Moralizing about politics: The white working-class 'problem,' in Appalachia and beyond

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Abstract

Since the global financial meltdown in 2008, moralizing stereotypes of white working-class citizens have proliferated across the US, UK, Australia, and in Europe. Both conservatives and liberals use concepts such as the Appalachian hillbilly, the council estate-dwelling chav, and the outer-suburban bogan to allege white working-class citizens' failure to adapt to the demands of the globalizing political-economy. As recent commentators on the Appalachia 'problem' note, such moralizing obscures more than it explains, and does so in the service of economic privilege and political power. Comparative examination of the actors and actions behind the erosion of citizenship as a political category in the US, the UK, and Australia helps to link contemporary moralizing about the white working-class to reaction against the 'excess of democracy' that working-class movements directly and indirectly provoked in the mid-twentieth century. Today in Appalachia and beyond, conservative and liberal moralizing about the white working-class 'problem' undermines democrats' capacity to recognize and respond to these efforts to displace citizenship as a political category with the moral category of the individual.

Introduction

Over recent decades, some political theorists have called for the abandonment of moralism, which has long characterized the sub-field, for what has been a less popular approach, realism.

(For overviews, see Rossi and Sleat 2014; Sleat (ed.) 2018) These calls coincide with an upsurge of opposition to proliferating moral stereotypes of the white working-class. In Appalachia especially, democratic resistance to political reaction and rejection of the prurience on which much of the news and entertainment industry trades has long fueled opposition to such stereotyping. (Massey 2007; Reid 1974; 1984; Reid and Taylor 2010; Speer 1993) Lately, however, one individual in particular, J.D. Vance (2018), has pushed in the opposite direction. Vance promotes the moralistic view that a homogeneous white and working-class 'Appalachia' produces a few strivers and many skivers, a deserving few and wretched many. Critics such as Elizabeth Catte (2018) and Nancy Isenberg (2019) link the moralizing tone of Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy* to a conservative ideological project (Also, Catte (ed.) 2019; Harkins and McCarroll (eds.) 2019). Vance ignores the long historical shadow cast by exploitative "extractivism" and simplistically directs individuals in Appalachia to "pull yourself up by your own bootstraps" (Isenberg, 2019: 26). These critics also note that media-disseminated "poverty porn" (Phelps 2016, 1) can fuel an equally moralizing liberalism. Rather than pushing perennial losers to start winning, well-meaning liberals paint "a picture of an alien world of rural whites trapped in false consciousness and a spiral of self-destructi[on]" (Isenberg 2019, 27).

This is important because in Catte's words, "the most telling aspect …" of *Elegy* and the handwringing liberal 'problem' articles, interviews, and essays that have proliferated recently is not "what they said about Appalachia, but what they didn't say" (2018, 9). As an alternative, Catte offers a politicized "commentary about who benefits from the omission of …" the region's diversity, and the many contributions to advancing democracy that people in the region have made and continue to make. (2018: 9-10) Catte and other critics who reject the Appalachia 'problem' in fact contribute to global efforts to undermine similarly moralizing portrayals of a homogeneous white working-class, which have grown in volume since the 2007-8 global financial

crisis, the hounding from office of Australia's first woman Prime Minister Julia Gillard in 2013, the 2016 election of Donald Trump as US President, the 'Brexit' vote in the UK, and also in Europe, with the rise of *Alternativ für Deutschland* and the *gilets jaunes* in France. (Guilluy 2018; Jones 2012; Michéa 2009; Nachtwey 2018; Paternoster et al. 2018)

This article contributes to these efforts to debunk conservative *and* liberal moralizing stereotypes of the white working-class in Appalachia and beyond, and does so from within the perspective afforded by the realist critique of moralism. It sets such moralizing into a comparative historical perspective by developing a partial and incomplete genealogy (Geuss 2001, viii-xx; Geuss 2005, 153-60; Williams 2002, 20-40) of the white working-class 'problem,' as reflected in efforts to erode citizenship over recent decades. (Turner 2001, 189; in the Appalachian context see, Reid and Taylor 2010; 92-4) The concept of 'citizenship' is helpful because it represents the quintessential political category of the person, as opposed to say, the moral category of the individual subject or the ethical category of personal character. 'Citizenship' does not derive its normative or explanatory power from some ideal of the right or the good but from the real political relationships that define it. Citizenship refers to "that set of practices (juridical, political, economic, and cultural), which define a person as a competent member of society, and which as a consequence shape the flow of resources to persons and social groups" (Turner 1993, 3). My belief is that by examining the erosion of citizenship in the US, Britain, and Australia over recent decades, this article might help democrats to recognize how some of the generic anti-democratic implications of moralizing about politics manifest in the particular case of the white working-class and more specifically, the Appalachia 'problem.'

