Is a Good Man Always a Good Citizen? Perspectives from Political Philosophy and Civic Education

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Abstract. This essay revolves around a discussion about the difference between a good person and a good citizen. This essay discusses the issue of what shapes a good citizen and a good person, and how the two concepts are parallel and would never collide due to these fundamental differences.

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1 Introduction

"No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime." — Kofi Annan.

Ever since ancient times, as far as the ancient Greek era, humankind has been striving to actualize harmony between the virtue of a good person and a good citizen. However, these two seemingly similar things have not collided in the long history of human civilization. The core of a good citizen is the ideal person that serves their entirety to the state, and their beliefs are in perfect harmony with the core values of their country. As Aristotle pointed out in "Politics", although citizens differ from one another, maintaining the partnership, which refers to the regime, is their responsibility. Therefore, a citizen's virtue must necessarily be in harmony with the regime [1].

In the real world, the making of a citizen is different from the making of a man. The morale of a citizen is different from that of a man. The moral borderline differs between the two actors. The underlying principle the virtue of the outstanding citizen cannot be singular or total if there are multiple types of the regime. [2] Such an ideal scenario where an idealistic bond between the citizen and the government would not be achievable in modern society. In this case, civic education is put in place to ensure these two subtly distinct characterizations are combined. A good person can be in perfect harmony with his virtue but struggles to match the image of a good citizen. This paper will discuss the concepts of a good citizen and a good person in time. Constructing the nuanced differences between a good citizen and a good person through examining the makings of the society and its relations to the good citizen, timely analysis, and demonstrating how civic education and social education shape a good citizen and a good person respectively, this paper argues that a good citizen is never a good person, and a good person is never a good citizen.

2   Morale and Social Contract

To determine whether a good citizen is a good person, it is essential first to examine what the two concepts are. A citizen is naturally born into a society, one that is expected to confine to the law and moral values acknowledged commonly by the stakeholders. A citizen must base his actions above the moral borderline of society, while a man's actions are based above the borderlines of his own morale. Kantian ethics illustrates how a good man is constituted by his inner "goodwill". That is to say that a good man's ethics comes from a non-benefit-driven standpoint. Humans are species with impulses, these impulses drive happiness. It is the presence of desires that could function independently of moral demands that makes goodness in man a constraint, an essential element of the idea of "duty". [3] In analyzing unqualified goodness as it occurs in imperfectly rational creatures like us, then, we are motivated by the thought that we are compelled to act in certain ways that we may not want to do, simply by the thought that we are morally obligated to do them. In a natural world, without the role of society acting as a constraint, the naturally made "good men" act upon their categorical imperative, where they "obey the moral code that everyone must follow regardless of their desires [Muscente]". Therefore, according to Kant, the definition of a good man solely depends on what is deemed to be moral to him, and when he acts upon it, he qualifies as a "good man".

With society put in the picture, however, mankind is now bonded by a common agreement–the social contract. The social contract argument states that individuals have agreed, either explicitly or tacitly, to give up some of their freedoms in exchange for protecting their remaining rights or maintaining social order by submitting to authority. The Hobbes-Rousseau debate examines the power of the social contract. [4] Hobbes believes that, without the social contract, man would act based solely on their free will and nothing else. Therefore, society would become chaotic and suffer from endless wars and anarchy. Hobbes insists that humans have desires, desires which can only be controlled by the social contract. Men naturally have a desire for power and a lust-driven society where everyone craves power is going to be malicious and cruel. Rousseau is polarized with his view that man in the state of nature without countries would be at peace. Where every individual has freedom, they have the chance to form households, relationships, and alliances. In Rousseau's social contract theory, human rationale no longer functions as a way to gain power but to control impulses, contrasting with Hobbes' theory. A "good citizen", under the social contract, should be a person with rationale and obedience. Under Hobbes' theory, where human nature is vicious, the purpose of a social contract is to constrain the thirst for power and impulses for war. For the stability and well-being of society, the "good citizen" should follow the social contract. Even in Rousseau's theory where human nature is tame and righteous, a social contract is necessary and would eventually form among the people, since one wants their rights protected by a bureaucracy.

The missing puzzle to their debate is that both their theories are all too polarized. Mankind can never truly reach a stateless, no-society status. Nature and culture are never a dichotomy, rather, the two have a biotic relationship where they coexist and rely on each other to form. [5] Both Hobbes and Rousseau try to separate the two to reach a state of pure nature and no government. However, even without the concept of a country

or a nation-state, which is not an acknowledged term until after the French revolution, society still forms and evolves by itself. This is because humans' primary goal is to survive, and this goal is better accomplished by forming allies and small units, which eventually evolve into a society. In the status quo, humans are more interconnected and dependent on social relationships and technology that sprouted from society. It becomes increasingly hard for mankind to make the existence of culture and nature parallel. Humans have been increasingly "modern" in the sense that culture–created by society–shapes one's values and behaviors. [6] The fact that we can never be "unmodern" again, is what weakens both Hobbes' and Rousseau's theories.

