

Ethical Citizenship and the Stakeholder Society

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Introduction

Ethical citizenship is an idea about a relationship between individuals. Their relation is grounded in the concept of social recognition where individuals come to recognize their shared commitments and obligations. This understanding of ethical citizenship and social recognition has received penetrating criticisms, such as the charge that this view fails to satisfactorily address reasonable pluralism and that it leads to a too demanding view about citizenship. These critics argue that the construction of a shared identity risks damaging the other more particular forms of identities we possess. Philosophers ranging from John Rawls to Bhikhu Parek defend very different, and perhaps opposing, proposals for how we might forge a sufficiently robust shared identity while permitting our other identities to flourish.

This chapter seeks to defend an old idea on new grounds. It argues that we should understand ethical citizenship in terms of a *stakeholder society*. Stakeholding is about a principle: those who have a stake should have say. A stakeholder society is a form of community where its members are citizens sharing in recognition and equal respect. Stakeholding requires not only that citizens *can* have a voice on outcomes where they may have a stake, but understand themselves *as stakeholders*. Simply put: to be a stakeholder requires equal opportunities for stakeholding and the conviction of oneself as a stakeholder. This perspective does not commit us to rejecting alternatives—from Rawls's pursuit of an overlapping consensus to Parekh's defence of equal respect—but it does require their revision to incorporate stakeholding.

The chapter first considers contrasting models for a form of ethical citizenship defended by Rawls and Parekh. It next argues these models fall short of addressing a crucial dimension of political alienation and why this is important. The heart of the chapter focuses on a novel application of stakeholder theory to citizenship—and why it is relevant and, indeed, necessary. The chapter closes by demonstrating how the stakeholder society model offers a more compelling model of ethical citizenship and its implications

Two Models of Ethical Citizenship

Ethical citizenship is about the normative relationship of individuals to each other as equal members of a political community. There are several different general approaches to citizenship familiar to political theorists (Brooks 2013a). This is typically presented as passive and active, often republican, models of citizenship. The first model understands citizenship as a kind of status and the second as a kind of engaged relationship. Passive citizenship concerns individuals enjoying equally shared rights and opportunities, such as their being subject to the rule of law, the ability to participate and contest elections. Active citizenship is this and more where citizens are modelled as persons engaged in deliberation: individuals do not merely enjoy certain rights from their shared status, but they participate through debate and engagement as citizens.

Citizenship is often argued to include special duties and obligations between citizens not shared with non-citizens. Citizens from different countries might be held to share common obligations across borders, such as to provide assistance to others in severe poverty. But citizens are thought to have obligations exclusive to fellow members of their particular political community.

This idea is contested primarily by strong cosmopolitans, following Seneca's declaration that he was a citizen of the world, who deny individuals can have such special obligations justified in virtue of a shared political community that does not include all

humanity. However, most dispute not the existence of common bonds shared between co-nationals giving rise to special duties, but the ground for these bonds.

There is generally wide support for a normatively-informed view of shared citizenship. Citizenship is a political concept and about the relations of people to institutions. A commonly shared view is that the borders that should count are not political boundaries, but moral ones: the normative justification for the special duties arising from shared citizenship are grounded on their normative strength. So citizenship based on non-arbitrary connections linking individuals often inhabiting a shared territory can have normative significance where, for example, these connection have intrinsic value for their members and do not deny any more general duties to all persons independently of citizenship (see Miller 2007; Margalit and Raz 1990). The borders that count are the ones we draw around people, not the ones found on maps however more convenient the latter are (see Goodin 1988).

The main question is: so what is this shared connection? The idea that citizens possess a common form of identity is less controversial than the diversity of claims about how this should be substantiated. Let us focus on two distinctive and contrasting models that have each received widespread attention.