The argument proceeds as follows. I first unpack the distinction that political realism makes between moralizing about politics and politics as an object of analysis. Then, I link this distinction to historical analyses of the actions and actors that fueled the erosion of a politicized

'social' model of citizenship that prevailed from the 1930s until the mid-1970s, and the constitution in its place of an individualized 'stakeholder' model. I argue that one of the primary achievements of those promoting stakeholder citizenship has been the simultaneous de-politicizing and moralizing of citizenship. Beginning in the 1970s, the owners of vastly concentrated wealth, liberal and conservative political elites, as well as libertarian and religious activists and scholars used the political process and news and communications-media to erode those dimensions of citizenship that served to advance the democratic impulse. This impulse rests on a collective aspiration to establish a political system of majoritarian decision-making sufficient to guarantee equal freedom, and by definition regards concentrated wealth and power as threats to its realization. (McCormick 2011, 1-6)

By focusing on the erosion of citizenship, I draw attention to the political and economic actors who "benefit [from moralizers] omissions" (Catte 2019, 9-10). My central theoretical claim is that moralistic portrayals of the white working-class 'problem' in Appalachia and beyond make it difficult to recognize oneself and others as citizens of a potentially democratic polity. Moralism conceals much of the evidence needed by citizens if they are to make informed decisions about how best to achieve and sustain equal liberty. Moralism does this by dissolving properly political questions in favor of a simplistic binary evaluative criterion: 'wrong' or 'right.' Paraphrasing political theorist Raymond Geuss (2008), properly politically questioning of authority can only begin with efforts to make clear who is doing what to whom for whose benefit, and on what grounds are the doers justifying the doing to the done. (25)

Note on aim and scope of the argument

Before continuing, one caveat is in order. The 'turn' to realism has inaugurated a stocktaking among some democratic political theorists. Rather than fulfilling the historical role of court advisor, holding up a 'mirror for princes,' realists contend that contemporary democratic

theorists are no more and no less than 'democratic underlaborers'; Collaborators with other citizens who seek to enliven and advance the democratic impulse. By distinguishing between democratically unhelpful and helpful arguments, "clarif[ying] concepts, interrogat[ing] claims about how the political community should organize …, and argu[ing] for particular principles" in context-dependent terms, political theorists assist fellow citizens to make political choices. (Swift and White 2008, 68) And, by venturing their own historically and empirically-informed normative arguments, political theorists seek to persuade others about which values may better serve their own political interests. Of course, given that the advancement of democracy depends not only political theorists and self-reflective, active citizens but on numerous other factors— many of which stand beyond citizens' control— "political theorizing does not yield … immediately relevant practical pay-offs" (Swift and White 2008, 54).

Distinguishing moralism from politics using 'citizenship'

Both conservative and liberal moralizing pose a significant risk to democrats who would rather talk and act politically. This risk arises from the gambit that consciously or not, moralizers play when publicizing their views. In what follows I explore how, by moralizing about politics, conservative and liberal moralists alike transform a material contest to decide in whose interest's authority will operate into a zero-sum debate about value-precedence. All that remains for individuals to do is either to fall into line, which is Vance's substantive point, or to rationalize their values, which is well-meaning liberals' substantive point. However, as Geuss (2008; 2010) and Bernard Williams (2002; 2005) show, neither the panoptical surveillance regime implicit in conservative moralizing nor the instrumental rationality central to most versions of liberalism can sustain authority without recourse to some degree of coercive power. Moralism terminates efforts to achieve clarity on political questions.

When opposed to moralism, politics is about contested authority and so, its legitimacy. For the realist, a political order merely reflects the degree to which those subjected to authority find the coercion necessary to uphold it tolerable. On this view, politics does not exist in situations where pure coercive power prevails. Authority in a slave state is uncontestable. Rather, politics takes place when those possessing significant material power establish and maintain institutions oriented to "the securing of order, protection, safety, trust, and the conditions of cooperation" (Williams 2005, 3). In the Western liberal-democracies that were established in the wake of the English, American, and French revolutions, politics took on a historically peculiar character. In contrast with pre-revolutionary societies, in post-revolutionary societies those holding office were compelled to concede a degree of authority to those subjected to them. Historically speaking, individual citizens acting collectively in pursuit of greater democracy, 'we the people,' through concerted political action, tasked 'ourselves' with legitimating authority. This was achieved by obtaining a say over who should wield it, and to a lesser extent what the institutions that uphold authority should look like. Insofar as citizens remain democratically active, those in authority must maintain an order that "makes sense to us," and therefore "goes beyond" the mere assertion of coercive power (Williams 2005, 10-11).

