city. It is consumed with many activities, and therefore, needs citizens who can perform many tasks. In the final purified city, there is the need for a citizen to have an impressive set of qualities. Plato writes: "Then the man who's going to be a fine and good guardian of the city for us will in his nature be philosophic, spirited, swift and strong."⁵

Socrates then discusses the training of these guardian-citizens, and this education, which he calls "the one great thing," involves both gymnastics and music.⁶ Some portions of Homeric poetry would cause citizens to act in ways harmful to the city and so it must be censored. For example, Socrates seeks to excise poetry which describes Hades as a place which every person would seek to avoid, as that teaching would lead to bad soldiers. The musical education also examines harmonic mode and rhythm. Moderation and obedience are the most important aims of this early education. The guardians are to be "obedient to the rulers, and . . . rulers of the pleasures of drink, sex and eating."⁷

The citizen must be also attached to the political order, and this is achieved through education. All members of the city are instructed by a tale about the city which tells them that they come from the earth beneath the city and that each person has a special function within the

⁴ For a description of the importance of citizenship in classical antiquity, see Peter Riesenberg, *Citizenship in the Western Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 1-84.

⁵ Riesenberg, *Citizenship, Western Tradition*, 376c.

⁶ Riesenberg, *Citizenship, Western Tradition*, 423e.

⁷ Riesenberg, *Citizenship, Western Tradition*, 389e.

city.⁸ For Plato, the citizen is not to consider his own happiness as the highest good; instead, the good citizen must look to the health of the city as the common good.⁹ The picture that emerges in the first four Books of the *Republic* is that the citizen is to attend to his specific role, and to have his reason, with the aid of his spiritedness, rule over his desires. There is also a special education given to some citizens of the purged city. It is a philosophic education which is given to those with special souls, and this “turning” education takes much time and is quite rigorous.

The *Republic* presents the citizen as crucial to the regime. If a regime has properly formed citizens, it will be a good regime. The mere issuing of laws and the establishing of governmental institutions is not enough to guide a political order. The character of the citizens forms the regime. If the citizens of a regime are moved by honor and military victory, then that regime will be best defined as timocratic. If most citizens of a regime are moved by wealth, then that regime will be characterized as oligarchic (i.e., ruled by a small group). If there is no civic education in a regime and everybody attends to their own way of life, that regime is best described as democratic. For Plato, as the citizen goes, so goes the polity.

An account of citizenship can be seen in Aristotle’s *Politics* and his *Nicomachean Ethics*. In the *Politics*, Aristotle states that a city is “a multitude of citizens.”¹⁰ The citizen is not merely a member of the city; the citizen is a partner in the enterprise of a city. Aristotle writes: “Just as a sailor is one of a number of partners, so we assert is the citizen.”¹¹ Aristotle describes

⁸ Riesenber, *Citizenship, Western Tradition*, 44d-415d.

⁹ Riesenber, *Citizenship, Western Tradition*, 420b.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 1274b41.

¹¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1276b20.

this role of the citizen as having “the capacity both to be ruled and to rule, and this very thing is the virtue of a citizen—knowledge of rule over free persons from both points of view.”¹²

Who is the Aristotelian citizen? He is a free person whose life is not consumed with work. Aristotle writes that “the best city will not make a vulgar person a citizen.”¹³ The unfree and the vulgar do not have the leisure time needed for participation in politics. The citizen should possess the virtues of a good man, most importantly, moderation and justice.¹⁴ Thomas Pangle writes that among the needed virtues for an Aristotelian citizen would be “a sense of shame or reverence, courage, moderation or self-control, truthfulness, justice, especially obedience to law, and piety.”¹⁵ These characteristics are described in further detail in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

How, according to Aristotle, does the citizen acquire these characteristics? The two primary means are education and the law. In Books VII and VIII of the *Politics*, Aristotle presents an overview of the education that is to be given to free men. This education seeks to form both the reason and appetites in the person. In the *Politics*, Aristotle does not fully describe the education given but refers to his writings on ethics where he gives greater treatment to moral and intellectual formation.¹⁶ Aristotle stresses the importance of law in the formation of individuals. The law should be obeyed and revered because it “has no strength with respect to obedience apart from habit.”¹⁷ In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explains that laws, both written and unwritten, are needed to help citizens acquire these desirable qualities because

¹² Aristotle, *Politics*, 1277b14-16.

¹³ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1276b30.

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1277b17.