The first model is defended by John Rawls. He focuses on the problem of political stability overtime for modern societies. Rawls argues every society is characterized by the diversity of different ‘reasonable comprehensive doctrines’ its members hold.¹ These doctrines concern individual views about values and the good. Doctrines may be religious, philosophical or moral. This includes all major religious faiths and leading philosophical approaches. The problem of political stability arises because of the diversity of doctrines held by citizens: we require some model to determine how to resolve conflicts among them. For example, citizens affirming Catholicism might defend different policies on abortion and capital punishment than Utilitarians.²

Rawls’s problem is significant because he assumes that any acceptable theory of political justice will secure and maintain equality between citizens. So if citizens disagree about which public policy should be promoted by the state, Rawls argues our solution to this problem must not prioritize one view of the good over others: we must give equal respect the different views about the good held by citizens. We cannot insist everyone affirms the same doctrine, but instead discover some alternative to address our differences (Rawls 2001: 3). Otherwise, the problem is that some may become unequal as some views about the good win support at the expense of others.

Rawls defends the idea of an overlapping consensus as a solution to the problem of political stability (Rawls 1996: 132—72; 2001: 32—38). The argument is that we can respect the diversity of views held by different citizens through building a new consensus that can connect everyone irrespective of whichever view any citizen endorses (Rawls 1996: 10). This consensus is to be constructed through the use of ‘public reasons’: the claims we may reasonably offer to others to construct an overlapping consensus (Rawls 1999b: 208). A reason is ‘public’ where it can be endorsed by persons across all reasonable doctrines. People with different views might continue to disagree, but policies supported by public reasons are

¹ See Rawls 1996: 24—25n227, 63—64, 129, 140, 144, 147—48, 172; Rawls 1999a: 131; Rawls 2001: 3—4, 33-34, 36, 40, 84.

² Two clarifications are necessary. The first is that Catholicism is one of many world religions that would count as a reasonable comprehensive doctrine in Rawls’s terminology—and similarly Utilitarianism is one of many philosophical views. These two are used only as one example of a potential conflict between doctrines. The second clarification is that I do not suggest that Catholicism and Utilitarianism are always at odds. My claim is instead that they ‘might’ defend different policies using abortion and capital punishment as an illustration. So, for example, Catholics are opposed to capital punishment, but Utilitarians could support it if its use maximised utility. Rawls’s challenge is determining a method to decide how to resolve such conflicts without choosing one doctrine over another.

accessible to anyone notwithstanding the different views people might have. For example, the reason that capital punishment should be banned because it runs contrary to Catholic doctrine is *not* a public reason. This is because the reason it offers requires us to accept Catholic doctrine if we are to find it convincing. Instead, we should aim to offer public reasons that do not make such demands on others and so at least secure the possibility of acceptance by all. So Rawls's model is about constructing a shared political conception from across diverse views of the good through the use of public reasons that all could support. Citizens should engage others using reasons all might share.

Rawls's model has received much criticism. Some argue a shared commitment to principles of justice is enough to secure political stability and so an overlapping consensus is unnecessary (see Barry 1995; McClennen). Others argue that an overlapping consensus is too weak a bond because the public reasons connecting us might be reasons all *could* accept, but none or only a few *might* accept in fact (see Greenawalt 1995; Wenar 1995). The first criticism fails to recognise the need to engage with the deep differences about the good found in any modern society. The second criticism fails to grasp that an overlapping consensus is not the only connection between citizens accounted for by Rawls (see Brooks 2014).

The second model of citizenship is defended by Bhikhu Parekh. While Rawls seeks to find ways of overcoming our differences, Parekh embraces them. He recognises the twin challenges modern societies face. On the one hand, there should be a strong sense of common identity among citizens in order to decide and enforce collectively-binding decisions. On the other hand, a strong bond can nurture the inescapable diversity found in every society: 'A weakly held society feels threatened by differences and lacks the confidence and the willingness to welcome and live with them' (Parekh 2006: 196). But how?

Parekh claims the morally and culturally neutral liberalism of Rawls claiming to be equally hospitable to all is impossible. Parekh argues: 'no state can be wholly free of moral and cultural biases and the concomitant coercion on those who disapprove of its structure or actions. Even a state that institutionalizes such values as liberty and equality coerces those who are opposed to them' (2006: 202). The community must choose and it should not burden itself with trying to be neutral to all views of the good.