Liberal-democracy is a political order that depends on citizenly legitimation and therefore critique. (Kirchheimer 1969; Neumann 1957) If one is interested in citizenship within such an order, one is interested in what takes place at the intersection of legitimation and critique. And only secondarily in morality and ethics, which may influence how citizens make sense of authority. For example, labor movements that seek to extend rights to economic justice or democratic movements that aim to increase citizenly participation criticize authority as currently implemented, with a view to change. These kinds of de-legitimating political critiques go on

constantly. However, so does reactionary critique enacted by movements aiming to defend private property rights or delimit participation, for example.

Importantly, the legitimation process is mediated by public debate, which since the 19th century has been driven largely by a 'culture industry' that is almost entirely controlled by private interests (Adorno 1991; Habermas 1989; for a recent account, see Stanley 2016). On this view, one of the most important reasons that democratic activism has not led to more normatively desirable outcomes is that it has been of insufficient political force to overcome sustained reactionary opposition. And, the resilience of reaction is inseparable from how politics is represented in a media ecosystem in which highly concentrated ownership prevails. To a significant extent, the politics of reaction depends on the moralistic "pseudo-personalization" of politics that the "culture industry" perpetuates. (Adorno, 1991: 172) The investments of owners and advertisers alike rely on sustaining the impression that individuals' negative experiences are consequential upon moral choice alone, as if all experience resembled the decision to consume a given commodity or not. This binary opposition of wrong to right carries over into portrayals of negative experiences of the political order. The 'culture industry' encourages citizens to treat economic exploitation, gendered or racialized domination, ill-health, and unhappiness more generally for example, as if the simple by-products of wrong choices. Conversely, positive experiences are represented as if simply the result of being 'true to one's self', or pseudo-politically, as solely dependent on "the honesty, courage, and warmth" of the morally righteous. (Adorno 1991, 172)

The close link between reaction to democratic incursions upon private property rights on the one hand, and moralizing about politics in the news media on the other hand, is especially visible in the Appalachian context. (Gaventa 1980, 255; also, Speer 1993; Billings and Kingsolver 2018) Indeed, as Herbert G. Reid and Betsy Taylor (2010) also observe, moralization is the

master-trope within which spectral 'Appalachia' fits. What conservative and liberal moralizers do is assist readers and viewers to position themselves personally, as ethically unflawed and morally upstanding, to laud winners and blame or pity losers. This invitation to position one's self as righteous or at least right-living may center on efforts to be modern, in contrast with allegedly premodern 'Appalachians' (Keefe 2008), or to be a female possessing sexual propriety or a law-abiding male in contrast with the stereotypical hyper-sexualized Appalachian woman or deviant man (Massey 2007). But, because negative political experiences in the region are interpellated with multiple decades of economic, juridical, political, and cultural defeat, what John Gaventa (1980) calls "quiescence" almost inevitably ensues (11-13). As in US' inner-cities (Desmond, 2016), postindustrial Britain (Jones, 2012) and Australia (Paternoster et al. 2018), mass-mediatized moralism effaces an ocean of historical evidence demonstrating the integration of entire regions and peoples into an exploitative global political-economy (Reid and Taylor 2010).

Setting this point aside momentarily, analytically speaking the defining feature of liberal-democracy as a political order remains citizenly testing of the legitimacy of authority, and those holding it (Williams 2002, 219-231). What is important about this citizenly testing is not the assertion of ethical principles or moral axioms such as inviolable right, whether to a living wage *or* untrammeled private property, or the just order, be it defined in terms of one-person-one-vote *or* a racially, economically, or educationally limited franchise. Or, indeed, that individuals are obliged to 'pull themselves up' or 'see through false consciousness.' Rather, what is important is whether or not and to what degree others are acting to legitimate or de-legitimate the institutions, norms, and values that sustain the political order. Labor- and civil-rights movements, as well as anti-worker and anti-democratic movements alike, are trying at once to make sense of authority and to ensure that authority makes a particular kind of sense to others. It follows that citizenship, both as a marker of political status and as a practice that is inherently political, entails

sense-making of this action-based sort. And, not in the first instance moral sense-making oriented to distinguishing losers from winners. For Williams, this is because

> if one comes to know that the sole reason one accepts some moral claim is that somebody's power has brought it about that one accepts it, when, further, [one finds that] it is in [that somebody's] interest that one should accept it, one will have no reason to go on accepting it (2002, 231; also 2005, Ch. 1).

