

Conference: Citizenship, Conscience and Political Education

This conference was held in the Palais des Congrès, Quebec, Canada, on July 29-31, 2000. It was sponsored by the Conference for the Study of Political Thought in association with the Canadian Political Science Association, with generous support by the Department of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism Program), the Privy Council Office of the Government of Canada, Concordia University and Université Laval. Opening remarks were delivered by James Moore (Concordia), Convenor of the Conference; Martyn Thompson (Tulane) CSPT Chairman.

What are the qualities of a good citizen? Are they the same qualities that make up the character of a good man or a good woman? Is there a role for conscience in public life? If so, how should one understand public conscience or civic morality? What sort of education best prepares men and women for responsible citizenship? The questions are of ancient lineage. But they address issues of enduring and pressing relevance for ourselves.

In the papers gathered for the conference on Citizenship, Conscience and Political Education, thirty distinguished and promising scholars will take up these issues in ten connected sessions over three days. In the first session, Benjamin Barber and Bernard Crick will explore the nature of democratic citizenship and the manner in which the school system may contribute to the formation of responsible citizens. Benjamin Barber argues that conditions for democratic citizenship are being eroded by the globalization of markets. He suggests that new conditions for citizenship will require the development of international civic and democratic institutions. Bernard Crick has recently completed a study of the manner in which citizenship may be taught in schools for the Department of Education in the United Kingdom. He will summarize his findings and invite discussion of the principles and values that should inform the curriculum of schools to help prepare students for the responsibilities of civic and public life.

In the second and third sessions of the conference, the writings of three outstanding modern theorists of citizenship - Montesquieu, Rousseau and de Tocqueville - will be scrutinized by scholars who have made recent and original contributions to our understanding of these theorists. Montesquieu's great work on the spirit of the laws in different forms of government and Rousseau's extended discourse on the education of citizens for an ideal society will be the subject of a paper by Rebecca Kingston. She will examine the manner in which writing on political education was transformed from literature designed to educate the prince to work directed to the formation of citizens. Cecil Courtney will re-examine Montesquieu's famous analysis of the English constitution, in light of his recent work on the manuscripts and correspondence of Montesquieu. He will argue that the 'separation of powers' as it is commonly understood is an abstraction; that Montesquieu's understanding of political and civic motivation is made more intelligible in light of his reading of contemporary debates (Bolingbroke, Hume) and his reading of history.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Alexis de Tocqueville both wrote insightful studies of the challenges which confront democratic societies. Daniel Gordon, author of a recent, outstanding book on ideas of citizenship and sociability in eighteenth-century France (*Citizens Without Sovereignty*) will examine the ways in which Rousseau and de Tocqueville reacted against the commercialization of societies and the challenges presented by commerce for democracy in Europe and America. James Schleifer will focus particularly upon the remedies which de Tocqueville proposed: the importance of local liberties and associations, of respect for rights and religious belief.

The advent of Protestant theories of conscience and its implications for citizenship is the theme of papers by Knud Haakonssen and Edward Andrew. Haakonssen, an authority on early modern natural law theories, will explore the manner in which ideas of conscience and toleration figured in the formation of natural rights theories. Andrew, author of a forthcoming book on *Conscience and its Critics*, will consider the tension between Protestant conscience and theories of reason in the enlightenment. He will focus particularly upon the concerns of John Stuart Mill and contemporary liberals to discover safeguards for individuality in face of social pressure and 'the despotism of public opinion'.

Perhaps the most influential modern theorist of the politics of conscience was the British idealist, Thomas Hill Green. Alan Ryan will attempt to demonstrate that Green's idealism - manifested not only in his writings and in his teaching but also in his work on settlements and on local government boards - was inspired by a tradition of Christian politics that linked the rhetoric of civic duty to the rhetoric of Christian sacrifice. John Roberts will contrast Green's idealism with the thinking of Wilhelm von Humboldt. Whereas Green thought that the state must have an active role in promoting moral character, von Humboldt argued that self-realisation is best assured by the absence of the state from the lives of its citizens. Among the most distinguished contemporary theorists of civic conscience in the second half of the twentieth century, C.B. Macpherson and George Armstrong Kelly merit particular consideration. Douglas Long argues that at the heart of Macpherson's writing and teaching, one finds a determination to put property to work in the service of humanity; that (in Long's words) "the creative, productive and humane use of property, not exclusive possession of it, was the key to the optimization of the human condition." John Christian Laursen finds in the work of George Armstrong Kelly an expression of "the scholarly conscience" and "the special responsibilities created by learning, knowledge and self-reflection." Kelly's wide-ranging work on religion in America, on ideas of death and dying in eighteenth-century France, on Hegel, Constant and de Tocqueville will form the subject of Laursen's tribute and critique.

Papers by Bhikhu Parekh and Bonnie Honig address issues of cultural diversity in societies and the implications of diversity for citizenship. Parekh will argue that the concept of citizenship must be rethought, that citizenship should be conceived in relation to institutions other than the state. Bonnie Honig will review the stories we tell about the origins of civil and political societies and the manner in which these stories are employed to help immigrants feel at home in their adopted countries. She will examine critically two foundation myths (proposed by Rousseau and by Freud). And she will consider the enduring relevance these stories may have for citizens in multicultural democracies.

On the third day of the conference, the discussion will focus upon political education. In the first of the three panels, Geraint Parry and David Kettler will review two episodes in the history of political education. Parry will consider how educational theorists from the seventeenth to the nineteenth attempted to reconcile respect for civility with demands for liberty and autonomy. David Kettler's paper will take up theories of political education which have their origins in Max Weber's understanding of the distinct vocations of the scientist and the politician. He will follow the careers of Albert Salomon and Karl Mannheim from the Weimar Republic to the New School for Social Research and the London School of Economics, respectively, to consider the impact of their educational theories and their theories of citizenship in these new institutional settings.

Among the philosophers who have written insightfully on this subject of citizenship and political education in the second half of the twentieth century, the names of Michael Oakeshott and Hannah Arendt come at once to mind. Timothy Fuller must be considered the leading authority on the writings of Oakeshott. He will compare Oakeshott's theory of education with the different perspectives of Allan Bloom and E.D. Hirsch and consider the future of liberal learning in the context of current debates about higher education. Peter Baehr, editor of *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, will review Arendt's defence of politics as a public debate in which citizens speak and act on principle. He will discuss Arendt's indictment of attempts to transform the public realm by the imposition of scientific modes of argument upon debates better understood as exchanges between equals. And he will review other models of political education not considered by Arendt.

In the concluding session, two distinguished historians of political thought will consider how the history of political discourse and concepts contributes to the education and formation of citizens. J.G.A. Pocock has (with Quentin Skinner) argued that the history of political thought is best understood by studying the languages and modes of discourse employed by the political thinkers of the past. In his paper, he will explore the relationship between the historian of political thought and the political theorist. Melvin Richter has argued that Pocock's and Skinner's approaches to the history of political thought should be considered complementary to the history of concepts, as exemplified by the highly ambitious conceptual history (*begriffsgeschichte*) composed by Reinhart Koselleck and others. Richter has played a leading role in bringing the history of concepts (back) into fashion among historians of political thought. Both of these distinguished academics will also reflect on the ways in which understandings of history bear upon ideas of citizenship and political education.