¹⁵ Thomas Pangle, *The Ennobling of Democracy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 107.

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1332a7,20.

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1269b20-21.

persuasion by parents and others is not always enough to persuade someone to act in the right way.¹⁸

The concern for the formation of citizens is not limited to the ancient political thinkers. For Augustine, human beings are often portrayed as pilgrims traveling to their final destinations, but they still possess duties and responsibilities in this world; a Christian is to obey the laws of the political order as well as obeying the law of God. He is “to injure no one and...do good to everyone he can reach” (XIX.14). There is some concern for commerce, but the primary concern is with individual piety. Peter Riesenberg, in *Citizenship in the Western Tradition*, argues that, in addition to the other worldly concerns, medieval thinkers believed there to be a role for the individual in temporal affairs. He asserts that

Medieval Aristotelianism did much to advance the value of activism in the service of a secular political world. It emphasized the community as the ideal sphere of human activity. It gave some value to the human body in all its worldly involvements—indeed, to the entire natural order. It even provided good reasons for the acceptance of the merchant as a contributing and necessary—hence potentially virtuous—member of society.¹⁹

Modern Political Philosophy and Citizenship

The formation of citizens is addressed by modern political philosophers, although less prominently so when compared to ancient classical ones. Some might characterize Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) as offering a political project depending for order only upon absolute monarchy because of the total power given to the sovereign in the social contract. A more comprehensive reading of Hobbes reveals that the citizens in a Hobbesian political order must be taught their duties by the sovereign because the punishment that can come from disobedience is

¹⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985), 1179b33-1180b12.

¹⁹Reisenberg, *Citizenship, Western Tradition*, 168.

not enough to make the citizens obey the laws of a particular political order. The beliefs of citizens should also **internally** direct the citizens to obey the laws. Without any instruction regarding their duties, individuals will be more likely to circumvent the laws by their own design or from the influence of others. Explaining the office of the sovereign, Hobbes writes: “It is against [the sovereign’s] duty to let the people be ignorant or misinformed of the grounds and reasons of those essential rights, because they are easy to be seduced and drawn to resist him.”²⁰ Citizens, Hobbes insists, must be taught to honor only the sovereign and not to dispute his commands. Moreover, citizens must be taught that it is their duty not to harm other members of the political order. The sovereign must use religion and the educational system to encourage abiding by laws and proper respect for the magistrate. One particular means of forming the intellectual and moral character of the citizens that Hobbes cites is the reform of universities; the universities were teaching ideas that led, according to Hobbes, to tumult and disorder such as the belief that every person “shall be the judge of what is lawfull and unlawfull . . . by [his] own conscience,” and that it is lawful to kill those same subjects considered to be tyrants.²¹ What universities taught could undermine the stability and health of the polity, even if the sovereign possessed all political power as he should. Hobbes greatly depends on citizens holding beliefs and acting in such a way as to support the political order.

John Locke (1632-1704), it could be argued, is an exception to this pattern, and this might suggest that the American founding, so significantly influenced by Locke, might not be sufficiently attentive to the needs in the formation of citizens. Locke’s major political work, the *Two Treatises of Civil Government*, says little explicit about the formation of citizens and the

²⁰ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Penguin, 1985), 377.

²¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 383-384.

desirable qualities that they should have. In the *Two Treatises*, there are a few general remarks about the need children have for an education, and some of the virtues of a citizen, such as being rational and industrious, can be seen in the work. But there is no chapter on, or even long discussion of, the citizen in the *Two Treatises*. Locke, if one looks only to the *Two Treatises*, seems to lack a comprehensive theory of citizenship. Some scholars appear to affirm this view. Reisenberg says that Locke is not interested in citizenship as a desirable quality; he writes: “There are several John Lockes, and not one of them is in the mainline tradition of Republican Citizenship. Locke is primarily interested in property and government.”²²

This predominant view of Locke being unconcerned with citizenship is problematic when considering Locke’s entire body of work. If there is an account of citizenship as being essential for Locke, then it would further indicate that a political order with a limited government, such as the U.S. political order, needs to be concerned with citizen formation. Regarding a Lockean citizen, Locke would certainly argue that the political order should have a concern about habits and beliefs of its citizens and that it should promote a particular way of life. Locke, it seems, would assert some civic virtues should be promoted by the state and are necessary for the health and preservation of the state. For example, Locke is not neutral with respect to loyalty. Citizens in a Lockean regime cannot have an open allegiance to a foreign regime; this is why Locke criticizes Catholics and Muslims in his writings on toleration as they would have divided political loyalties. The Lockean state should not be neutral with respect to defending the family because the family has an essential role in nurturing and educating children.

