

**COMMUNITY AT  
LOOSE ENDS**

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**COMMUNITY**

# Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community

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The themes of “citizenship” and “community” are being discussed in many quarters of the left today. It is no doubt a consequence of the crisis of “class” politics and indicates the growing awareness of the need for a new form of identification around which to organize the forces struggling for the radicalization of democracy. I do indeed agree that the question of political identity is the crucial one, and I consider that to attempt to construct “citizens’ ” identities should be an important task of democratic politics. But there are many different visions of citizenship and central issues are at stake in their contestation. The way we define citizenship is intimately linked to the kind of society and political community we want.

How should we understand citizenship when our goal is a radical and plural democracy? Such a project requires the creation of a chain of equivalences among democratic struggles and therefore the creation of a common political identity among democratic subjects. For the interpellation “citizens” to be able to fulfill that role, what conditions must it meet?

Those are the problems I will address and I am going to argue that the key question is how to conceive of the nature of the political community under modern democratic conditions. I consider that we need to go beyond the conceptions of citizenship of both the liberal and the civic republican traditions while building upon their respective strengths.

To situate my reflections in the context of the current discussions, I will begin by engaging the debate between Kantian liberals and the so-called communita-

rians. In this way, I hope to bring to the fore the specificity of my approach both politically and theoretically.

### **Liberalism versus Civic Republicanism**

What is really at stake between John Rawls and his communitarian critics is the issue of citizenship. Two different languages for articulating our identity as citizens are confronting each other. Rawls proposes to represent the citizen of a constitutional democracy in terms of equal rights expressed by his two principles of justice. He affirms that once citizens see themselves as free and equal persons, they should recognize that to pursue their own different conceptions of the good, they need the same primary goods (i.e., the same basic rights, liberties, and opportunities) as well as the same all-purpose means (i.e., income and wealth), and the same social bases of self-respect. This is why they should agree on a political conception of justice that states that “all social primary goods—liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect—are to be distributed equally, unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favored” (Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 302–3). According to that liberal view, citizenship is the capacity for each person to form, revise, and rationally pursue his/her definition of the good. Citizens are seen as using their rights to promote their self-interest within certain constraints imposed by the exigency to respect the rights of others. The communitarians object that it is an impoverished conception that precludes the notion of the citizen as one for whom it is natural to join with others to pursue common action in view of the common good. Michael Sandel has argued that Rawls’s conception of the self is an “unencumbered” one that leaves no room for a “constitutive” community, a community that would constitute the very identity of the individuals. It only allows for an “instrumental” community, a community in which individuals with their previously defined interests and identity enter in view of furthering those interests (*Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*).

For the communitarians, the alternative to this flawed liberal approach is the revival of the civic republican view of politics that puts a strong emphasis on the notion of a public good, prior to and independent of individual desires and interests. Such a tradition has almost disappeared today because it has been displaced by liberalism, though it has a long history. It received its full expression in the Italian republics at the end of the Middle Ages, but its origins go back to Greek and Roman thought. It was reformulated in England in the seventeenth century by James Harrington, John Milton, and other republicans. Later it traveled to the New World through the work of the neo-Harringtonians, and recent studies have shown that it played an important role during the American Revolution.

There are indeed serious problems with the liberal conception of citizenship,

but we must be aware of the shortcomings of the civic republican solution, too. It does provide us with a view of citizenship much richer than the liberal one, and its conception of politics as the realm where we can recognize ourselves as participants in a political community has obvious appeal for the critics of liberal individualism. Nevertheless, there is a real danger of coming back to a premodern view of politics that does not acknowledge the novelty of modern democracy and the crucial contribution of liberalism. The defense of pluralism, the idea of individual liberty, the separation of church and state, the development of civil society, all these are constitutive of democratic politics. They require distinguishing between the domain of the private and the domain of the public, the realm of morality and the realm of politics. Contrary to what some communitarians propose, a modern democratic political community cannot be organized around a single substantive idea of the common good. The recovery of a strong participatory idea of citizenship should not be done at the cost of sacrificing individual liberty. This is the point where the communitarian critique of liberalism takes a dangerous conservative turn.

