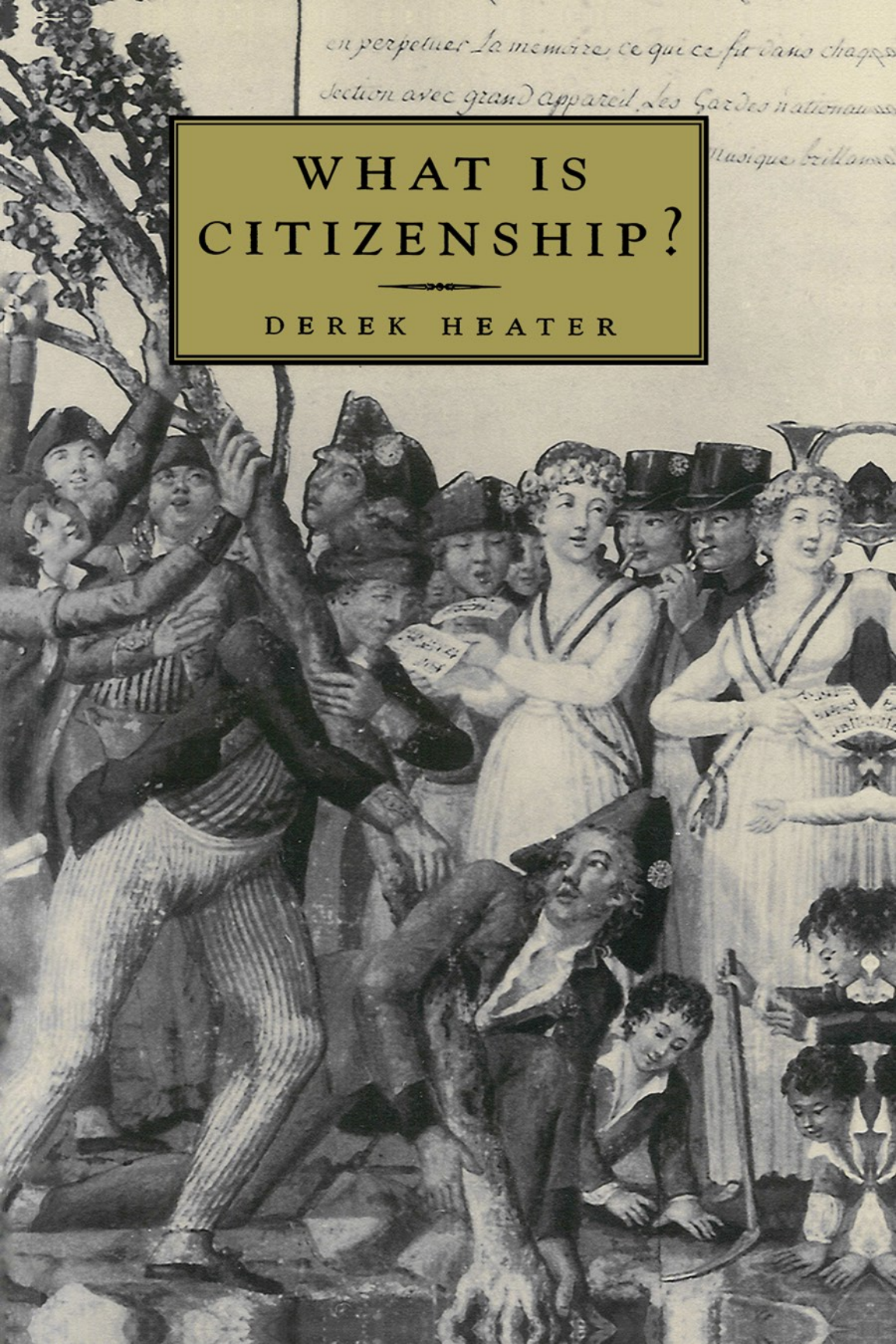


en perpétuer la mémoire, ce qui ce fit dans chaque
section avec grand appareil. Les Gardes nationales
Musique brillante

WHAT IS CITIZENSHIP?

DEREK HEATER



What is Citizenship?