From the realist perspective, ethical principles or moral absolutes need not precede one's account of politics. Democratic political interventions do not need to disprove or debunk conservative or liberal moralizing but rather to expose the terms on which authority commands acceptance. Catte (2018) implicitly recognizes this point. Her critique aims to de-legitimize moralism by example, and so exposes its unhelpful ideological qualities. The problem with arguing that people should 'pull themselves up' is not that everyone cannot hope to be a winner, although this is true. Rather, the problem is that Vance's conservative moralism and the liberal moralism of those who diagnose white working-class false-consciousness corrodes our capacity as citizens to make sense of the authority under which we must live.

On this point I return to the unhelpful role played by the culture industry in sustaining moralistic stereotypes of Appalachia and white working-class 'problem' more generally. Moralizing enters politics in an ideological way, yet

> there must be ideologies as a common ground, [therefore,] the issue … is not about moving from false consciousness to emancipation, but about trying to achieve a high level of self-reflection on the presuppositions on which the structures of a social order thrive or fail (Prinz and Rossi 2017, 343).

Moralizing about politics offers a binary evaluative criterion that resolves any and all political questions as personal ones. Such an evaluative criterion is not drawn from within the conflict-

ridden political order itself but from beyond it, from an imaginary autonomous realm of pure reason (Sleat 2018, 17-21). Moralizing about politics reduces contest to decide in whose interest's authority will operate to a zero-sum game: Is the actor or action in question wrong or right, a loser or winner? From the perspective of the moralist, political engagement is therefore a contest of absolute not relative power (Geuss 2005, esp. Ch. 5). Moralism pre-empts self-reflection on the presuppositions on which an order thrives or fails because taking unquestioning acceptance as given. In Appalachia as elsewhere, what so often takes the place of democratic sense-making is adoption of and adaptation to the ideology favored by the victors of historical political conflict (Interestingly, compare Gaventa 1980, 20-25 with Geuss 2010, 41-3).

Moralism is ideological in the pejorative sense. Those adopting it know that a social order or an individual is thriving or failing before assessing any given situation. Moralism involves the simple conduct of an inventory of wrong and right. Such *a priori* defining of solutions is only available to an un-democratic authority. This is because moralizers can ask only one type of question: For the conservative, does authority panoptically impose sufficient discipline on the recalcitrant populace or, for the liberal, does authority facilitate individual decision-making guided by the light of reason. Conservative and liberal moralists alike invite their readers to join them in utopian fantasizing from the perspective of an omnipotent and omniscient authority, or alternately, to accept powerless, erroneous subjection. Moralizing renders political sense-making a matter of purifying absolute ideals, not of participating in a collective enterprise oriented to delegitimizing or legitimizing authority.

The politics of citizenship in the mid-twentieth century

The seminal work in the study of citizenship was conducted by Thomas H. Marshall in the late 1940s (Marshall and Bottomore 1998). Marshall's work has since been used to examine transformations of citizenship in North America, Australasia, and Western Europe (Bellamy

2008; Gabrielson 2008; Isin and Wood 1999; Isin 2004; Scerri 2012; 2013; Somers 2008; Susen 2010; Turner 1993; 1994; 1997; 2001; 2016). In Marshallian theories of citizenship, what the English, American, and French revolutionaries struggled for and achieved were specifically the articulation by authority of a suite of 'civil' rights, to formal equality, and duties, to uphold the law. Of course, civil citizenship was not formally realized in the US until after 1865. Marshall notes that at around this time, another transformation of citizenship was already underway. Amidst the industrialization of the market economy in the late nineteenth century, 'political' citizenship was achieved by the organized working-class. Political thus overlays civil citizenship, and was established with extension of the franchise to all adults based on the simple fact of belonging to a nation-state, operationalized in the right to vote, and the concomitant the duty to support the imperial pretensions of the nation-state through patriotic nationalism.

