

**The Concept of Citizenship from a Philosophical  
and Theological Perspective**

**მოქალაქეობის კონცეფცია ფილოსოფიური და თეოლოგიური  
პერსპექტივიდან**

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**Abstract:** The concept of citizenship is becoming more and more important in the field of thematic research, especially when addressing issues of national and transnational citizenship law. The concept of citizenship has its origin in Greek and Roman antiquity, where citizens – free and adult men – had rights, freedoms, and obligations.

From that time until the present day, when the transnational elements of the concept of citizenship tend to replace the ethno-state elements, its definition, and the concept itself have undergone a series of changes. Their synthetic, unified approach is difficult to achieve. This is why the author of this article aims to analyze, using specific research methods, the philosophical and theological aspects of the concept of citizenship, starting in this effort from the text of the Old and New Testament and from the work of Blessed Augustine, *De civitate Dei*.

This paper is part of a broader effort to explore the topic, materialized in a series of articles and studies published in scientific journals: *Augustinian Model in the Byzantine Political Thinking. Case Study: The Elements of Political Augustinism in the Current Romanian Mentality, Termenele acordării și redobândirii cetățeniei române, Romanian Citizenship. Case Study: Districts Teceu and Rahau from the Right Side of the Tisza, Introducere în legislația privind cetățenia română* etc. The titles of the works suggest a historical and legal analysis, which limits debates and deprives the concept of its theological and philosophical value. Therefore, it is necessary to initiate two directions of analysis: one through which the author aims to identify the mystical-religious elements present in the national and European legislation on citizenship, and a second one in which emphasis is placed on the secular, desacralized elements of the relevant legislation.

**Keywords:** Political citizenship, citizens of the Republic, modern citizenship

**ანდრეი ტინუ**

ისტორიის დოქტორი, ტიტუ მაიორესკუს  
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**აბსტრაქტი:** მოქალაქეობის კონცეფცია სულ უფრო მნიშვნელოვანი ხდება თემატურ კვლევებში, განსაკუთრებით ეროვნული და ტრანსნაციონალური მოქალაქეობის სამართლის საკითხების განხილვისას. მოქალაქეობის კონცეფცია სათავეს იღებს ბერძნული და რომაული ეპოქებიდან, სადაც მოქალაქეებს – ზრდასრულ მამაკაცებს – გააჩნდათ უფლებები, თავისუფლებები და ვალდებულებები.

ამ დროიდან დღემდე, როდესაც ტრანსნაციონალური ელემენტები მოქალაქეობის კონცეფციის ეთნო-სახელმწიფოს ელემენტებს ახშობს, მისი განმარტება და თავად კონცეფცია მრავალჯერ შეიცვალა. მათი სინთეზური, გაერთიანებული მიდგომის მიღწევა რთულია. სწორედ ამიტომ, ნაშრომის კვლევის მიზანია მოქალაქეობის კონცეფციის ფილოსოფიური და თეოლოგიური ასპექტების ანალიზი, კონკრეტული კვლევის მეთოდების გამოყენებით, იწყება ეს მცდელობა ახალ აღთქმაში არსებული ტექსტებიდან და წმინდა ავგუსტინეს ნაშრომიდან „*De civitate Dei*“.

ნაშრომის ნაწილი არის უფრო ფართო მცდელობა, რომელიც მიზნად ისახავს თემის კვლევას, რაც გამოიხატება რიგი სტატიებისა და კვლევების გამოქვეყნებაში სამეცნიერო ჟურნალებში: ავგუსტინური მოდელი ბიზანტიურ პოლიტიკურ აზროვნებაში; პოლიტიკური ავგუსტინიზმის ელემენტები თანამედროვე რუმინულ მენტალობაში; ტერმინები, რითაც გადაეცემათ და უბრუნდებიან რუმინული მოქალაქეობა, რუმინული მოქალაქეობა; რაიონები თეჩუ და რაჰაუ, ტიხის მარჯვენა მხარიდან, რუმინული მოქალაქეობის კანონმდებლობიდან. როგორც ჩანს, ნაშრომების სახელები ცხადყოფს ისტორიულ და სამართლებრივ ანალიზს. ამდენად, საჭიროა ორი ანალიზის მიმართულების დაწყება: ერთი, რომლის მეშვეობითაც ავტორი მიზნად ისახავს მოქალაქეობის ეროვნულ და ევროპულ კანონმდებლობაში არსებული მისტიკულ-რელიგიური ელემენტების გამოვლენას, და მეორე, რომელშიც ყურადღება გამახვილდება კანონმდებლობის საერო, განწმენდილი ელემენტებზე.