The problem, I believe, is not to replace one tradition with the other but to draw on both and to try to combine their insights in a new conception of citizenship adequate for a project of radical and plural democracy. While liberalism did certainly contribute to the formulation of the idea of a universal citizenship, based on the assertion that all individuals are born free and equal, it also reduced citizenship to a mere legal status, indicating the possession of rights that the individual holds against the state. The way those rights are exercised is irrelevant as long as their holders do not break the law or interfere with the rights of others. Social cooperation aims only at enhancing our productive capacities and facilitating the attainment of each person's individual prosperity. Ideas of public-spiritedness, civic activity, and political participation in a community of equals are alien to most liberal thinkers.

Civic republicanism, on the contrary, emphasizes the value of political participation and attributes a central role to our insertion in a political community. But the problem arises with the exigency of conceiving the political community in a way that is compatible with liberal pluralism. In other words, we are faced with the old dilemma of how to reconcile the liberties of the ancients with the liberties of the moderns. The liberals argue that they are incompatible and that today ideas about the "common good" can only have totalitarian implications. According to them, it is impossible to combine democratic institutions with the sense of common purpose that premodern society enjoyed and the ideals of "republican virtue" are nostalgic relics to be discarded. Active political participation, they say, is incompatible with the modern idea of liberty. Individual liberty can only be understood in a negative way as absence of coercion.

This argument, powerfully restated by Isaiah Berlin in "Two Concepts of Liberty," is generally used to discredit any attempt to recapture the civic republican

conception of politics. However, it has recently been challenged by Quentin Skinner, who argues that there is no basic or necessary incompatibility between the classical republican conception of citizenship and modern democracy. He finds in several forms of republican thought, particularly in Machiavelli, a way of conceiving liberty that though negative—and therefore modern—includes, however, political participation and civic virtue. It is negative because liberty is conceived as the absence of impediments to the realization of our chosen ends. But it also asserts that it is only as citizens of a “free state,” of a community whose members participate actively in the government, that such individual liberty can be guaranteed. To ensure our own liberty and avoid the servitude that would render its exercise impossible, we must cultivate civic virtues and devote ourselves to the common good. The idea of a common good above our private interest is a necessary condition for enjoying individual liberty. Skinner’s argument is important because it refutes the liberals’ claim that individual liberty and political participation can never be reconciled. This is crucial for a radical democratic project, but the kind of political community adequate for such an articulation between the rights of the individual and the political participation of the citizen then becomes the question to be envisaged.

### **Modern Democracy and Political Community**

Another way to approach the debate between Kantian liberals like Rawls and the communitarians is through the question of the priority of the right over the good, which has a direct relevance for the issue of the modern democratic political community.

For Rawls, such a priority indicates that individual rights cannot be sacrificed for the sake of the general welfare, as is the case with utilitarianism, and that the principles of justice impose restrictions on what are the permissible conceptions of the good that individuals are allowed to pursue. This is why he insists that the principles of justice must be derived independently of any particular conception of the good, since they need to respect the existence of a plurality of competing conceptions of the good in order to be accepted by all citizens. His aim here is to defend liberal pluralism, which requires not imposing upon men any specific conception of well-being or particular plan of life. Those are for liberals private questions bearing on individual morality, and they believe that each person should be able to organize his or her life according to his or her own wishes, without unnecessary interferences. Hence the centrality of the concept of individual rights and the assertion that principles of justice must not privilege a particular conception of the good life.

I consider this an important principle that needs defending because it is crucial for modern democratic societies. Indeed, modern democracy is precisely char-

acterized by the absence of a substantive common good. This is the meaning of the democratic revolution as analyzed by Claude Lefort, who identifies it with the dissolution of landmarks of certainty. According to Lefort, modern democratic society is a society where power has become an empty space and is separated from law and knowledge (*Political Forms*, 305ff.). In such a society, there is no more possibility of providing a final guarantee, a definite legitimation, because there is no more power incorporated in the person of the prince and related to a transcendental instance. Power, law, and knowledge are therefore exposed to a radical indeterminacy: in my terms, a substantive common good becomes impossible. This is also what Rawls indicates when he affirms that “we must abandon the hope of a political community if by such a community we mean a political society united in affirming a general and comprehensive doctrine” (“The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus,” 10). If the priority of the right over the good were restricted to that, there would not be anything for me to disagree with. But Rawls wants to establish an absolute priority of the right over the good because he does not recognize that it can only exist in a certain type of society with specific institutions and that it is a consequence of the democratic revolution.