Many liberals defend the so-called public-private divide. The idea is that public spaces are the subject of possible state intervention while private spaces are not. So every home is a person's castle where she can act however she pleases, but such a freedom ends when interacting with others in society. This distinction is crude and some liberals have begun to account for the private sphere to some degree.³

Nonetheless, Parekh highlights how this view of the public and the private gets wrong something crucial about culture and religion. The liberal defending this distinction limits the public sphere to exclude culture and religion. This might be part of an effort to demonstrate neutrality. For Parekh, culture and religion defy the public-private distinction. He argues:

Religious persons see life as a whole and seek to live out their deeply held beliefs in their personal and collective lives . . . If [the liberal] confined religion to the private realm as he generally does, he would discriminate against religious people, alienate them from public life, provoke their resistance, and endanger the very unity for whose sake he excludes religion from the public realm (Parekh 2006: 203).

In essence, limiting culture and religion to the private sphere alone is self-defeating. Rather than foster greater unity for all, it may in fact drive citizens further apart and risk political

³ Rawls is a good example of this. He became convinced by Susan Moller Okin that the family should be counted as part of society's basic structure to which principles of justice applied.

alienation. Our differences concerning values and the good distinguish some from others, but they need not push us apart.

Parekh argues our common *political* identity should be located in shared political institutions ‘and not the widely shared personal characteristics of its individual members’ (2006: 231). The diversity of identities held by individual citizens should be enjoyed and without any stigma of possessing divided loyalties. Any national identity should be defined so it includes all its members and made possible for them to identify with it. Such an identity must not be merely *located*, but *shared* (Parekh 2006: 232).

So Parekh’s model is more comfortable with multiculturalism: our differences should receive recognition and equal respect, but equal options does not mean equal opportunities in fact. He argues opportunity is ‘a subject-dependent concept’ (Parekh 2006: 241). To say all have the same options to attend a particular school is not to claim each has equal opportunities. For example, all children might have the same option to be admitted to a local school, but it might ban the wearing of turbans. Such a scenario might fail to provide equal opportunities despite extending the same options because some persons, such as male Sikhs, who want to wear a turban would not be permitted to do so at that school. And so issues of culture and religion are not merely private and neutrality can lead to outcomes that can disproportionately affect some more than others.

Rawls and Parekh endorse opposing models of citizenship. Rawls’s model views diversity as a problem to overcome. His solution is to create a new shared political conception—or overlapping consensus—through the use of public reasons that could be endorsed by anyone. Parekh’s model understands diversity as a challenge to be embraced. His solution is to focus on creating a more self-assured sense of national identity as the best means of fostering the cultural and religious diversity we have: instead of moving away from diversity, it becomes further embedded. Our common unity comes from a national identity all can identify with, such as a shared set of institutions.

The Problem of Political Alienation

Rawls’s and Parekh’s models for citizenship are attractive in many respects, but both face a challenge from the problem of political alienation. Rawls’s model aims for a commonality forged through public reasons where policies are selected for reasons few, if any, do endorse. The fact a public reason is a public reason, for Rawls, is not itself a reason to accept it. There is a real danger to the reciprocity between citizens that Rawls claims is so central to political justice where citizens come to feel alienated. Likewise, for Parekh, a common sense of belonging requires effort whether it is cultural, national or otherwise. But what to do about persons who fail to see how they belong or how they might share a valuable identity with others?

Citizens are disillusioned by politics perhaps more so than ever before, or at least in many Western societies.⁴ Any theory about ethical citizenship must have a view about how this view of citizens might avoid or overcome problems about political alienation. This alienation is often characterised as voters refusing or unwilling to go to the polls during elections, but it speaks to a problem much more fundamental than this.

We should distinguish between political *alienation* and political *agnosticism*. Political agnosticism is often what many have in mind when they point to poor voter turn-out as an example of alienation. Political agnostics are citizens who have suspended their engagement. Politics lacks importance or priority for that individual, but this is from choice and she can

⁴ This qualification is important for at least two reasons. The first is that generalizations cutting across all communities East and West are difficult to substantiate. The second reason is my greater familiarity with political alienation within the Western context, its problematic dimensions and how these might be addressed by stakeholding which is my central focus in this chapter.

choose to reengage in future. For example, political agnostics might prefer assisting with charitable activities or watching a television programme to voting or other forms of political engagement. Reasons for avoiding politics can be praiseworthy or mundane. However, the key is that such a person's disengagement is a product of choice at a given time that can change in future.