²² Reisenberg, *Citizenship, Western Tradition*, 251. Bruce Frohnen writes that the “Lockean emphasis on individual rights provides the basis only for the hedonistic pursuit of base pleasures” which “can provide no good life for either individuals or communities.” See Bruce Frohnen, *The New Communitarians and the Crisis of Modern Liberalism* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1996), 25.

The Lockean state is also not neutral with respect to religion. Locke never explicitly argues against an established church and the state support of that church, although Locke may have not made this argument only because of possible political persecution. He certainly does not believe that people should be forced to participate in religion. Still, state support of religion would be a means of encouraging religious practice. Even if the logic of Locke's later writings on toleration would lead to suggest disestablishmentarianism, Locke would have still favored the active presence of religion in society because of religion's capacity for promoting morality. It would follow that Locke would support policies, such as tax exemption, that favor religious groups.

The state would also not be neutral regarding all ways of life. Regarding the economic virtues for a free society, Locke believes that individuals should not be able to choose to be beggars or live off the public dole. Beggars and their children should be forced to work so that they can become habituated to industry. Locke wrote a proposal regarding the poor that would have greatly encouraged labor and industry because indolence was not an option.²³ The intent of that proposal was to make the poor "useful to the public."²⁴ Locke also would have favored laws that encouraged work by protecting property.

In a pamphlet entitled, *Some Thoughts Concerning Reading and Study for a Gentleman* (1703), Locke gives an outline of the curriculum for a gentleman and in the process comments on the nature of politics, saying: "Politics contains two parts very different the one from the other, the one containing the origins of societies and the rise and extent of political power; the

²³cf. "An Essay on the Poor Law," in Locke, *Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie, 182-198 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²⁴ Locke, *Essays*, 183.

other, the art of governing men in society.”²⁵ He then lists several books which address the first part of politics, the formation of political society. Concerning the second part of politics, the art of governing men in society, he asserts that this part of politics is known through history and experience. He also notes that Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* is helpful for one seeking to know the passions of men. It seems, then, that studying these works will help the gentlemen know the art of governing men because history and experience will enable an individual to know the nature of man.

It seems quite reasonable that Locke believes the “art of governing men in society” is an important part of politics.²⁶ In fact, it might be the most important part of politics for Locke. In a personal letter, Locke wrote, “True politics I look on as a part of moral philosophy, which is nothing but the art of conducting men right in society and supporting a community amongst its neighbors.”²⁷ The art of governing men in society is broad, but the central aspect of this part of politics seems to be the formation of citizens that are fit for civil life.

Among early modern political thinkers the concern for citizenship is most prominent in Jean-Jacques Rousseau. His political writings, especially *On the Social Contract*, consider the relation between the individual and the state and the means by which citizens support the social contract of a given political order. Most importantly, individuals must legislate for themselves the rule of the general will. Each person must be able to say: “Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will; and in a body we receive

²⁵ Locke, *Essays*, 351.

²⁶ Ruth Grant also asserts this. Cf. *John Locke’s Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 20-26.

²⁷ James Axtell, ed., *The Educational Writings of John Locke* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 396.

each member as an indivisible part of the whole.”²⁸ That is, citizens must know what is in their interest and in the interest of the society as a whole, and those citizens must do those things which are commanded by the general will. Such an individual, according to Stephen Ellenburg, will be a “self-governing individual” whose “actions express his conscientious adherence to the general will.”²⁹ Abiding by laws and a support for the political order would seem to be the chief civic virtues found in the citizen that Rousseau would desire. He writes that the most important element of political order “is not engraved on marble or bronze, but [it is] in the hearts of the citizens” where are found the “mores, customs, and . . . opinion[s].”³⁰ The heart guides the citizen better than mere written law. Shklar asserts that the *mores* which Rousseau seeks to instill in citizens are so important that without them “the social contract is meaningless.”³¹ What specifically, according to Rousseau, is in the heart of a citizen? Ellenburg writes that such a citizen has a “passionate affection for his fellow citizens and for the reciprocal conditions of their common life” and that these mores are brought about through a proper education.³²

In *On the Social Contract*, Rousseau gives special attention to one aspect of life that must be properly regarded by the citizen. Religion, according to Rousseau, can be dangerous insofar as individuals could have divided loyalties. There could be a tension between obeying the political leader and obeying a religious leader. Moreover, the citizen could hold that all religions other than his own are completely wrong and harmful if permitted to exist, and therefore, those

²⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy*, ed. Roger D. Masters, trans. Judith R. Masters (New York: St. Martin’s, 1978), 53.