To that, the communitarians reply — with reason — that such an absolute priority of the right cannot exist and that it is only through our participation in a community which defines the good in a certain way that we can acquire a sense of the right and a conception of justice. And Charles Taylor correctly points out that the mistake with the liberal approach is that “it fails to take account of the degree to which the free individual with his own goals and aspirations whose just rewards it is trying to protect, is himself only possible within a certain kind of civilization; that it took a long development of certain institutions and practices, of the rule of law, of rules of equal respect, of habits of common deliberation, of common association, of cultural development and so on, to produce the modern individual” (*Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, 200).

Where the communitarians go astray is when some of them, like Sandel, conclude that there can never be a priority of the right over the good and that we should therefore reject liberal pluralism and go back to a type of community organized around shared moral values and a substantive idea of the common good. We can perfectly agree with Rawls about the priority of justice as the principal virtue of social and political institutions and in defending pluralism and rights, while admitting that those principles are specific to a certain type of political association. There is, however, another aspect of the communitarian critique of liberalism that we should not abandon but reformulate. The absence of a single substantive common good in modern democratic societies and the separation between the realm of morality and the realm of politics have, no doubt, signified an incontestable gain in individual freedom. But the consequences for politics have been damaging. All normative concerns have increasingly been relegated to the field of private morality, to the domain of “values,” and politics has been

stripped of its ethical components. An instrumentalist conception has become dominant, concerned exclusively with the compromise between already defined interests. On the other hand, liberalism's exclusive concern with individuals and their rights has not provided content and guidance for the exercise of those rights. This has led to the devaluation of civic activity, of a common concern, which has caused an increasing lack of social cohesion in democratic societies. The communitarians are right to criticize such a situation, and I agree with their attempt to revive some aspects of the classical conception of politics. We need indeed to reestablish the lost connection between ethics and politics, but it cannot be done by sacrificing the gains of the democratic revolution. We should not accept a false dichotomy between individual liberty and rights on one side versus civic activity and political community on the other. Our choice is not at all between an aggregate of individuals without common public concern and a premodern community organized around a single substantive idea of the common good. How to envisage the modern democratic political community outside this dichotomy is the crucial question.

I have already pointed out how Quentin Skinner indicates a possible form of articulation between individual freedom and civic participation. But we must also be able to formulate the ethical character of modern citizenship in a way that is compatible with moral pluralism and respects the priority of the right over the good. What we share and what makes us fellow citizens in a liberal democratic regime is not a substantive idea of the good but a set of political principles specific to such a tradition: the principles of freedom and equality for all. Those principles constitute what we can call, following Wittgenstein, a "grammar" of political conduct. To be a citizen is to recognize the authority of those principles and the rules in which they are embodied—to have them informing our political judgment and our actions. To be associated in terms of the recognition of the liberal democratic principles, this is the meaning of citizenship that I want to put forward. It implies seeing citizenship not as a legal status but as a form of identification, a type of political identity: something to be constructed, not empirically given. Since there will always be competing interpretations of the democratic principles of equality and liberty there will therefore be competing interpretations of democratic citizenship. I will inquire into the nature of a radical democratic citizenship, but before going to that point I must further tackle the question of the political association or community.

### **The Political Community: Universitas or Societas?**

As I indicated previously, we need to conceive of a mode of political association that, although it does not postulate the existence of a substantive common good, nevertheless implies the idea of commonality, of an ethico-political bond that

creates a linkage among the participants in the association, allowing us to speak of a political “community” even if it is not in the strong sense. In other words, what we are looking for is a way to accommodate the distinctions between public and private, morality and politics, which have been the great contribution of liberalism to modern democracy, without renouncing the ethical nature of the political association.

I consider that, if we interpret them in a certain way, the reflections on civil association proposed by Michael Oakeshott in *On Human Conduct* can be very illuminating for such a purpose. Oakeshott shows that *societas* and *universitas*, which were understood in the late Middle Ages as two different modes of human association, can also represent alternative interpretations of the modern state. *Universitas* indicates an engagement in an enterprise to pursue a common substantive purpose or to promote a common interest. It refers, therefore, to “persons associated in a manner such as to constitute them a natural person, a partnership of persons which is itself a Person, or in some important respects like a person” (203).