Political alienation is a different type of disengagement that involves a more permanent, and problematic, sense of self. This is presented powerfully by G. W. F. Hegel in his comments concerning 'the rabble':

When a large mass of people sinks below the level of a certain standard of living . . . that *feeling* of right, integrity [*Rechtlichkeit*], and honour which comes from supporting oneself by one's own activity and work is lost. This leads to the creation of a rabble (Hegel 1990: 266).

Commentators have typically understood Hegel's rabble in mostly economic terms. For example, Shlomo Avineri has argued that if market capitalism necessarily creates and perpetuates such a rabble then the solution is to transition the economy away from capitalism (see Avineri 1974). In contrast, Raymond Plant claims that Hegel's problem can be solved by ensuring everyone has some means of employment, such as through an expanded civil service, so that no one falls below a threshold of well-being (see Plant 1983).

These interpreters fail to grasp Hegel's position. The *central* problem of the rabble is not that they may live in poverty, but that they possess a particular sense of political alienation (see Brooks 2012a). Hegel argues: 'Poverty in itself does not reduce people to a rabble' (1990: 266). To be a member of the rabble is to have a mind-set—it is to have a *conviction* about the relation of self to others that affirms that oneself is separate from others. Society is a place for others and by others; that my voice would not be heard even if I were to speak.

Hegel's rabble may live in poverty or even great wealth: either can contribute to a conviction of separateness from others. The alienated are not merely disinterested like political agnostics, but disengaged and they lack the belief their alienation can or should be overcome. So the political disconnection someone may believe exists between him and others will seem fixed and either beyond their ability to fix or to care about changing it.

Hegel identifies the existence of a rabble—or politically alienated citizens—as one of the most significant problems for modern society. If our community should be a place all might call home, then what to do for those who see it as a place of disconnection or oppression? Which how might our models of citizenship better address this problem?

Ethical Citizenship as Stakeholding

The problem for Hegel's alienated rabble is their conviction about their disconnection from others. This can be understood as a problem about *stakeholding*: that the politically alienated fail to see themselves as stakeholders in the political community. The idea of 'stakeholding' originates in the literature on business ethics and corporate governance, but it resonates with the issue of alienation (see Freeman et. al. 2010). Stakeholder theory argues that good corporate management should involve various stakeholders in its decision-making process. Stakeholders are defined generally as those with a stake in the outcome from some collective decision by a firm (Sachs and Rühli 2011: 37). Stakeholder theory is about not only a different way to manage a firm, but a vision about economic justice and sustainable markets (see Hutton 1999; Hutton 2010).

This can be translated into the realm of citizenship by viewing stakeholding as a principle of justice: those who have a stake should have a say on outcomes that affect them. As with the firm, this requires ethical decision-making to be *inclusive* of those with a stake and *transparent* so those with a stake are able to reach informed views concerning their

decision-making in an *interactive* framework no less down-up than top-down. Citizen stakeholding is inclusive on principle by involving all persons with a stake to inform the decision-making processes that affect them. It is transparent insofar as relevant information is made available to stakeholders. Otherwise, stakeholders are unable to feed into the decision-making process effectively. Finally, stakeholding is interactive whereby communication feeds across channels and networks rejecting a top-down only structure. This perspective views citizens as sharing an identity as stakeholders who view themselves and others as having a voice in public deliberations because of the stakes each has in them.

Crucially, stakeholding is about this principle with a conviction about self-understanding themselves as stakeholders. To be a stakeholder is to see myself as a stakeholder: it is not only about the opportunities others offer us, but about how we see ourselves. A community of stakeholders is a world away from a rabble society. The issue is the connections that transform us from a rabble to stakeholders.