²⁹ Stephen Ellenburg, *Rousseau’s Political Philosophy: An Interpretation from Within* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), 168.

³⁰ Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 77.

³¹ Judith Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau’s Social Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 187.

³² Ellenburg, *Rousseau’s Philosophy*, 168, 274.

religions are deserving of contempt and legal penalty. Intolerance cannot be one of the *mores* of a citizen because this will lead to civil tension and unrest. Regarding religion, Rousseau speaks of the need for the magistrate to produce a civil profession, which would contain a few basic doctrines agreed upon by all, so that the citizens can think and act properly with regard to religion. Such a civil confession is necessary because “without [it]...it is impossible to be a good citizen.”³³ It would seem, thus, quite clear that Rousseau understood proper political order to depend on properly formed citizens.

Contemporary Political Philosophy and Citizenship

Contemporary political philosophers have recently reexamined the question of citizenship and its place within a political order. To understand the current discussion of the role of the citizen within a political order, one must consider recent liberal theory. Liberalism during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was primarily a utilitarian defense of political freedom and was associated with the work of English political theorists such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill.

A new version of liberal theory was presented in John Rawl’s *A Theory of Justice*.³⁴ Rawls begins the work by presenting what some critics call his “metaphysical individualism.” He says: “Let us assume, to fix ideas, that a society is more or less a self-sufficient association of persons who in their relations to one another recognize certain rules of conduct as binding.”³⁵ Rawls says that the rights of individuals are what is paramount in society because “each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society cannot override.”³⁶

³³ Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 130.

³⁴ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971).

³⁵ Rawls, *Justice*, 4.

³⁶ Rawls, *Justice*, 3.

Rawls says that, when considering political order, individuals must first assume as a methodological and counterfactual construct that they are in an “original position,” which is the Rawlsian version of the state of nature. In this “original position,” all human beings are separate individuals and do not exist in any social context. In this original position, individuals are to assume they are behind a “veil of ignorance,” which means that individuals must assume that they have no knowledge of what they would be like in the political order.³⁷ They could be a member of any racial group, be any sex, or have any degree of intelligence; moreover, they could have many talents or none whatsoever.

Rawls expects individuals in this context to choose the two principles which constitute “Justice as Fairness.” The first principle calls for as much liberty as is compatible with a system of equal liberty for all. The second principle stresses equality, permitting inequality only in cases where inequalities would benefit all and requiring that important positions in society would be open to all. This second principle would permit high rates of taxation in order to bring about greater equality of property. Regarding the ends of political life, individuals within this political order “are free to pursue their disparate visions of the good life.”³⁸ That is, the state should not promote any way of life as one that should be pursued by its citizens. An individual, following this proposition, can do whatever he wishes to do so long as he endorses the proper principles for a well-ordered society. The Rawlsian state cannot promote any character traits in its citizens because that would interfere with the individual choosing for himself.

³⁷ Rawls, *Justice*, 136-137.

³⁸ Kenneth Grasso, “Introduction: Catholic Social Thought and the Quest for an American Public Philosophy,” in *Catholicism, Communitarianism, and Liberalism*, eds. Kenneth L. Grasso, Gerald V. Bradley, and Robert P. Hunt, 3 (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995).

Other rights-based, individualistic, and neutrality-promoting versions of liberalism emerged after *Theory of Justice*. In 1974, Robert Nozick published *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, wherein he argues for maximum political, economic and religious liberty and a minimal also based on grounds of moral rights and duties.³⁹ Nozick's primary argument regarding the right to possess property is that whatever has been acquired justly is just to possess. He rejects the redistribution of wealth defended in *A Theory of Justice*. Like Rawls, Nozick argues that the government should not promote any one way of life rather than another. For Nozick, the government must be "scrupulously neutral between its citizens."⁴⁰

Rawls and Nozick are both focused on what the individual gets from the political order and society, rather than considering how the individual contributes to the wellbeing of the political order. For these contemporary theorists, there is a priority of the rights of the individual over any good that society might propose and promote for all of its members. Related to this individualism, they argue that the state must be neutral with respect to any version of the good life that might be proposed. Since the state is neutral, the state must be concerned with having the proper procedures which treat all people equally. Because of the concern for rights and neutrality, Rawls and Nozick do not speak of any desirable qualities that citizens should possess, except insofar as citizens must accept the principles which guide their respective political orders. In regard to these principles, they do not present a developed program of civic education so that citizens will hold these principles. These authors depend upon the rationality of individuals to accept these precepts of liberalism.