From the difference between a naturally good man and a "good citizen" created by the social contract, we can conclude that it was impossible and yet even harder for good citizens to be good men in modern society. A good man needs to have no other restrictions except his own morale and values. It is only when a man does well because of his inner drive is when he is truly a "good man". However, good citizens obey laws. They do so because obeying the social contract to them is a benefit-driven behavior. Their values are infiltrated by society and norms. What's more, a good man exists only in an ideal natural condition while a good citizen coexists with culture and society, but since we can never truly exclude culture from nature, "good men" do not exist with "good citizen".

3 The Ever-Changing Value

The previous section analyzed the concept of a good citizen and a good person in theory, but in reality, both concepts constantly change throughout history and across geography. The characterizations of these two stakeholders are never fixed, therefore making it extremely hard for these concepts to overlap, always creating differences between the cognition of a good person and a good citizen. As governments gradually develop and form their types of regimes, the image of a good citizen evolves and transforms. The typical good citizen changes because, in different phases of a country's development, governments would need different kinds of citizens to serve the country, but in any historical period, the good citizen never matches the good person. Both western and eastern societies went through such discords. As society developed and was influenced by other governments, it slowly evolved into a more democratic society. With the progression of society, the obedience of the people as the sole judgment of a good citizen ceased to exist, and valuing each individual and focusing on what they can bring to society becomes the criterion of a good citizen.

The US, for instance, has undergone a big change in both its good citizenship and its good personhood. Starting from 1750, good citizens were the ones that defied the aristocrats and political elites. [7] This is mainly due to the fact that America was gaining its independence from Great Britain, therefore, they were in desperate need of people that had the courage and awareness of going against the aristocrats that controlled the colonists in America. By doing so, violent revolutionary events like the "Boston tea party" took place. However, when considering the standards of a good person at that time, it is inevitable that violating others' property rights, committing violence, and defying their then-mother country is not a characteristic of a good person. In Christianity,

civic disobedience is considered not just and not approved by God. Norman Geisler highlighted the fact that the American Revolution is not possible to be justified by the Bible since the "freedom fighter" of America was by his nature a traitor to their religion [8]. Undoubtedly, none of the best citizens who played significant roles in the founding period of the US was a pious Christian, whom people of the period would consider a good person.

From 1950, the country needed citizens that are well aware of their rights, and willing to protect their rights and thus enhancing democracy. [9] The "rights-conscious" citizen of the country was able to survive and thrive with the previous foundation laid by the people. Kony 2012 illustrates how swiftly these values change in a more recent case. The Kony 2012 campaign is a 2012 American short documentary film whose purpose was to make the Ugandan cult leader, war criminal, and ICC fugitive Joseph Kony globally known and arrested. The film triggered many discussions on social media platforms, creating memes, blogs, comments, and videos, reaching the goal of creating virality. In response to this occasion, "We emphasize that although good citizenship is often portrayed as a fixed and self-evident set of standards, good citizenship is a social construction, situated in a particular place and time" [10]. According to Schudson's definition, good citizenship was the "right" conscious people; accordingly, the citizens in Kony 2012 evolved from only knowing their natural rights to making action and empowering social justice movements with their freedom of speech and press. Even in a broader time frame, the definition of a good citizen still goes through its evolution.

Looking at the incident of Kony 2012, the virality on the internet is what the government seeks as a result of this campaign, relocating attention and increasing awareness, eventually fulfilling their objective of arresting Kony. However, the discussion that was aroused from the campaign was not so humanitarian. The most successful widespread of Kony 2012 was in the meme category. Most of the content created is scornful, yet indifferent, demonstrating the arrogance and satiric nature of these memes. One specifically had an image of an African toddler who looks happy with the words "Woke up this morning, wasn't kidnapped by Kony" [11]. Such forms of attire and sarcasm are not the reaction of a good person in the face of an inhumane occurrence. Although these memes raised a significant amount of attention to Kony 2012 and are considered a successful characterization of a good citizen, the people that triggered this success are indifferent, and lack of empathy people which is arbitrary with the concept of a "good person" in the status quo society.