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** პოლიტიკური მოქალაქეობა, რესპუბლიკის მოქალაქეები, თანამედროვე მოქალაქეობა.

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**Introduction.** Citizenship is a term that requires more than just a legal or political definition. It is a fundamental concept, wholly circumscribed to the historical course of the individual, from the birth of civilization to the present day. Moreover, if we refer to its religious value, the concept of citizenship is a bivalent concept, in the sense that man, after Jesus Christ restores the connection between creation and Creator, benefits from two citizenships: a human, legal and political citizenship,

giving Caesar what belongs to Caesar<sup>54</sup>, and a divine one, which the protoancestors Adam and Eve had lost, in which the individual has the obligation to give to God what belongs to God.<sup>55</sup> *Fecerunt itaque civitates duas amores duo, terrenam scilicet amor sui usque ad contemptum Dei, caelestem vero amor Dei usque ad contemptum sui*' (Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self)<sup>56</sup>, says Blessed Augustine in his work "City of God". The dual nature of man (matter and spirit) presupposes not only the existence of two distinct cities, but also of two categories of citizens – individuals who, depending on the dominance of the psychological personality, fall into one of the two loves mentioned above.

In defining the modern concept of citizenship, several theories and approaches of a bio-sociological, legal-institutional, and philosophical-religious nature must be considered. The concept of citizenship encompasses a series of sub-concepts or secondary concepts, such as gender, class or ethnicity, that over time have contributed to the development of the concept of citizenship.<sup>57</sup> According to Barbalet, the concept of citizenship, in its modern sense, encompasses the totality of the political obligations and rights of individuals, to which other secondary rights and freedoms have been added in the global age (Immanuel Geiss, *non vidi*).<sup>58</sup> If we admit that freedom is man's right to manifest himself in a natural or defined framework, then we will also embrace Monchablon's theory that democratic citizenship presupposes five broad categories of rights and freedoms, such as freedom of the individual, of the group, freedom of thought and expression, which are deeply related to religion and philosophy (author's note), "real" freedoms and rights related to technical progress.<sup>59</sup>

Through this study, the author aims to identify the main philosophical and religious aspects that underlie the concept of citizenship.

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<sup>54</sup> *Matthew*, 2:21

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>56</sup> Augustin, *De civitate Dei*, XIV:28, *apud* <https://digilander.libero.it/maipiustudiare/vers/agostino-civitate.htm>, consulted on 13.05.2023, at 14.24.

<sup>57</sup> Diana Elena Neaga, *Gen și cetățenie în România: între formal și substanțial, normal și normativ*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2013, p. 33.

<sup>58</sup> Viorel Vizureanu, *Introducere*, in J.M. Barbalet, *Cetățenia*, DU Style Publishing House, Bucharest, 1998, p. 11.

<sup>59</sup> Alain Monchablon, *Cartea cetățeanului*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 1991, p.13, *apud* Viorel Vizureanu, *op. cit.*, p.11.

## **Citizenship from a philosophical and religious perspective**

In the modern sense, citizenship is the concept that defines, within a state, the institutional and human relations that have as object the observance or non-observance of fundamental rights, the obligations that the individual, as part of the community, has toward other individuals and the entire socio-political community, the limits between which a citizen can freely manifest and the elements of constraint and regulation of freedoms, arising in response to actions that endanger the safety, integrity, freedom and independence of another person, organization or state entity. An intermediate conclusion is that the term citizenship is a complex one, with deep ramifications in the entire primary legislation of a state.

*“Nationality must be felt with the heart, not spoken with the mouth. That which is deeply felt and respected is rarely spoken out loud.”*<sup>60</sup> Therefore, being a citizen requires vocation, feelings, attachment towards the founding values and ideas of the state.

The concept of citizenship, like the totality of modern concepts, draws upon the teachings of the dawn of civilization, the texts of the sacred books of the mono and polytheistic religions containing complete and complex provisions both regarding the relationship between creation and the Creator and the relationship between individuals or within the group, city, or state. The Pentateuch, a source of learning for the three Abrahamic religions, introduces norms and rules of coexistence, developed, improved, and adapted to the temporal and local needs of the members of the community of the aforementioned beliefs, starting from the ten commandments that God gives Moses, as a guarantee of the Creator’s will to restore the connection between Him and His creation, a connection previously broken through disobedience by Adam and Eve. Throughout the text of the Old Testament, we see that God Himself rules the city, the people, He sets the rules and, ages later, it is He who, becoming incarnate, comes to save His creation. But not brutally. Christ comes and tells those who were listening to Him *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”*<sup>61</sup> Therefore, the laws given by the Father to Moses continue to be viable, continue to regulate the life of the community, even if only on the spiritual level.

