

Callan's Citizens

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In his inaugural lecture at the London School of Economics Michael Oakeshott said that the term "political education" had acquired a sinister meaning [Oakeshott, 1962]. Given Oakeshott's anti-rationalist predilections such a reputation would no doubt be viewed by him as well deserved if political education had as its proper object the shaping of citizens in accordance with some abstract political ideology. However, for Oakeshott the proper aim of political education is not the ideological shaping of a certain kind of citizen but rather consists in acquiring an explanation and understanding of political activity.

In the almost 50 years since that lecture the sinister reputation of political education has not lessened. Indeed, distrust about educational matters has in fact expanded so as to cover the very idea of an education and a schooling which is common to all. A diversity of voices, each with its own characteristic religious or moral outlook on how the young should be raised, has reflected deep divisions within the modern polity. What needs to be asked is whether the continuation of this diversity means an ever deepening fragmentation or whether, to use a favourite metaphor of Oakeshott, such diverse views can engage in a genuine conversation.

Something like a genuine conversation between diverse voices is viewed by Eamonn Callan in his book Creating Citizens not only as a means by which trust in common schooling could be secured across social cleavages, but also as a means by which the aim of political education is to be achieved. The aim is not to create citizens who share an identical conception of the good and the right: in a liberal and pluralistic democracy such an aim would indeed give credibility to political education's sinister reputation. Rather the aim is to cultivate "the abilities and virtues that ensure competent engagement in public reason" [Callan, 1997]. But just what is public reason and just what are the characteristics of the virtues a citizen needs so as to engage competently within such reason?

Public Reason

Callan's approach to political education is indebted, though critically so, to John Rawls' Political Liberalism. In that work Rawls is concerned with correcting certain deficiencies in his treatment of stability in his earlier Theory of Justice. The stability of a well-ordered society depends upon its citizens consenting to its principles of justice. Without this endorsement the very legitimacy of the basic structure

of the society may come to be doubted. According to Rawls however, the principles of justice endorsed in his earlier Theory of Justice are based on a comprehensive ethical theory which is only one among other reasonable outlooks which may endorse yet other principles of justice. This then sets the problem for Political Liberalism which is to consider how it is `possible that there may exist over time a stable and just society of free and equal citizens profoundly divided by reasonable religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines?` [Rawls, xviii]

For Rawls, a political liberalism differs from any comprehensive liberalism, including his own earlier version. Rawls' move towards a political liberalism and away from the comprehensive variety requires an attempt to formulate standards of deliberation about public policy which do not rest upon conceptions of the good and the right that all reasonable citizens do not share. But any liberalism of a comprehensive variety, is based upon conceptions which are divisive and for that reason appeal to them will not help in securing the acceptance of certain public policies as legitimate. The sort of education that would reflect a particular version of comprehensive liberalism, would seek to foster the values inherent in that version. Thus a liberalism based on the views of Mill or Kant would seek to foster the good of individuality or that of autonomy. The state through its common schools might then think itself justified in cultivating these values in children even if some citizens see this as an unjustified undermining of an entire way of life and thus doing harm to these children. If the state persisted in using the schools in this way this would no doubt require an oppressive use of state power. Political liberalism however, does not rest on any one comprehensive view of the right and good, but develops a conception of public deliberation which is `designed to be compatible with the full range of values that citizens might reasonably endorse.` [Callan, 16] Hence, the education based on political liberalism can avoid the suppression of certain views of the right and the good. This then is a mark in favour of a political rather than a comprehensive liberalism.

The conception of public reason which political liberalism supports, involves acceptance of standards of deliberation which avoids oppression by finding a consensus among citizens as to what sort of considerations have a bearing on matters of public policy. However, the consensus sought does not try to take into account all possible voices but only those which are worthy of our respect. [Callan, 22] Political liberalism does not try to accommodate simple pluralism but only reasonable pluralism. For Callan, however, this accommodation undermines Rawls' radical distinction between comprehensive and political liberalism and in fact turns the latter `into a version of comprehensive liberalism.` [Callan, 21] As Callan sees it,

the main question is whether a defensible form of political education can be found which, though it relies on some conception of the good and the right which not all citizens share, can yet be implemented without resorting to oppressive measures. In Chapters 6, 7, and 8, Callan deals with the question of how common schools can non-oppressively implement a version of political education. My main concern however, will centre on Callan's attempt to formulate a conception of the aim of political education which takes account of a pluralism which is reasonable.