What Marshall labels 'social' citizenship was established in response to World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II. By then a powerful political force acting through the avenues opened by the achievements of civil and political citizenship, the organized working-class was able to influence the representative system of government. Through the US' Democratic Party, UK Labour, and the Australian Labor Party, for example, the organized working-class was able to secure a substantial redistribution of the spoils accruing through the industrial exploitation of nature and indeed, the poor in the global South (Scerri 2012, 64). The rights and concomitant duties of social citizenship—to a just standard of living, and to military or maternal service—were established by applying political pressure to elected representatives, who responded not only by legislating in support of workplace collective bargaining over pay and conditions, but also by raising taxes to fund 'welfare state' programs, in the US the New Deal, Fair Deal, Great Society, and the War on Poverty. (Meyerson, 2019, 2). As an aside, it is worth noting that then and now conservative and liberal moralizing portrayals of Appalachia, which

emphasize the receipt of welfare, airbrush out of history the roles played by regional workers and working-class organizations—specifically but not exclusively the United Mine Workers in their effort to formalize a "racially integrated … Welfare and Retirement Fund"—in sustaining the political pressure necessary for these admittedly flawed and far from sufficient democratic achievements (Muncy 2009, 73-4).

Of course, the white male breadwinner central to social citizenship excluded racial, ethnic, gender, and sex minorities, while relegating white women to maternal subservience. However, it must be noted that the high-point of social citizenship in the decades following World War II did also mark the point at which the modern civil-rights, women's liberation, antiwar, and environmental movements also emerged, and made considerable gains (Cobble 2004, 145-79; Isserman and Kazin 2004, 122-5; Maclean 2006, 65). Aware that correlation is definitely not causation, it does seem fair to say however that even though these movements were infamously opposed by many white workers and labor unions (Caughey 2018), working-class organization overall served to politicize citizenly life. This politicization served as the hallmark of social citizenship. Working-class organizations were not only able to discipline elected representatives by exerting political pressure to produce, albeit biased, redistributive outcomes but to keep politics political for other democratic "new social movements" (Habermas 1975, 174; also, Offe 1984).

For Michael Kazin, who criticizes Catte for empty "rhapsodizing" about these achievements, what is important is that working-class organization in Appalachia and beyond served to educate "members and their friends and families about who held power in the economy, which politicians were on their side ... and how to [shut] down a mine [or] to effectively [lobby] a state legislature" (2019, 24). In short, social citizenship engendered the dissemination of a politicized view of authority as the object of legitimation that, regrettably for

Kazin may never be re-established (2019, 22). Fully accepting his hardheaded but probably accurate assessment can only lead to nihilistic withdrawal however. As a political theorist rather than a historian, I think that a better use of my time is to contribute to the democratic project of sense-making by exposing to others how moralism today reinforces efforts to erode the politicized core of citizenship and to replace it with something else, something wholly moral yet, ironically, constituted through political (re)action.

The politics of reaction in the 1970s

As Catte shows (2018, 82-3), even liberal political and economic elites who oversaw the Cold War welfare state subscribed to the hegemonic doctrine that political theorists call liberal-pluralism. Liberal-pluralism holds that liberal-democratic institutions neutralize a plurality of material interests, with the result that the desirable political order is said to be held in something like a natural equilibrium. Those acting on such interests are 'partisans.' Partisans observe institutional neutrality, such that political power appears dispersed, albeit unevenly and in fragmented ways amongst a plurality of them. Liberal-pluralists admit however that power tends to accrue to elites; partisans whose interests partially overlap but who also possess resources sufficient to *pervert* institutional neutrality.

In the mid-twentieth century, it was by and large partisans of democratic movements, primarily labor and radical civil rights, whom liberal-pluralists labelled as the sources of this alleged perversion.[1] Such labelling amounts to a bias at the heart of liberal-pluralism, and is a consequence of the institutional neutrality assumption. Liberal-pluralism elides the historically close and mutually advantageous relationship between those who hold representative office and those posessing vastly concentrated economic wealth (Winters 2011). This is a critique of liberal-pluralism that Gaventa (1980; 2018), Herbert G. Reid (1974; 1986), and Reid and Betsy Taylor (2010) justify empirically in their work on the Appalachian region. Acknowledging the historically

close relationship between reprentatives and putative oligarchs, economic elites, and the aspirational-affluent, makes it impossible to accept the neutrality thesis. The neutrality thesis is a metaphysical assumption that serves an anti-democratic end: It de-legitimizes democratic activism. Just as cultural moralizing sustains a binary evaluative criterion that curtails ideological self-reflection, the neutrality thesis sustains a similarly binary criterion, which distinguishes only right from wrong acts of citizenship. Right(eous) citizens act rationally and contribute to the polity's harmonious equilibrium. Wrong(ful) citizens irrationally disrupt the institutions, norms and values on which equilibrium rests, and should be feared by the righteous (Robin 2004).