The stakeholder view of citizenship conceives the citizen as not politically alienated. This does not mean that every citizen must exercise his or her voice where he or she has a stake: the fact that I have a stake entails I should have a say and not that I must, perhaps under coercion, exercise my say. But it does entail that the failure of some citizens to see themselves as stakeholders is not only a problem for those persons, insofar as the possession of this lack of conviction is a problem. This is a problem for *us*, those citizens who accept the principle and conviction of ourselves as stakeholders. This is because if those who have a stake should have a say fail to see themselves as stakeholders it calls into question the stakes for all. Political alienation is an issue that stakeholding can help us identify.

British Idealism may hold some useful insights. While none defend explicitly stakeholder theories, several argue for positions consistent with stakeholding and they develop in interesting ways. Many British Idealists shared Hegel's concerns about the rabble and the need to address political alienation. For example, T. H. Green claims 'these dangerous classes' of people are individuals with 'no reverence for the state . . . no sense of *an interest shared with others* in maintaining it' (1941: 33 [§7]). Green's point is *not* that the state must or should be obeyed wherever it is found. The issue concerns persons who reject entering into any shared interest with others under any circumstances. Green claims such persons cannot be forced to see themselves as stakeholders by coercion (1941: 109 [§98]). Instead, we must encourage a change of heart because 'there is no right "but thinking makes it so"' (Green 1941: 140—41 [§136]). This view supports the stakeholder approach by confirming the importance of our having the conviction of seeing ourselves as stakeholders. The failure of some to share a conviction that they are also stakeholders is a problem for the political community and a sign of its imperfection (Green 1941: 129 [§121]). Individuals must come to see themselves as having 'a share' in the 'making and maintaining the laws which he obeys' as a stakeholder, requiring a conviction about a particular 'feeling of political duty' and connection to other citizens (Green 1941: 130 [§122]).

Stakeholding plays an important role in the work of other British Idealists as well. F. H. Bradley and Bernard Bosanquet separately argue that the self is constructed in relation to others through a process of mutual recognition (Bradley 1927: 161; Bosanquet 1965: 142—43). Each person engages others as equals as part of a shared, public endeavour. This engagement helps us construct our shared legal and political institutions, and informs the development of our individual self-understanding (Bradley 1927: 163, 173). Others, such as James Seth, claim it is not enough for us to consider ourselves as stakeholders, but rather we must become convinced free from the coercion of others (1898: 211—12).

The shared interest all persons have is in fostering and maintaining a *common good*. This good is a good for all that does not exclude any citizen. Our common good points to a substantial unity in our common social purpose to secure its flourishing for the benefit of

each individual (see Hetherington and Muirhead 1918: 20). The common good is not a mere ideal, but grounded in our practical needs. Indeed, John Henry Muirhead claims that when done well ‘philosophy at all times . . . has had its roots in man’s practical needs. To try to sever it from these is to cut it off from the springs of life’ (1924: 312). So a view about the common good divorced from our practical needs is effectively render it dead. Our common good is the source of our ‘common well-being’ (Green 1941: 124 [§117]).

The common good finds expression in our mutual recognition of rights shared equally with other citizens in our political community. Our rights are not a product of arbitrary guesswork, but instead forged through common agreement after engaged deliberation. Rights represent our substantial freedoms to do or achieve that command political and legal protections (see Brooks 2012b: 127). Crimes can be understood as violations of these rights. Their punishment is an effort at the restoration of rights violated by crimes. James Seth argues:

This view of the object of punishment gives the true measure of its amount. This is found not in the amount of moral depravity which the crime reveals, but in the importance of the right violated, relatively to the system of rights of which it forms a part (1907: 305).

What is key is ‘the protection of the right in question’ that is threatened by a crime (Seth 1907: 305). Punishment aims to restore rights through their protection and maintenance. Our rights are worthy of retention because they demarcate the fundamental freedoms we have and so require this protection.⁵