³⁹ Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (New York: Basic, 1974), 153-155.

⁴⁰ Robert Nozick, "Moral Constraints and Distributive Justice (Reprinted from ASU)" in *Liberalism and Its Critics*. Ed. Michael J. Sandel, 105 (New York: New York University Press, 1984).

Some political theorists reacted to this emphasis on individualism and neutrality in contemporary liberalism. This criticism has been characterized as the communitarian critique of liberalism, and this critique asserted a great concern for citizenship as a desirable quality.

Who are these communitarian critics of liberalism? Most frequently identified as communitarians are the following authors and their primary “communitarian” works: Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*; Robert Bellah, *Habits of the Heart*; Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*; Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*; and Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy*. These authors have said that contemporary individualistic liberalism, in its various manifestations, is inadequate regarding to the political and moral order. These communitarians are seeking to augment or modify liberalism in order to improve it. Walzer, asserting that liberalism is broadly correct in its treatment of the rights of the individual and the needs of the society, characterizes the communitarian critique as a reoccurring voice of republicanism in liberalism.⁴¹ The communitarians do not want a repressive regime which respects no individual rights and no diversity of ways of life. Moreover, some of the communitarians, such as Sandel and William Sullivan, believe that liberalism possesses within itself the capacity for repairing its own difficulties.⁴²

The main criticisms of liberalism by communitarians as they relate to the desirable qualities of citizens are the contemporary liberal conception of the person and the neutrality of the state. According to Sandel, liberals see the person as “antecedently individuated or

⁴¹ Michael Walzer, “The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism,” *Political Theory* 18 (1990): 4.

⁴² cf. Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1-14.

unencumbered.”⁴³ Sandel and Walzer characterize Rawls’ position as one where selves exist prior to community life as a kind of abstraction. That is, individuals are considered apart from the communities from which they come. Sandel says that Rawls must “presuppose the existence of some community of persons” because an abstract person cannot exist.⁴⁴ Walzer writes that “all the goods with which distributive justice is concerned are social goods. They are not and cannot be idiosyncratically valued.”⁴⁵ Walzer’s reference to goods as “social” means that goods come into existence within a community.

Related to the critique of “unencumbered” selves, communitarians also accuse the liberalism of Rawls and Nozick of promoting an “asocial individualism.” In this case the only good recognized is that of free and independent selves. Benjamin Barber relates this criticism to citizenship: “In establishing the solitary individual as the model citizen, liberalism shortchanged ideas of citizenship and community.”⁴⁶ Communitarians assert that the opposite of “unencumbered selves” will be “situated” selves. Walzer promotes a view that counters the individualism of procedural liberals like Rawls. Walzer argues that the life of the community must be constantly nurtured so that it continues to be vital.⁴⁷

Moreover, according to Walzer, as members of a community, individuals are to see themselves as having moral duties towards other members of the community. Individuals are to support the community and participate together in the community because it is moral to do so. Related to this, communitarians accuse contemporary procedural liberals of being unable to

⁴³ Sandel, *Liberalism*, 4.

⁴⁴ Sandel, *Liberalism*, 78.

⁴⁵ Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic, 1983), 7.

⁴⁶ Benjamin Barber, “Liberal Democracy and the Costs of Consent” in *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, ed. Nancy Rosenblum, 55 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

⁴⁷ Walzer, *Spheres*, 64-93 on health and welfare; 197-226 on schools.

promote any moral duties because of the moral subjectivism which pervades contemporary liberalism. Communitarians assert that it is rational that everyone owes a debt to the community because individuals are socially interdependent. One critic describes the aims of communitarians this way: “Members are expected to act in certain ways toward one another, to respond to each other in particular ways, to value each and every person as a member of the group.”⁴⁸

The other aspect of liberalism critiqued by communitarians is the neutrality of the political order promoted by contemporary liberals. For communitarians, communities should promote a view of the good life which supports the common good, while allowing for some degree of individuality and diversity. For example, communitarians assert that communities should not be neutral with respect to the commitments that individuals make. Communitarians also believe that self-restraint, public spiritedness, responsibility, and toleration can be promoted in a community without leading to the formation of a repressive state. The characteristics that communitarians argue should be promoted are, in effect, the desirable qualities of a citizen.