Such liberal-pluralism deeply affected public understandings of 'Appalachia' and the white working-class throughout the era of social citizenship, as Catte (2018) shows. While an array of working-class, civil-rights, women's and other democreatic movements were acting politically, Democratic Party welfarists, the rump of Republican Party patricians not sidelined by the party's swing to the right in the 1960s, senior federal and state bureaucrats, and notably what Catte recognizes was at the time a largely sympathetic "liberal media," were busy portraying working-class problems—"poverty, lack of education, ill-health"—as the outcomes of a morality play between a potentially caring nation and its unwittingly disposessed (2018, 82-4, also, 103-5). Throughout the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, the model of social citizenship and the political activism central to sustaining it were simply elided by a hegemonic ideological mainstream (Reid, 1974).

All the while, successful working-class and democratic politicking had by the late 1960s and early 1970s prompted a wave of political reaction. This reaction was in part fueled by indirect forces, notably the 'energy crisis' and globalization of national political-economies (Beck 2005; Runciman 2013). More important however was the direct pressure exerted by those possessing vastly concentrated wealth and high incomes and sympathetic political elites who

sought a specific set of policy responses to the crises of the 1970s. Initially labeled the 'Volcker reforms,' after then chair of the ostensibly unpolitical Federal Reserve, these responses were designed to undermine the allegedly inflationary effects of welfare state programs and legislation, including rules governing collective bargaining, labor, and social movement activism (Barker, 2019; Slobodian, 2018).

The reaction that arose in the 1970s depended greatly on efforts by political elites to sponsor and host cooperation and coordination amongst disparate oligarchs and economic elites with the aim of addressing incipient crisis (Maher, 2017). From within a liberal-pluralist perspective however, the goal of the elite-cooperative 'summits' that flourished in the 1970s was merely to return the political-economy to an orderly equilibrium state. However, when one considers the fact that Nixon won the presidency in the wake of the Goldwater insurgency and as such represented a harbinger for the New Right (Perlstein 2008), such summitry can only be conceived as an early salvo in the war on social citizenship. The increasing influence of similar summits hosted by government and well-funded think-tanks such as the Trilateral Commission, American Enterprise Institute, Brookings Institution, and Heritage Foundation helped to alert state-based political elites and aspirational suburbanites, especially in the Sunbelt and New South, to the dangers posed by the democratic ambitions which welfare statism supported (Davis 1984; Gill 1990; Harcourt 2011; Kwak 2018; Maclean 2017; Mann and Ornstein 2016; Mayer 2016; Weder 2014). Indeed, as Catte (2018) and the historians on whose work she draws shows, in Appalachia as elsewhere in the US, including inner-cities experiencing 'white flight,' welfarist programs sustained an array of grassroots democratic efforts dedicated to "addressing problems with educational facilities, food scarcity, poor roads, voting rights, political transparency, and unemployment" (104, citing Williams 2002, and Eller 2008).

Perhaps more than other factors, it was this dimension of welfare statism—the use of taxpayer funds to mobilize citizens and deepen democracy—which provoked New Right consolidation. In fact, US-focused historians show that what would subsequently emerge in the 1980s as privately funded networks of family-business, corporate, and investor organizations dedicated specifically to dismantling the welfare state have their origins in reaction to the 'democratic excesses' of the 1970s (Mirowski and Plehwe 2009; van Horn 2018; Phillips-Fein 2009; Phillips-Fein and Zelizer 2012). Such findings resemble closely those applying in the UK (Crouch, 2004), Australia (Weiss et al., 2005; Boucher and Sharpe, 2008), on the Continent (Dardot and Laval, 2014; Mirowski and Plehwe, 2009; Nachtwey, 2018; Streeck, 2014), and globally (Slobodian, 2018; Steger, 2008). Spanning think-tanks, trusts and foundations, lobbying groups, business peak bodies, university-based centers and institutes, especially those led by departments of economics, public, and business administration, as well as sympathetic state level organizations through state-oriented national bodies such as the American Legislative Exchange Council, these networks converged on a single political goal; to restrict organized working-class movement and wider democratic aspirations perceived as likely to produce redistributive outcomes, such as progressive tax reforms or new welfare, education, or public health programs (Davis 1981; 1984; Frank 2000; 2008; Fraser and Gerstle 1989; Luke 1989; Piven and Cloward 1982; Sklar 1986; Waterhouse 2014).