Such a scenario also occurred in China. Scholar Kwan-Choi Tse examined Chinese K-12 politics textbooks from 1997 to 2005 and noticed significant differences in the way Chinese citizens are required to behave over time. As China evolved to being more liberal and connected to the world, despite focusing on how individuals relate to their collectives, the worth of individuals, especially their human rights, is also more stressed. [12] Legal awareness and competency are further bolstered with expanded coverage of the expansion and protection of citizens' rights. When China was more inclined toward a totalitarian regime, the focus on human rights and individuals was less essential. As the society develop and was influenced by other governments, it slowly evolved into a more democratic society. With the progression of society, the obedience of the people

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The Chinese government requires "absolute obedience" from their people until several decades after the establishment of the country. The state dominates and disallows society in many significant ways. [13] This form of good citizenship contrasts with an image of the "good person". A good person needs to have integrity, that is, in this case, the ability to tell right from wrong and the firm standpoint of refusing to do the wrong thing. Absolute obedience to the Chinese government denies a person's opportunity to classify what is right and wrong and act against what is wrong. In Chinese history, never is a good citizen the same as a good person.

4   Civic Education and Social Education

Now that we have seen the ever-lasting difference between a good citizen and a good person, why are they always different? Also, remember the common impression that a good citizen is very similar to a good person—why? The making of a good citizen and a good person will give us a clue. The way of shaping modern-day people to be good citizens is by providing them with civic education, that is, instructing citizens to take actions to benefit their state and country. Whereas the way of shaping a good person is by providing them with social education. Social education involves parents and community equipping children with proper values that lead them to become good persons in the later years of their lives, such as adulthood. [14].

Civic education is an intricate system, created by the government, and thus only understood fully by the government. Civic education is a complex curriculum itself, and it cannot be interpreted and executed by the average public without a thorough inspection of a country's politics and general ideology. Topics like social transformation and systemic changes are specifically pointed to creating a "good citizen", which is alienated from the making of a good citizen due to the fact that this knowledge is not crucial to being a "good person" in the modern era.

Civic education envisions the excellent citizen; policies and curriculums are designed to fulfill that need. It is only by education can people truly comprehend what the state needs from good citizenship. Without the guidance provided by school education, becoming a good citizen for people is an ambiguous task. The necessity of civic education to shape a good citizen is reflected in the uneven educational resources between the social majority and minority that "non-Latino students have significantly more civic knowledge, are more likely to expect to vote, and are less likely to hold positive attitudes toward the rights of immigrants than Latino students" [15]. Several layers of analysis are in response to that. The report suggested a significant factor contributing to this result: the difference in enrollment in school and the teacher's use of the curriculum. It also demonstrates that studying and discussing politics is a factor when measuring civic development. The fact that less of the Latino population is enrolled in local schools compared to the other ethnicities in the U.S is also important causation. This analysis proves the cruciality of civic education when shaping a good citizen. That the Latino population has lower rates of "good citizenship" is often caused by language barriers and cultural differences, which have no direct relationship with their character and whether or not they are "good people".

While one needs to learn from school education and a legitimate curriculum to be a good citizen, education to be a good person comes from almost every occasion in a person's life. From the early phases of their lives, one would learn how to be a good person, that is, a human being with morality, ethics, and empathy, from both family and community: [16].

Socialization functions show the family's role in shaping a child's personality. Through social interaction in the family, children learn patterns of attitudes, behavior, beliefs, ideals, and values in the community within the context of their personality development [17].

Since being a toddler, humans constantly learn from their nurturers, from practical knowledge like language, religion, and behavior to theoretical knowledge like being helpful, respectful, and kind. Growing up in a community, one also adapts moral values from the people around them. People form their basic behavioral norms and ideology of society before receiving civic education. Notice that crime rates and tax rates are never related to the degree of civic education [15]; even with less civic education, Latino adolescents are still "good people" due to community influences and family education. Civic education does not own the absolute criteria that determine whether a person is good or bad. Instead, civic education focuses on the expectation of informed voting, attitude toward immigration rights, and traits of a good citizen at that time frame. One could be less well-informed and educated on these elements yet still be a good person due to the influence of family and community. Civic education is not accessible to all citizens of a country, especially minority groups. However, it is illegitimate to deny them as being good people solely due to their lack of formal education.

5   Conclusion

Though the traits of a good citizen and a good person are in accordance in some cases, these two values are never the same. As discussed in this essay, it is not only the people in the society that constantly changes and diverges from the expectations of a lawfully-binding good citizen but also the underlying logic of how the society, as a concept itself is constituted. Unless everyone in the society has identical moral values and the social contract is based entirely on the morale of each citizen, at the same time giving equal chances to all in civic education, thus constituting a utopia-like society and a perfect government, the "good men" and the "good citizen" will always be different.

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