## **Plato's “Republic” and “The City of God” - unfailing philosophical sources**

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<sup>60</sup> Mihai Eminescu, *non vidi, apud* Ion Deleanu, *Cetățenia română*, Dacia Publishing House, Bucharest, 1976, p. 5.

<sup>61</sup> *Matthew*, 5:17.

Regarded as utopias, the two reference works of philosophical literature – the “Republic” and “The City of God” – laid the foundations for universal political thought. Plato's Republic is the starting point of the idea of a city, of a city within the dream. It is an ideal, but difficult to achieve fortress, in which citizens have *the ontological obligation* to avoid the dogma of perversion and be protected from it. Citizens belong to a society that is based on education and justice, a stratified society guided by education, justice, which must be strong and severe, as to punish all deviations, and by religion.<sup>62</sup> Opulence and poverty do not exist, and Platonic citizens have no openness to the new, because their society is perfect. The citizens of the Republic are equal before the law, even if this equality is not manifested among all. It is an “unequal” equality, as Plato considers it appropriate to classify people into three categories: simple people, soldiers, and guards.<sup>63</sup> In order to build the ideal city, Plato also identifies the solution: respect and obedience towards the philosopher-kings and belief in a founding myth.<sup>64</sup> It may seem strange, but the fundamental characteristic of utopias is their cyclicity. The Platonic model of the ideal fortress is found once more in the new civilizational dogma of the post-global era. The founding myth of the new republic is the French Revolution, the philosopher-kings are the apostles of political correctness, and social stratification presupposes the existence of two categories of citizens: progressives and sovereigntists.

“The City of God” is the work of Blessed Augustine, in which the foundations of Western dogmatic thought and historical philosophy are laid, the Bishop of Hippo giving time a special importance. Time plays a primary role in Abrahamic philosophy. In Jewish and Christian religion, a time of waiting, of supra-temporal and supra-historical hope develops. The Jews await the Messiah and the restoration of the lost Paradise, of eternal Israel. Christians have Christ and have the church—the city of God on earth. The members of the church, citizens of the Christian republic, have more than hope. They have faith that, in exchange for a virtuous life, they will benefit from new rights, as inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, living among the saints and angels. The City of God is bivalent. There is a temporal, palpable, definite city, in which the faithful is a participant and direct beneficiary of the rights deriving from this quality, and an imaginary city, defined, yet unpalpable, in which God is the absolute ruler, full of love and goodness. This is a city promised to all who will conquer the kingdom of this world.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Alexandru Ciorănescu, *Viitorul trecutului: utopie și literatură*, Cartea Românească Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996, p. 69.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>64</sup> Jean Servier, *Istoria utopiei*, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 2004, p. 20,

<sup>65</sup> *The Apocalypse*, 2:7

Christianity and the church offer a completely different approach. Christianity is addressed to all people. The Christian philosophy and the City of God are based on love. Love of God and love of one's neighbor. Because *"Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."*<sup>66</sup>

### **Values of Enlightenment thinking in defining the modern concept of citizenship**

The emergence of the printing press, which allowed access to information to a greater number of people, the Renaissance, whose ideals aimed at rediscovering the values of Greco-Roman Antiquity, the religious reform, which appeared with the stated purpose of simplifying and "humanizing" the message of the Gospel, and the Enlightenment movement contributed both to the birth of mass culture, general literacy, the establishment of a widespread intellectual elite, and the secularization of public life and legal norms and rules. We are witnessing the change of Humanity's center of gravity, in the sense that the Creator is exiled from creation into the macro-cosmos, leaving his place to man. These are the auspices under which modern ideologies and cultural currents are born. It is from these ideas that the whole construction of fundamental rights and freedoms begins.

The French Revolution of 1789 created the premises for the reconstruction of states on the basis of innovative ideas. The major event occurring at the end of the 18th century, which brings the period of the French Enlightenment to an end in an apothotic and violent manner, changed not only an outdated form of organization, hardened into absolutist clichés, but the whole mentality of the French society.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, we can say that, if England was the first to take initiative both technically and politically, the French were at the forefront of ideological and structural transformations. They are the first to build and develop, at the political and institutional level, norms of organization based on the principles of equality, fraternity, and freedom.<sup>68</sup> The base document of the Revolution – *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* – adopted on August 26, 1789, advocates the cause of the natural rights of the citizen. *"Men are born and remain free and equal in rights"* (Article 1)<sup>69</sup>, and no citizen shall be incriminated for his ideas, either political and religious, provided that such ideas do not come in conflict with the legal interests of

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<sup>66</sup> *John*, 3:15

<sup>67</sup> Andrei Tinu, Cătălin Boboc, *Istoria statului și dreptului românesc: note de curs*, 3rd Edition, Hamangiu Publishing House, Bucharest, 2022, pp. 136-137.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 137.