Over time increasingly coordinated (Mayer, 2016; MacLean, 2017; Teles, 2008; Weder, 2014), this counterrevolution succeeded in dismantling the political foundation of social citizenship (Somers 2008). Particular energy and resources were dedicated to celebrating long-established yet marginal libertarian ideas and to undermining the legitimacy of labor and democratic activism, which are necessarily collective (Lilla, 2017; Lasch, 1995). Consider for example not merely the aims but the achievements of the now hegemonic jurisprudential

doctrine of Chicago Law and Economics, and of the closely related Public Choice doctrine in the social sciences (Amadae 2003; 2015; Brown 2015; Grewal and Purdy 2014; ; Maclean 2017; Purdy 2012; Supiot 2012; van Horn 2018). Or, in a similar vein, consider work that uncovers privately-funded and state-sponsored efforts to unify an anti-democratic coalition comprised of libertarians, desiring policy that enhances individual self-reliance, and conservatives, defending family values and biblical morality (Cooper 2017; Skocpol and Williams 2012; for examination of this phenomenon in Appalachia, see Mason, 2009). The new jurisprudential and social science doctrines and the promoters of libertarian and conservative ideologies explicitly privilege private property rights and wealth or 'human capital maximization' as the highest social goods (For a critique of the role played by theories of 'social' or 'human capital' in the erosion of citizenship, see Somers, 2008: 213-53, also Amadae 2015). Meanwhile, the news-media and newer communications technologies were continually employed to dismiss working-class and democratic efforts to defend non-market rights or goods, such as to a living wage or environmental justice, and to replace these with moralistic defenses of individual choices to 'grow' such capital (Bauman 2001; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002).

Moralizing citizenship in the 1990s and beyond

What emerged in the space opened up by such reaction was a new model of 'stakeholder' citizenship (Burkitt and Ashton 1996). Stakeholder citizenship redefines the status and practices associated with the working-class in particular. Political demands that had been pressed by organized movements were in the course of the 1980s and 1990s replaced by a new set of apolitical yet often ethically and morally laudable demands, which issued forth solely from individuals (Scerri 2012; 2013). In place of the political contest central to social citizenship were established new consensus-based 'third way' and 'compassionate conservative' approaches to representative government (Scerri 2019, 100-8). The ostensible public objective of these reforms

was to provide citizens with access to consumption choices and promote freedom of choice in relation to the opportunities on offer in an allegedly 'new economy.' What was achieved closely aligned with the wishes of the 1970s New Right to simultaneously depoliticize and moralize citizenship by invalidating collective democratic agency and promoting individual self-responsibility (Harcourt 2011; also, Amadae 2015; Maclean 2017).

It is no surprise then, that throughout the 1980s and 1990s political elites worked to devolve responsibility for accruing positive citizenly benefits—such as access to decent wages and affordable education, training, and healthcare, a safe workplace, or clean environment—from politically organized movements to individual stakeholders. In the process, democratic critique was de-legitimated. Under Democratic President Bill Clinton, UK Labor Prime Minister Tony Blair, and successive Australian Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating, these peak working-class political organizations embraced a suite of market-friendly policies. (Jones 2011, 101, 252; Isenberg 2016, 296-303; Paternoster et al. 2018, 10) In particular, these parties adopted a vision of representative government as self-restricted to the sound management of citizenly preferences. Such technocratic 'neoliberalism' was justified on neo-pluralist grounds, which hold that political institutions can be made fully rational by limiting them to the defense of formal equal rights, most importantly to private property, against the ostensibly predatory threats that a democratic majority would pose (Scerri 2019, 125-7).

Liberal-democratic authority would no longer conceive of citizens as political actors. Rather, stakeholder citizens would be seen as the senders of passive 'signals' to those in authority. The model is that of an idealized free market, in which by choosing to purchase or forego a commodity, consumers 'reveal' clear preferences to producers, distributors, and marketers. Central to the model of stakeholder citizenship is therefore an explicitly apolitical idea, which stems directly from the technocratic worldview. This is the egalitarian meritocratic idea that

political contest, especially over distributive questions, is inherently inefficient. Such contest should be replaced by market-like signals, which are revealed to politicians and bureaucrats through transactions such as consumer purchases, employment contracts, and importantly, public opinion polls and voting (Supiot 2012). Excluded, as a barrier to the transparent revelation of individual preferences, is active participation in the democratic process. Stakeholder citizenship ironically represents the institutionalization of the individual as a moral category through the use of politics.