Contemporary liberals have responded to the criticisms leveled against them by communitarians by proposing a teaching regarding the desirable qualities of citizens. For example, John Rawls, in an essay written nearly a decade after the publication of a *Theory of Justice*, re-presented his central thesis of that work, and in this representation specifically notes the role that citizens have in a ‘well-ordered society.’ He writes that he hoped “that social institutions generate an effective supporting sense of justice . . . its members [must] acquire as they grow up an allegiance to the public conception [of justice].”⁴⁹ While Rawls indicates in this

⁴⁸ Derek Phillips, *Looking Backward* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 14.

⁴⁹ John Rawls, “A Kantian Conception of Equality” in *Ideological Voices: An Anthology in Modern Political Ideas*. eds. Paul Schumaker, Dwight C. Kiel and Thomas W. Heilke, 229 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997).

essay the role that citizens should have in a political order, he gives a much greater treatment to the role of the individual in *Political Liberalism*, wherein he writes: “Citizens are viewed as having the intellectual and moral powers appropriate to that role, such as a capacity for a sense of political justice given by a liberal conception and a capacity to form, follow, and revise their individual doctrines of the good, and capable also of the political virtues necessary for them to cooperate in forming and maintaining a just political society.”⁵⁰ In *Political Liberalism*, a work published in 1993 and one which Rawls considers to be a slight revision of *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls argues that it is necessary to be reasonable and important to practice public reason.⁵¹ Public reason, as the term suggests, is the reason that is used when determining public disputes. Moreover, according to Rawls, citizens must also have “a reasonable moral psychology.”⁵² Later in the work, Rawls asserts that “justice as fairness,” which is Rawl’s primary political principle, “includes an account of certain political virtues—the virtues of fair social cooperation, such as the virtues of civility and tolerance, of reasonableness and the sense of fairness.”⁵³ Rawls, while giving attention to the qualities of citizens, still wants to claim that the state in his revised version of liberalism is neutral, even though he presents certain desirable qualities of the citizen. He asserts that political liberalism “may still affirm the superiority of certain forms of moral character and encourage certain moral virtues” while being neutral with regard to what Rawls would consider to be strictly personal matters.⁵⁴ Rawls believes that he can maintain the claim to

⁵⁰ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), xlvii.

⁵¹ Rawls, *Liberalism*, 62.

⁵² Rawls, *Liberalism*, 86.

⁵³ Rawls, *Liberalism*, 194.

⁵⁴ Rawls, *Liberalism*, 194.

neutrality because he seeks to make a distinction between the citizens' private and public character.⁵⁵

Another contemporary political theorist who presents a revised version of liberalism as part of the communitarian critique is William Galston. In *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State*, Galston asserts that the communitarian critics of liberalism have argued convincingly that there is a relationship “between liberal political institutions and practices . . . and what might be called the moral culture of liberal society.”⁵⁶ With this as a starting point, Galston proposes “that the liberal state must become far more aware of, and far more actively involved in reproducing the conditions necessary to its own health and perpetuation.”⁵⁷ Galston asserts that it is possible to construct a version of liberalism that is both liberal insofar as it defends individual freedoms and contains a “robust understanding of goods and virtues.”⁵⁸

Much of Galston's work is a critique of what he considers a false alternative between the “perfectionism” of the ancients (in particular Plato) and the neutrality of contemporary liberalism. Galston rejects classical political thought as a practicable alternative because in a modern, diverse society it is not possible to have a single highest good toward which society is organized.⁵⁹ The largest portion of the work is an argument against the neutrality of contemporary liberalism. Galston's primary argument is that liberal societies cannot be neutral with respect to those character traits which are necessary to maintain those institutions which

⁵⁵ Rawls asserts that individuals will hold a variety of reasonable comprehensive doctrines, but there should be a shared public reason for determining public concerns. cf. Rawls, *Liberalism*, 58-66, 154-157, 223-226.

⁵⁶ William A. Galston, *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 6.

⁵⁷ Galston, *Purposes*, 6.

⁵⁸ Galston, *Purposes*, 10.