Many British Idealists are supportive of our common good including the embrace of cultural diversity. For example, Seth claims culture addresses ‘the *man* in the man’ (1898: 248). Our self-realisation and fulfilment comes through our social interactions with others (Seth 1898: 269—70; Mackenzie 1924: 318). Seth argues that ‘to cut *him* off from others, to isolate him, would be to maim and stunt his growth’ (1898: 289). Political alienation is not a path to self-improvement and it is harmful to it. Our aim is to ensure the connections we enjoy to each other are forged primarily at the individual level and not imposed from above (Seth 1898: 297). This is because overcoming the conviction of alienation is perhaps something the state can influence, but should not impose. We are all better for it: the good life is ‘a richer form of life’ for everyone (Muirhead 1910: 260).⁶ Our sharing a common good while respecting our differences reflects a kind of harmony (see Ritchie 1905: 296). This is important because it accounts for our unity and diversity without sacrificing either. For Bosanquet: ‘Man can only be fully realised as social when he is fully distinguished as individual’ (1999: 110).

Modern stakeholder theory came long after the golden age of British Idealism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While Idealists developed a broadly shared philosophical perspective using their own Hegelian-inspired terminology, it is also true that they adopt and develop views present in stakeholding. This is important because they are sensitive to the problem of political alienation and the need for an ethical account of citizenship to respond constructively to it. They recognise the need to view stakeholding as requiring not only opportunities for stakeholder engagement, but creating a social and political space that all citizens can recognise as theirs and share a common identity—and conviction—about their being a stakeholder. This is to be pursued not by denying diversity, but embracing it through

⁵ This view of punishment is compelling, in part, because it can account for cases of pardons understood as contexts where the protection and maintenance of a violated right does not require an act of punishment (see Brooks 2012b: 130).

⁶ See Muirhead 1910: 186: ‘Just as contact with various concepts and ways of thinking expands the mind and makes it at home in the world of ideas which we call culture, so a rich environment of institutional forms opens up the spiritual horizon and makes a man a citizen of the moral universe’.

a recognition that all citizens share in a common good located in mutually acknowledged rights that form an important core linking citizens together. Ethical citizenship is a kind of stakeholding.

Towards a Stakeholder Society

Does a stakeholder society have importance for us today?

It is clear that it can supplement citizenship models we have already considered. For example, Rawls's model focuses on how we might overcome our differences and create a shared overlapping consensus through public reasons. Part of Rawls's claim is securing such a consensus is important to honour and guarantee the equality of citizens: this is why he claims we cannot support one view of the good over other views in pursuit of some new, consensus that every reasonable comprehensive doctrine can buy into. If the equality of citizens is not fulfilled, then he fears that citizens will lack reciprocity by failing to see others as equals and so undermine the social bonds that can enable political stability over time. If Rawls's models accounted for stakeholding, then he might recognise that a consensus based on public reasons is insufficient. This is because Rawls simply assumes honouring principles of justice, such as fair equality of opportunity and equal basic rights, will by themselves protect against political alienation. But there is no reason to assume—and countless contemporary counterexamples on hand—that convictions of common identity can and should follow the creation of a consensus built on reasons all can accept, but none might accept.

But let us now consider a second model that I believe is more congruent with stakeholding: Parekh's model that views our diversity as a fact to be embraced while pursuing a common identity of shared belonging (see 2006: 237, 263). Parekh emphasises the need of citizens to not only view their government as a legitimate political entity, but guarantees they are 'justly treated and enjoy respect for their cultural identities' (2006: 237—38). He says:

While cherishing their respective cultural identities, members of different communities also share a common identity not only as citizens but as full and relaxed members of wider society, and form part of a freely negotiated and constantly evolving collective 'we' (Parekh 2006: 238).

Stakeholding is about each of us being part of this collective 'we' and viewing ourselves as such. This is the problem of being *in* a community, but not *of* it (Parekh 2014). The importance of collective goals like a common sense of belonging is no less important than equality (see Parekh 2006: 263). This is explicit in Parekh's model of citizenship and compatible with the stakeholder account of ethical citizenship defended in this chapter.

Stakeholder theory can inform ethical citizenship for a modern world characterised by diversity. This builds off of Parekh's model of citizenship and the perspectives of many British Idealists. This new perspective of citizenship can better address the problem of political alienation that creates serious concerns for alternative views. Ethical citizenship as stakeholding acknowledges that celebrating our inescapable differences need not entail we possess weak collective bonds, but highlight through the ideas of a common good how strength in diversity can be achieved.

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