Political action that aims to de-legitimize authority in fact constitutes 'noise' to those managing a potentially fully efficient and so rational authority. The erosion of citizenship depends on idea of the public good as the aggregate sum of individual moral choices as revealed to government or business; to consume 'healthy' or 'unhealthy' foods, 'sustainable' over 'cheap' goods and services; to embrace 'zero-hours' or 'self' employment contracts over union-guaranteed agreements; or, to pursue education over hedonism, for example. In Appalachia especially, the normalization of stakeholder citizenship reinforces rather than dissolves the historical "obfuscation of class [solidarity] through racism" (Smith 2004, 46). 'Whites' making the 'wrong' choices are exposed to unofficial cultural sanction, as hillbillies, and to official sanction through aggressively punitive legal penalties for minor breaches of the law (Harcourt 2011). By dint of historical racism, such individuals are encouraged to regard themselves as intrinsically different from alleged gangstas, mac daddies and the like, who constitute a separate black or Latino underclass sharing nothing in common with the hillbilly and thus reinforcing "America's evasions and conflations of race and class" (Smith 2004, 53).

Conclusion

By the first decade of the new millennium, a model of citizenship anchored by citizens' collective engagement in political contest to decide in whose interest's authority would act had given way to

an apolitical model anchored by individual choice, albeit overseen by political representatives who understood themselves as technocratic managers seeking maximally efficient economic growth. This erosion of citizenship has in large part been consequential upon sustained judicial, political, economic, and cultural reaction that, beginning in the 1970s, has rather successfully redefined what it is to be "a competent member of society" (Turner 1993, 3; also, Somers 2008, 244-7). The de-legitimizing of citizenly solidarity oriented to the expansion of democracy through the disempowerment of a collectively organized and politically engaged working-class has reshaped the flow of resources away from individuals as members of that class. In place of the solidary social citizen mobilized to pursue the democratic aspiration to equal freedom has been constituted an individuated stakeholder citizen, a classless, raceless, sex- and genderless moral chooser to whom resources are said to flow based on personal effort to invest and grow human and social capital. This is the sense that liberal-democracy now makes to many citizens, working-class and otherwise.

The moralizing stereotype of 'Appalachia' that the conservative Vance and well-meaning liberals espouse helps to reinforce the reactionary politicking behind this erosion of citizenship. This is because the emphasis of moralism on applying simplistic binary evaluative criteria to any and all problems conceals much of the evidence needed by citizens if they are to make informed decisions about how best to achieve and sustain equal freedom. This dynamic is nothing new. Indeed, politically enervating moralism has a long history in Western political thought and practice, for Geuss (2017) beginning perhaps with the Ancients (36-7). In an often-quoted few lines, Geuss (2010) further describes moralism as in effect,

> usually dead politics: the hand of a victor in some past conflict reaching out to try to extend its grip to the present and the future. There is nothing inherently wrong with this. Our past is an essential part of what we are, which we ignore at our peril. We could not leave it

> behind, even if we wished to do so; but recognition of this necessity gives us no reason to romanticize it (42).

At issue for democrats and other critics of the *status quo* is how moralizing about occludes political contest to decide in whose interest's authority will act. Those who benefit disproportionately from the globalizing political-economy have a real interest in the propagation of moralizing representations of white working-class citizens as hillbillies, chavs, and bogans. Moralism is the ideology of the victors. Assurance of victory in the present and into the future depends on the continued legitimacy of a simplistic binary distinction between wrong and right, or losers and winners. Insofar as the citizenly task of making sense of authority is in this way reduced to a zero-sum game, it is logical that losers invest time and energy in winning, rather than in collective action oriented to advancing the democratic project. Ironically, this displacement of citizenship as a political category and the concomitant reduction of the collective task of making sense of authority, to that of choosing to prosper or to fail in the globalizing political-economy, has been achieved politically. Inadvertently or not, contemporary conservative and liberal moralizers of the Appalachian and white working-class 'problem' romanticize this victory. Whether in Appalachia, the UK, Australia, or Western Europe, moralizing about the white working-class conveniently protects those who have done so much to erode citizenship as a vehicle for the democratic impulse.

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Endnotes

1. In fact, Robert A. Dahl (2015) and Charles Lindblom (1977), the two leading theorists of pluralism, used empirical evidence to revise their theses in the 1970s. Each showed that the

most allegedly perverse influence on liberal-democratic equilibrium was not the organized working-class after all, but organized business. As the twilight of organized working-class power descended, the resulting 'corporatocracy' or 'polyarchy' was shown to be anathema to both liberal formal equality and the rule of law, and as well as to the egalitarian democratic impulse.