⁵⁹ Galston, *Purposes*, 30-41.

make liberalism possible. Galston examines in great detail Rawls' post-*Theory of Justice* writings, arguing that they are problematic insofar as they speak of citizen qualities while still maintaining the claim of neutrality and the related moral subjectivism.

In place of neutrality, Galston argues that a liberal society can seek to promote certain liberal goods and virtues. Underlying this claim for Galston is the conviction that reason can guide us to some truth about a free society. In Galston's version of liberalism, the political order should promote all of the following as "key dimensions of . . . a liberal conception of individual human good": life, normal development of basic capacities, fulfillment of interests and purposes, freedom, rationality, society, and subjective satisfaction.⁶⁰ Galston admits that this "liberal account of the good is deliberately thin" and "a kind of minimal perfectionism." Because Galston's position promotes "minimal perfectionism," he can rule out some alternative visions of social life, such as "theological withdrawalism" or "secular nihilism," both of which argue that there is no good to be sought in the social order.⁶¹

The most significant part of Galston's work is his account of liberal virtues. He begins this section with the claim that "for two generations, scholarly inquiry has been dominated by the belief that the liberal polity does not require virtue."⁶² He notes that some recent scholars, such as Judith Shklar, Nathan Tarcov, Rogers Smith, Ronald Terchek, Harvey Mansfield, and Thomas Spragens, have presented a re-reading of the liberal intellectual tradition that demonstrates a

⁶⁰ Galston, *Purposes*, 173, 173-177.

⁶¹ Galston, *Purposes*, 177.

⁶² Galston, *Purposes*, 213.

concern for and necessity of virtue in political life.⁶³ He cites Tarcov as presenting a different view of Locke; Terchek, of Adam Smith; and Mill, and Mansfield, of *The Federalist*.

Galston describes several sets of virtues needed for a liberal society. There are general virtues, which he asserts are needed for all societies, such as courage, abiding by laws and loyalty. The virtues, according to Galston, most characteristic of a liberal society are individualism and diversity. The virtue of individualism is the capacity to take care of oneself and be self-directed; Galston stresses that he does not mean by this the “unencumbered self” discussed in Rawls. While community support is important, an individual must possess some skills by which he can support himself, and he must have some initiative so that he can use those skills for his benefit and the benefit of others. The virtue of diversity is the capacity to tolerate differences among citizens. He notes that this does not necessarily imply relativism about the shared good for members of the political order.

There are also virtues related to participation in a liberal economy. These include entrepreneurial virtues such as initiative and determination. There are the virtues possessed by a worker such as punctuality, reliability, and the respect for co-workers. Liberalism depends upon a functioning economy, and thus, these are necessary virtues. Finally, there are the virtues of political life. These include the virtues of citizenship, by which he means participation in

⁶³ Galston cites Judith Shklar, *Ordinary Vices* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); Rogers Smith, *Liberalism and American Constitutional Law* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985); Nathan Tarcov, *Locke’s Education for Liberty* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 1999); and “A ‘Non-Lockean’ Locke and the Character of Liberalism,” in *Liberalism Reconsidered*, eds. Douglas MacLean and Claudia Mills (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983); Ronald Terchek, “The Fruits of Success and the Crisis of Liberalism,” in *Liberals on Liberalism*, ed. Alfonso Damico (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1986); Harvey Mansfield, “Constitutional Government: The Soul of Modern Democracy,” *The Public Interest* 86 (1987); Thomas Spragens, Jr., “Reconstructing Liberal Theory: Reason and Liberal Culture,” in *Liberals on Liberalism*, ed. Damico.

political life, and the virtues of leadership, which constitute the desirable characteristics of those holding political office.

The communitarian critique of liberalism and recent revisions of liberalism indicate an awareness of the importance of the desirable qualities that citizens should have. Communitarians see that the basic problem of citizenship in a liberal society is how to engender the commitments and sacrifices necessary for a society to survive. Moreover, there seems to be agreement among modern liberals that the “health and stability of a modern democracy depends, not only on the justice of its ‘basic structure’ but also on the qualities and attitudes of the citizens.”⁶⁴ One example of this sentiment in recent political philosophers is seen in the work of Jürgen Habermas, who writes that “the institutions of constitutional freedom are only worth as much as a population makes of them.”⁶⁵

What kinds of qualities and attitudes are considered necessary for modern liberal citizens? Kymlicka and Norman suggest that there is agreement among modern liberals about what is desired from citizens:

their ability to tolerate and work together with others who are different from themselves; their desire to participate in the political process in order to promote the public good and hold political authorities accountable; their willingness to show self-restraint and exercise personal responsibility in their economic demands and in personal choices which affect their health and the environment.⁶⁶

Kymlicka and Norman also assert that contemporary theorists disagree about the means to inculcate these virtues. They assert that classical liberals believe that institutional and

⁶⁴ Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman, “Return of the Citizen,” *Theorizing Citizenship*, ed. Ronald Beiner, 352 (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995).