Contrary to that model of association of agents engaged in a common enterprise defined by a purpose, *societas* or “civil association” designates a formal relationship in terms of rules, not a substantive relation in terms of common action. “The idea *societas* is that of agents who, by choice or circumstance, are related to one another so as to compose an identifiable association of a certain sort. The tie which joins them, and in respect of which each recognizes himself to be *socius*, is not that of an engagement in an enterprise to pursue a common substantive purpose or to promote a common interest, but that of loyalty to one another” (201). It is not a mode of relation, therefore, in terms of common action but a relation in which participants are related to one another in the acknowledgment of the authority of certain conditions in acting.

Oakeshott insists that the participants in a *societas* or *cives* are not associated for a common enterprise nor in a view of facilitating the attainment of each person’s individual prosperity; what links them is the recognition of the authority of the conditions specifying their common or “public” concern, a “practice of civility.” This public concern or consideration of *cives*, Oakeshott calls *respublica*. It is a practice of civility that consists in a manifold of rules or rulelike prescriptions that do not prescribe performances, satisfactions to be sought, or actions to be performed but “moral considerations specifying conditions to be subscribed to in choosing performances” (182).

It seems to me that Oakeshott’s idea of the civil association as *societas* is adequate to define political association under modern democratic conditions. Indeed, it is a mode of human association that recognizes the disappearance of a single substantive idea of the common good and makes room for individual liberty. It is a form of association that can be enjoyed among relative strangers belonging to many purposive associations and whose allegiances to specific com-

munities are not seen as conflicting with their membership in the civil association. This would not be possible if such an association were conceived as *universitas*, as purposive association, because it would not allow for the existence of other genuine purposive associations in which individuals would be free to participate.

To belong to the political community, what is required is to accept a specific language of civil intercourse, the *respublica*. Those rules prescribe norms of conduct to be subscribed to in seeking self-chosen satisfactions and in performing self-chosen actions. The identification with those rules of civil intercourse creates a common political identity among persons otherwise engaged in many different enterprises. This modern form of political community is held together not by a substantive idea of a common good but by a common bond, a public concern. It is therefore a community without a definite shape, a definite identity, and in continuous reenactment.

Such a conception is clearly different from the premodern idea of the political community, but it is also different from the liberal idea of political association. For liberalism also sees political association as a form of purposive association, of enterprise, except that in its case the aim is an instrumental one: the promotion of self-interest.

Oakeshott criticizes the liberal view of the state as a conciliator of interests, which he considers to be as remote from civil association as the idea of the state as promoter of an interest, and he declares, "It has been thought that 'the Rule of Law' is enough to identify civil association, whereas what is significant is the kind of law: 'moral' or 'instrumental' " (318). Oakeshott's conception should therefore not be confounded with the liberal doctrine of the rule of law. He stresses the moral character of the *respublica* and affirms that political thought concerns the *respublica* in terms of *bonum civile*. He declares: "Civility, then, denotes an order of moral (not instrumental) considerations, and the so-called neutrality of civil prescriptions is a half truth which needs to be supplemented by the recognition of civil association as itself a moral and not a prudential condition" (175). By "moral" Oakeshott obviously refers not to a comprehensive view but to what I have proposed to call the "ethico-political" since he asserts that what is civilly desirable cannot be inferred or derived from general moral principles and that political deliberation is concerned with moral considerations of its own: "This *respublica* is the articulation of a common concern that the pursuit of all purposes and the promotion of all interests, the satisfaction of all wants and the propagation of all beliefs shall be in subscription to conditions formulated in rules indifferent to the merits of any interest or the truth or error of any belief and consequently not itself a substantive interest or doctrine" (172).

We could say, using Rawls's vocabulary, that in a civil association or *societas* there exists a priority of the right over the good, but in Oakeshott's case, the principles that specify the right, the *respublica*, are conceived not in a Kantian

manner as in Rawls, but in a Hegelian way, since for him, to be associated in terms of the recognition of the *respublica* is to enjoy a “sittlich” relation. What I find useful in this approach is that, while allowing for the recognition of pluralism and individual liberty, the notion of *societas* does not relinquish all normative aspects to the sphere of private morality. This mode of association that Oakeshott traces to Machiavelli, Montesquieu, and Hegel permits us to maintain a certain idea of the political community in the sense of a noninstrumental, an ethical, type of bond among *cives*, while severing it from the existence of a substantive common good.