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Polity Press

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Preface

Yet another book on citizenship needs to be justified. This is simply done: among the great outpouring of works on the topic during the past decade or so, it is difficult to find a succinct analysis of the subject-matter. David Held recognized the gap, invited me to try to fill it, and he and his colleagues at Polity Press have been of great assistance in seeing the task through to completion. I am also grateful for the comments of two anonymous readers of the manuscript. My wife, too, deserves my usual thanks for uncomplainingly being drawn away from her interest to listen to mine. But, of course, none of these can be thought responsible for the judgements I have made about the content and general approach of the book nor for any errors that it may contain.

I must add two explanations. One is that the book perhaps reflects my own greater interest in the academic disciplines of history and politics rather than sociology, though I have striven to present what I believe to be a reasonable balance. The other is that, although the material is presented in summary form and will, it is hoped, find favour with students, what follows is not just a 'textbook'. I have attempted in places some interpretations by clustering material into patterns, which will add, I trust, both to the understanding of this complicated topic and to its intrinsic interest.

Derek Heater

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The author and publisher wish to thank Pluto Press for permission to reproduce extracts from T. H. Marshall and Tom Bottomore, *Citizenship and Social Class*.

Introduction

The title of citizen (*citoyen citoyenne*) was adopted by the French revolutionaries to pronounce the symbolic reality of equality: the titles of aristocratic distinction were expunged. The Russian revolutionaries went one better by replacing even the title of Mr (*gospodin*) by the uniform title of citizen (*grazhdanin*). Today citizenship is a commonly held status throughout the world, though, true, the title has not persisted; so equality, at least in theory, in principle and in law, might seem pervasive. But explaining that equality – how it has evolved; its variegated elements, including rights and duties; the civic identity it provides; and how far the practice so often falls short of the theory – all this is a much more complicated business than the bland statement of the generalized principle of equality might suggest.

Yet, however difficult the concept of citizenship may be, the effort of comprehension is especially necessary now. For we are at present living through an age that for good reasons considers citizenship of cardinal significance. However, as a consequence of this recognized importance, academic enquiry has uncovered the extraordinary complexity of its history and present condition to aid our more accurate understanding.

There have been other ages of heightened consciousness of citizenship, often associated with particular states. Fifth to fourth-century BC Athens, first-century BC to first-century AD Rome, late medieval Florence, late eighteenth-century America and France spring obviously to mind. The present interest is different: it is virtually global in its extent. How, then, to explain the fascination the subject currently holds? It

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derives from the confluence of a number of events and concerns in the 1980s and 1990s.

First, in the established liberal democracies the emergence to political and doctrinal dominance of the New Right in the US and UK threw into question the validity of 'social citizenship'. By social citizenship is meant the provision of welfare state benefits as a *right*. It is a right that was conceded in order to ensure a greater equality for citizens than would be the case if untempered market forces of employment and wages were allowed to prevail.

Secondly, partly because of accelerated human migrations and partly because of enhanced and politicized awareness of ethnic differences within states, the fact that almost all states are multicultural in demographic composition has become an issue related to the definition of citizenship as civic identity.

Thirdly, and closely related to this development, ethnic, cultural and national consciousness have brought about either the loosening or the actual fragmentation of polities hitherto thought of as nation-states. What does it mean, for example, to be a Canadian citizen if one thinks of oneself primarily as a Québécois, or an Israeli citizen, if a Palestinian Arab? In potentially fissiparous conditions like these only a stable or strong government could hold a national citizenship in place. In the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia that stability and strength failed; and the assumed nation-states disintegrated. Furthermore, it was a consciousness among a critical mass of the population of the need and the opportunity to claim an effective citizenship that wrought these changes.

But, and moreover, these states had been autocratic regimes, many of whose successor governments sought to rebuild their political systems, this time following the liberal democratic blueprint. And so, fourthly, they have needed to construct fresh constitutions and ways of conducting public life which could give reality to the legal and political rights of citizenship that had not been thoroughly enjoyed under Communism. Nor were the ex-Communist countries alone in striving to make this transition: South Africa and the states of sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America that had endured but shook themselves loose from military dictatorships, have passed through similar experiences of improving the meaning of citizenship for their people.