⁶⁵ Jürgen Habermas, “Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe,” *Praxis International* 12 (1992): 7.

⁶⁶ Kymlicka and Norman, “Return,” 353. cf. Jeff Spinner, *The Boundaries of Citizenship* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 38. In his presentation of liberal citizenship, Spinner emphasizes the significance of toleration as the most desirable quality for liberal citizenship.

structural arrangements will be enough to encourage the proper behavior among citizens. “Many classical liberals believed that a liberal democracy could be made secure, even in the absence of an especially virtuous citizenry, by creating checks and balances. Institutional and procedural devices such as the separation of powers, a bicameral legislature, and federalism would all serve to block the would-be oppressors.”⁶⁷ Moreover, liberals, such as Nozick and some free market economists such as Milton Friedman, have been characterized as depending on the selfishness of human beings to cause citizens to act properly; for example, selfishness will cause one to work harder so that he will receive more economic rewards. While Kymlicka and Norman argue that this is the dominant position among classical liberals, they admit that some classical liberals have argued that some level of civic virtue and public spiritedness is required.

Kymlicka and Norman speak of another group, liberal “participatory democrats” who think that political participation will engender the proper civic virtues. Barber calls for citizens to gather together and have “strong democratic talk” about politics. He believes that the very act of discoursing about politics will encourage the development of some virtues which do not naturally exist, such as civility, tolerance, empathy, mutualism, and the capacity to listen. In fact, “talk is a . . . force with which we can create community.”⁶⁸ Barber seems to believe that harmful vices can be overcome through such participation. Moreover, democratic talk will restore a sense of citizenship because citizens will be forced to consider issues facing the political community. Barber even wants to institutionalize democratic talk through the organization of “a national system of neighborhood assemblies in every rural, urban, and suburban district in America.”⁶⁹ In

⁶⁷ Kymlicka and Norman, “Return,” 359.

⁶⁸ Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Mutualism refers to mutual or reciprocal support among citizens.

⁶⁹ Barber, *Democracy*, 261.

addition to talking about matters of politics, participatory democrats would encourage additional political participation, such as voting and public service. All of these forms of political participation would help strengthen liberal political institutions.

Kymlicka and Norman identify another group of liberals, which they style “civil society theorists,” who argue that the requisite civic virtues are best learned in the voluntary organizations of civil society. They write that it is “in the voluntary organizations of civil society—churches, families . . . [where] we learn the virtues of mutual obligation.”⁷⁰ They categorize Michael Walzer as a “civil society” theorist. He writes: “The civility that makes democratic politics possible can only be learned in the ‘associational networks’ of civil society.” Walzer goes on to note that these associational networks, which include families, religious groups and civic groups, must be properly organized so that they can teach the appropriate civic virtues. These civil society theorists, asserted to be defenders of the republican paradigm by some, believe that the virtue taught by ‘associational networks’ makes for both good individuals and good citizens. For the civil society theorist, “the virtue of citizens is held to be the ultimate guarantee of good government.”⁷¹

Conclusion

From the review of the Western political philosophy and the citizen, it is certain that the citizen is crucial to the functioning of political order. That is, the citizen is not only needed in the ‘perfectionist’ or more comprehensive accounts of political order as found in the ancient political philosophy. Modern political philosophers, who seem to have lower aims for politics, recognized

⁷⁰ Kymlicka and Norman, “Return,” 294.

⁷¹ Michael Ignatieff, “The Myth of Citizenship,” in *Theorizing Citizenship*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1995).

that politics could not be reduced to procedures and the enforcement of laws. When more recent political philosophers tried to conceptualize political life, they gave insignificant attention to the qualities of the citizen, and the communitarian critique of recent political theory articulated this deficit. While there remains a debate over the means to form citizens, the importance of the citizen seems quite clear and citizen formation should not be neglected.