I did mention at the outset that to be useful for a radical democratic project Oakeshott’s reflections needed to be interpreted in a certain way. I am, of course, perfectly aware of the conservative use he makes of the distinction between *societas* and *universitas*, but I believe that it is not the only and necessary one. To be sure, Oakeshott’s conservatism resides in the content he puts in the *respublica*, and that can obviously be remedied without problems by putting in it more radical principles, as I will indicate later. But more fundamentally, his conservatism lies in his flawed idea of politics. For his conception of politics as a shared language of civility is only adequate for one aspect of politics: the point of view of the “we,” the friend’s side. However, as Carl Schmitt rightly pointed out, the criterion of the political is the friend/enemy relation. What is completely missing in Oakeshott is division and antagonism—that is, the aspect of the “enemy.” It is an absence that must be remedied if we want to appropriate his notion of *societas*.

To introduce conflict and antagonism into Oakeshott’s model, it is necessary to recognize that the *respublica* is the product of a given hegemony, the expression of power relations, and that it can be challenged. Politics is to a great extent about the rules of the *respublica* and their many possible interpretations; it is about the constitution of the political community, not something that takes place inside the political community, as some communitarians would have it. Political life concerns collective, public action; it aims at the construction of a “we” in a context of diversity and conflict. But to construct a “we,” it must be distinguished from the “they” and that means establishing a frontier, defining an “enemy.” Therefore, while politics aims at constructing a political community and creating a unity, a fully inclusive political community and a final unity can never be realized since there will permanently be a “constitutive outside,” an exterior to the community that makes its existence possible. Antagonistic forces will never disappear, and politics is characterized by conflict and division. Forms of agreement can be reached, but they are always partial and provisional since consensus is by necessity based upon acts of exclusion. We are indeed very far from the language of civility dear to Oakeshott!

## A Radical Democratic Citizenship

What becomes of the idea of citizenship in such a perspective? If we understand citizenship as the political identity that is created through identification with the *respublica*, a new conception of the citizen becomes possible. First, we are now dealing with a type of political identity, a form of identification, and no longer simply with a legal status. The citizen is not, as in liberalism, someone who is the passive recipient of specific rights and who enjoys the protection of the law. It is not that those elements become irrelevant, but the definition of the citizen shifts because the emphasis is put on the identification with the *respublica*. It is a common political identity of persons who might be engaged in many different purposive enterprises and with differing conceptions of the good, but who accept submission to the rules prescribed by the *respublica* in seeking their satisfactions and in performing their actions. What binds them together is their common recognition of a set of ethico-political values. In this case, citizenship is not just one identity among others—as in liberalism—or the dominant identity that overrides all others—as in civic republicanism. It is an articulating principle that affects the different subject positions of the social agent (as I will show when I discuss the distinction public/private) while allowing for a plurality of specific allegiances and for the respect of individual liberty.

Since we are dealing with politics, however, there will be competing forms of identification linked to different interpretations of the *respublica*. In a liberal democratic regime, we can conceive of the *respublica* as constituted by the political principles of such a regime: equality and liberty for all. If we put such a content into Oakeshott's notion of *respublica* we can affirm that the conditions to be subscribed to and taken into account in acting are to be understood as the exigency of treating the others as free and equal persons. This is clearly open to potentially very radical interpretations. For instance, a radical democratic interpretation will emphasize the numerous social relations where relations of domination exist and must be challenged if the principles of liberty and equality are to apply. It should lead to a common recognition among different groups struggling for an extension and radicalization of democracy that they have a common concern and that in choosing their actions they should subscribe to certain rules of conduct; in other words, it should construct a common political identity as radical democratic citizens.

The creation of political identities as radical democratic citizens depends, therefore, on a collective form of identification among the democratic demands found in a variety of movements: women, workers, black, gay, ecological, as well as in several other "new social movements." This is a conception of citizenship that through a common identification with a radical democratic interpretation of the principles of liberty and equality aims at constructing a "we," a

chain of equivalence among their demands so as to articulate them through the principle of democratic equivalence. For it is a matter not of establishing a mere alliance between given interests but of actually modifying the very identity of these forces. This is something many pluralist liberals do not understand because they are blind to relations of power. They agree on the need to extend the sphere of rights in order to include groups hitherto excluded, but they see that process as a smooth one of progressive inclusion into citizenship. This is the typical story as told by T. H. Marshall in his celebrated article "Citizenship and Social Class." The problem with such an approach is that it ignores the limits imposed on the extension of pluralism by the fact that some existing rights have been constituted on the very exclusion or subordination of the rights of other categories. Those identities must first be deconstructed if several new rights are to be recognized.