Introduction

Fifthly, we are becoming increasingly conscious that for large numbers of people throughout the world the idea of citizenship is still hollow and meaningless, deprived as they are of virtually all its attributes.

Sixthly, the validity of the nation-state is itself being put in question. Uniquely, at the sub-continental level, the European Union has created a new, legally defined category of citizenship, namely, of the Union. Meanwhile, economic developments and environmental worries have revived the ancient concept of cosmopolitan citizenship, the awareness of being a citizen of the world and the imperative need to behave and to be encouraged to behave as such. These trends are part of the increasing recognition that citizenship is a multiple rather than a singular feeling and status.

Citizenship in our complex times reflects this complexity. Its elements derive from manifold sources, influences and needs. To analyse them is, inevitably, to oversimplify and to exaggerate the separateness of the component parts. However, this is the route to understanding and therefore this is the task upon which we now embark.

1

The Liberal Tradition

Origins

Something of an oversimplification it may be, but it is most helpful to easy comprehension – not to mention quite fashionable – to distinguish between two traditions and interpretations of the nature of citizenship. These are the civic republican style, which places its stress on duties, and the liberal style, which emphasizes rights. Now, despite the former's origins in classical antiquity and therefore its longevity, it is the liberal form that has been dominant for the past two centuries and remains so today. It is therefore fitting to start with the liberal tradition, postponing consideration of civic republicanism to the next chapter. Compared with the republican variant, liberal citizenship is much less demanding of the individual. It involves a loosely committed relationship to the state, a relationship held in place in the main by a set of civic rights, honoured by the state, which otherwise interferes as little as possible in the citizen's life.

Liberal citizenship was the offspring of the liaison between revolutionary upheaval and contractarian natural rights theory, Great Britain playing the role of midwife. True, it was the French Revolution that first established the principle and practice of citizenship as the central feature of the modern socio-political structure, but it was the British (including, crucially, the American) experience over one-and-a-half centuries prior to 1789 that laid the foundations for the transition from a monarch–subject relationship to a state–citizen relationship. Paradoxically, the actual terms 'citizen' and 'citizenship' were rarely used in the

The Liberal Tradition

liberal sense in the English-speaking world. Yet the English Civil War and its aftermath, the political theory of John Locke, and the seizing of independence by the American colonies and their transmutation into the United States were all absolutely vital to the evolution of the liberal mode of citizenship and citizens' rights.

A citizen has the right to vote: Colonel Rainborough declared in 1647, 'I do think that the poorest man in England is not at all bound in a strict sense to that government that he has not had a voice to put himself under' (see Wootton, 1986, p. 286). A citizen also has a right to just treatment by the law: the first Habeas Corpus Act was passed in Britain in 1679. In about this year Locke wrote his *Two Treatises of Civil Government* (though they were not published until a decade later, in 1690). In the second of these Locke influentially expounded his theory of natural rights, that every man should have the free and equal right 'to preserve . . . his life, liberty, and estate' (Locke, 1962, s. 87). The American revolutionaries adapted this formula to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness', and the French, to liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression'. These rights are God-given; but it is the function of the state to ensure their protection. We therefore step from generalized natural rights, which individuals have *qua* human beings, to specific civic rights, which are assured by the state to individuals *qua* citizens. Hence the dual title of the French Declaration – of Man and the Citizen.

The distinction could be telling, as Marx recognized. The rights of man are negative, allowing the individual to pursue his own, personal life, not committing him to a life as a member of a community, a citizen. Marx cites Art. 6 of the French Declaration, which defines liberty as 'the power of doing anything that does not harm others', and he continues:

The freedom in question is that of a man treated as an isolated monad and withdrawn into himself. . . none of the so-called rights of man goes beyond egoistic man . . . namely an individual withdrawn behind his private interests and whims and separated from the community.

(*'On the Jewish Question'*, in McLellan, 1977, pp. 53–4)

The rights of the citizen, on the other hand, have a more defined, positive character. For example, the French Declaration and the American