Justice as Reasonableness

If Callan is right in viewing Rawls' political liberalism as a version of comprehensive liberalism, then the sort of outlooks we allow into public deliberation call upon considerations which go beyond political liberalism's narrow conception of what is of political significance. Callan's dissatisfaction with Rawls' radical separation of the political and the non-political is centred on the disparity Callan believes to exist between what Rawls will allow to be a reasonable extra-political outlook and Rawls' requirements as to what makes a citizen reasonable. Crucial to the latter, is the recognition and acceptance of what Rawls calls "the burdens of judgement". Acceptance of these burdens means that one does not necessarily ascribe the roots of political differences "to the vices of unreason, such as closed-mindedness, logical bungling, or sheer ignorance." [Callan, 175] The free and competent exercise of human reason does not necessarily converge on identical beliefs. Recognition and acceptance of the burdens of judgement is vital to a polity of free and equal citizens, in that such citizens are "disposed to propose fair terms of cooperation to others, to settle differences in mutually acceptable ways, and to abide by agreed terms of cooperation so long as others are prepared to do likewise." [Callan, 175] When citizens do not view all their differences as between reason and unreason, then they become inclined to develop mutually acceptable rules which accommodate the range of differences which are acknowledged to be between views which are reasonable.

Despite the divisions among the citizens of a pluralistic society, engaging in public reason requires that citizens accept the standards of deliberation about public policy. Among these is acceptance by reasonable citizens, of the burdens of judgement. However, there are comprehensive outlooks which take the view that anyone who holds religious or ethical beliefs which differ from theirs, is *ipso facto* unreasonable or worse. Clearly, those who have such an outlook do not accept the burdens of judgement within certain non-political domains. Are they therefore unreasonable as citizens? For Rawls, even if the burdens of judgement are rejected in a

non-political sphere, those comprehensive views which do this could still count as reasonable so long as they satisfy certain other criteria such as coherence, a specification of certain values as guides to conduct and belong to some tradition of thought and conduct. Callan allows that this might be possible but it comes at the ethically unacceptable price of being integrity destroying.[Callan, 31] Suppose for example, that as part of a set of comprehensive doctrines, one took the view that any arguments on behalf of homosexuality and/or abortion, could only be the fruit of unreason as well as displaying ill will towards the family. It would be difficult to see how as a citizen such a person could, in good conscience, strive towards terms of cooperation on public policy about these issues, with those who think differently. For Callan then the notion of the reasonable must include acceptance of the burdens of judgement even within the non-political aspects of human life. Such a requirement however, "wreaks havoc on Rawls's distinction between the public and non-public spheres." [Callan, 31] Consequently, only those ethical and religious views which accept the burdens of judgement, can fit into public reason.

As we have seen, the cultivation of "the abilities and virtues that ensure competent engagement in public reason" is taken by Callan as the central aim of political education. Given the significance of the burdens of judgement to public reason, then the cultivation of the disposition to acknowledge that others who differ from us in their judgements are not thereby sunk in unreason, is essential to a political education within a liberal polity. This marks a citizen as reasonable and allows Callan to take reasonableness as the most salient feature of the cardinal civic virtue of justice.

Many years ago, far more than I care to remember, when first reading Plato's Republic, I was struck by the oddity of the conception of justice that emerges from Book II to Book IV. There, in an analogy to a just city, a just person is considered to be one in whom there is an internal harmony among the parts of the soul due to each part performing its proper function. The oddity might disappear if "justice" is taken to be synonymous with "virtue" since we expect that a virtuous agent, as distinguishable from a strong willed one, is someone who does not have to fight against his or her appetites and emotions so as to act as virtue requires. However, if justice is taken to be one particular virtue as distinct from other particular virtues, then it seems odd to pick as its distinguishing feature the one it shares with all others. I find a similar oddity in Callan's treatment of justice as reasonableness. Sometimes it looks as if Callan views "justice" as the same as "political virtue", in which case reasonableness could be an appropriate characterization of what makes any citizen of a liberal democratic polity, a good citizen. More often, espe-

cially in the light of Callan's treatment of patriotism as a distinct civic virtue, justice is taken as one particular virtue among others. If this is indeed the case, then it seems odd to pick on reasonableness as the distinguishing feature of that particular virtue. It seems nearer the mark to hold that one of the things that can be used to distinguish one virtue from another, is the difference in respective spheres of action and feeling. For example, one of the things that marks the difference between courage and temperance, is that the former is concerned with fear and confidence while the latter is exercised within the sphere of pleasure and pain. With justice one might argue that the sphere of action and feeling which distinguishes it from courage and temperance, is that of the distribution of certain benefits and burdens. Of course none of this is unproblematical and different schema for the various spheres might be constructed which could give a more perspicuous differentiation. My main point however, is that it seems doubtful that reasonableness can serve as marking off justice as one particular civic virtue among others. Moreover, if active acceptance of the burdens of judgement is a distinguishing feature of any virtue, then it seems to characterize tolerance rather than justice.