To make possible a hegemony of the democratic forces, new identities are therefore required and I am arguing here in favor of a common political identity as radical democratic citizens. By that I understand a collective identification with a radical democratic interpretation of the principles of the liberal-democratic regime: liberty and equality. Such an interpretation presupposes that those principles are understood in a way that takes account of the different social relations and subject positions in which they are relevant: gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so on.

Such an approach can only be adequately formulated within a problematic that conceives of the social agent not as a unitary subject but as the articulation of an ensemble of subject positions, constructed within specific discourses and always precariously and temporarily sutured at the intersection of those subject positions. Only with a non-essentialist conception of the subject which incorporates the psychoanalytic insight that all identities are forms of identification can we pose the question of political identity in a fruitful way. A non-essentialist perspective is also needed concerning the notions of *respublica*, *societas*, and political community. For it is crucial to see them not as empirical referents but as discursive surfaces. Failure to do so would make the type of politics that is posited here completely incomprehensible.

This is the point where a radical democratic conception of citizenship connects with the current debates about "postmodernity" and the critique of rationalism and universalism. The view of citizenship I am proposing rejects the idea of an abstract universalist definition of the public, opposed to a domain of the private seen as the realm of particularity and difference. It considers that, although the modern idea of the citizen was indeed crucial for the democratic revolution, it constitutes today an obstacle to its extension. As feminist theorists have argued, the public realm of modern citizenship has been constructed on the very negation of women's participation. This exclusion was seen as indispensable to postulate the generality and universality of the public sphere. The distinction public/private, central as it was for the assertion of individual liberty, also

led to identifying the private with the domestic and played an important role in the subordination of women.

To the idea that the exercise of citizenship consists in adopting a universal point of view, made equivalent to Reason and reserved for men, I am opposing the idea that it consists in identifying with the ethico-political principles of modern democracy and that there can be as many forms of citizenship as there are interpretations of those principles.

In this view, the public/private is not abandoned but reformulated. Here again, Oakeshott can help us to find an alternative to the limitations of liberalism. *Societas* is, according to him, a civil condition in which every enterprise is “private” while never immune from the “public” conditions specified in *respublica*. In a *societas*, “every situation is an encounter between ‘private’ and ‘public,’ between an action or an utterance to procure an imagined and wished-for substantive satisfaction and the conditions of civility to be subscribed to in performing it; and no situation is the one to the exclusion of the other” (183). The wants, choices, and decisions are private because they are the responsibility of each individual, but the performances are public because they are required to subscribe to the conditions specified in the *respublica*. Since the rules of the *respublica* do not enjoin, prohibit, or warrant substantive actions or utterances, and do not tell agents what to do, this mode of association respects individual liberty. But the individual’s belonging to the political community and identification with its ethico-political principles are manifested by his or her acceptance of the common concern expressed in the *respublica*. It provides the “grammar” of the citizen’s conduct.

In the case of a radical democratic citizen, such an approach allows us to envision how a concern with equality and liberty should inform one’s actions in all areas of social life. No sphere is immune from those concerns, and relations of domination can be challenged everywhere. Nevertheless, we are not dealing with a purposive kind of community affirming one single goal for all its members, and the freedom of the individual is preserved.

The distinction between private (individual liberty) and public (*respublica*) is maintained as well as the distinction individual/citizen, but they do not correspond to discrete separate spheres. We cannot say: here end my duties as a citizen and begin my freedoms as an individual. Those two identities exist in a permanent tension that can never be reconciled. But this is precisely the tension between liberty and equality that characterizes modern democracy. It is the very life of such a regime, and any attempt to bring about a perfect harmony, to realize a “true” democracy, can only lead to its destruction. This is why a project of radical and plural democracy recognizes the impossibility of the complete realization of democracy and the final achievement of the political community. Its aim is to use the symbolic resources of the liberal democratic tradition to struggle for the deepening of the democratic revolution, knowing that it is a never-ending pro-

cess. My thesis here has been that the ideal of citizenship could greatly contribute to such an extension of the principles of liberty and equality. By combining the ideal of rights and pluralism with the ideas of public-spiritedness and ethico-political concern, a new modern democratic conception of citizenship could restore dignity to the political and provide the vehicle for the construction of a radical democratic hegemony.