Patriotism

In addition to the cultivation of reasonableness, Callan's conception of political education also requires the development of an unsentimental patriotism. Justice as reasonableness does not constitute the entirety of civic virtue. It needs to be integrated with the sort of affective attachment to a particular polity that constitutes patriotism. Such an integration would go a long way towards overcoming the somewhat prevalent view that justice and affective attachments reflect two different and rival ethical outlooks. But why exactly does Callan think that justice needs patriotism?

The development of a citizen's affective attachment to a particular polity is taken by Callan as a necessary supplement to the disposition to act and feel which is already inherent in a just person's motivational structure. But why can't we rely on this structure alone as providing sufficient motive power? Callan's answer is that we need the ties of civic friendship so that the tensions and conflicts which frequently occur within a pluralistic society and thus threaten the reliability of justice, can be mitigated. Such a supplementation is not however, intended to place considerations of justice as matters of last resort when the force of our civic ties fails to mitigate conflict. Patriotism is not simply added on to a citizen's sense of justice, but is integrated with it. Callan shows the link between the two virtues by way of Rawls' picture of the connection between the psychological growth of justice and

the formation of particular political attachments.’ [Callan, 92] According to this picture, in a well-ordered society governed by a conception of justice, we learn what is expected of us as citizens by engaging in cooperative activities with others and through this we come to regard our fellow citizens with friendship and trust. It appears then, that for Callan, although justice and patriotism are conceptually distinct nonetheless, psychologically, they are indistinguishable within the outlook of the liberal patriot.

Is patriotism a virtue? If indeed it is, it is a conditional one and therefore unlike justice which is an unconditional virtue. A virtue like justice is unconditional in that it cannot be misused since its possession implies a disposition towards the making of correct judgements about situations as well as the appropriate actions to be taken. Patriotism however, can be misused in that it can be directed towards a particular polity in ways which a more discerning judgement would find wanting. In his endorsement of patriotism as a virtue, Callan is certainly aware of its conditional nature. Nonetheless, such an endorsement reflects his approval, albeit qualified, of the political structure of modern liberal democratic states. Because these states view a polity as a scheme of cooperation among free and equal citizens, they are not mere mechanisms for the adjustment of conflicting interests, but are morally worthy objects of our affective attachment.

Can patriotism, as a civic virtue, do the task which Callan expects of it; namely, ‘of shoring up the motivational strength’ of the demands of justice ‘against the pressures of pluralism’? [Callan, 175] But patriotism, like any affective attachment, can occur in degrees of strength. The main question then is not so much over the feasibility and desirability of patriotism, but rather over whether a citizen's attachment to a particular modern state is of a strength sufficient to mitigate the force of those attachments formed within non-political associations. This seems to be a particular problem for the modern state which tends to be at a considerable remove from the everyday lives of its citizens, whereas many non-political associations which are closely connected with people's lives can generate a very strong sense of attachment. When conflicts and tensions occur between a modern state and certain non-political associations, the former may be at a considerable disadvantage when it calls upon the loyalty of its citizens. But perhaps even a weak sense of attachment, when combined with a sense of justice, will suffice to overcome even a very strong sense of attachment to non-political associations. This however, comes perilously close to making the virtue of justice sufficient as a motive force.

One of the striking differences between ancient citizenship, particularly that

of the Greek *polis*, and citizenship in the modern state, is that in the former being a citizen of a particular polity had a primacy in a person's self-identification which the more modern version lacks. One reason for this is that much of the ancient citizen's day by day experience was concerned with civic matters since the range of civil activities and functions included much that in the modern state is viewed as a private concern (e.g. religion, drama). So the occasions for the maintenance and strengthening of civic ties were far greater in the *polis* than in the modern state. The upshot of this is that in the modern state, even in one which is well-ordered, a patriotism engendered by cooperative engagement in civic activities, would be less central to the lives of its citizens than would the attachment engendered by activities found in the private sphere. So even if the modern polity is successful in fostering patriotism as a virtue, it may not be central enough to limit the attractiveness of private life with the consequence that an indifference towards the civic life of the polity may grow. Let us hope that a sense of justice may prevail.

Conclusion

In this essay I have considered what I take to be the central themes of Callan's book; namely, the nature of justice and patriotism as two of the civic virtues which need to be fostered in any pluralistic society. Unfortunately, I have had to leave out of consideration several matters which Callan enquires into in the later chapters: issues such as "What limits, if any, can be placed on parents' rights to educational choice?" and "What hope is there for the maintenance of the common school in the face of fragmenting pressures?" If there are any defects in the book they are its heavy dependence on the reader's familiarity with the work of John Rawls, as well as, by the author's own admission, the sometimes serpentine nature of his arguments. Nevertheless, the arguments are always cogent and take into account a considerable range of literature. Creating Citizens is an important book on an important topic. Let's hope that Oxford University Press will soon see fit to release a paperback version, thus providing a form of financial aid to those who should read it.

References

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