<sup>69</sup> *Declarația drepturilor omului și ale cetățeanului*, in Dominique Schnapper, in collaboration with Christian Bachelier, *Ce este cetățenia?*, Polirom Publishing House, 2001, p. 74.

the state.<sup>70</sup> These are values gradually accepted by the contemporary society, the entire legislation of contemporary democratic states, regardless of the category (fundamental, organic or ordinary law) arising from the principles of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

The effort to conceptualize/reconceptualize citizenship is also circumscribed to these values. Modern citizenship, although defined as the connection between the individual and the state, based on mutual rights and obligations<sup>71</sup>, presupposes a broader set of values. Citizenship is not just a concept limited to nationality, but the utmost definition of the totality of existential values characterizing the modern state. It is a complete and complex nationality, in which the individual is both a beneficiary and a party. The contemporary citizen is different from that of antiquity, the very opposite of the latter, whose primary quality was obedience, the individual being included in the category of goods or objects.<sup>72</sup>

Therefore, obedience, the behavioral archetype of the society built on the basis of testamentary teachings, is replaced, through the French Revolution, by emancipation, by the public manifestation of the individual's personality, which increasingly claims superiority and independence. An independence translated, in the light of Christian teachings, as a new disobedience, as a new distancing of creation from the Creator. The impact of the French Revolution was a striking one, the whole 19th century being marked by social, political, and national emancipation movements.<sup>73</sup> If the 19th century brought with it that *Europe of Nations* of which Gaulle spoke<sup>74</sup>, the 20th century is characterized by the presence of totalitarian ideologies – communism and Nazism, class struggle and the Cold War. Although divided, with different views on the methods and finite product, the global world has only one goal: to create the new man, the exemplary citizen, deprived of free will and able to meet the needs of society. The Soviet man, the Aryan race, and the adept of consumerism are paradigmatic models for the new man. These models are the fruit of despiritualized ideologies that drive the global citizen away from both natural and especially moral and religious values. The gap deepens in the current stage of the post-global era, in which archetypal values are reversed, overturned. The citizen of the future is no longer a woman or a man, is no

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 75.

<sup>71</sup> Barbu B. Berceanu, *Cetățenia: monografie juridică*, ALL BECK Publishing house, Bucharest, p. 8.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>73</sup> Andrei Tinu, Cătălin Boboc, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-138.

<sup>74</sup> Charles de Gaulle, *non vidi*, apud Matei Vișniec, *Generalul de Gaulle, o figură tot mai legendară – comemorarea a 50 de ani de la moartea sa*, RFI Romania, November 9, 2020, <https://www.rfi.ro/special-paris-127159-generalul-de-gaulle-o-figura-tot-mai-legendara-comemorarea-50-de-ani-de-la>, consulted on 31.05.2023.

longer connected to his homeland or parents, has no goals and ideals. Despiritualized, the citizen of the future has every chance of being a dehumanized man.

**Conclusions.** Citizenship is not just a mere term, but a complex concept, adaptable to the psycho-social, natural, and cultural needs of man. Analyzing the historical and literary documents, the texts of the legislation applicable in the field of citizenship, the birth and evolution of the concept, we find that the basis of the rights, freedoms and obligations of citizens are, in addition to the natural needs of the human species, the totality of the founding myths of civilization, which have been polished, sedimented and stratified during the historical evolution.

It is further noted that, parallel to the historical evolution of society, with its economic development, the multiplication of methods and techniques of manufacturing, with the increase of the individual's access to information, a wide range of conceptual approaches on citizenship arise, from the materialistic and evolutionary ones to the deeply spiritualized one. In this entire conceptual mélange, the moral-spiritual side is the defining element of the concept, in the sense that a person's belonging to a nation or group also gives rise to freedoms, rights and obligations. In ancient civilizations, especially in Greece and Rome, the cradle of the concept of citizenship, the holder of this status was the only beneficiary of rights, the only one called upon to develop norms of coexistence within the city. The birth of Christianity, the acceptance of the faith founded by the followers of Jesus Christ as a licit religion, and its establishment as the official religion of the empire bring a new approach to the concept of citizen and citizenship. Man, creation and creator alike, must manifest himself both as a member of his ethnic-political community and as a member of the Christian oikumene, the church, the city and body of Christ<sup>75</sup>.

Through this study, the author tried to identify the main philosophical and religious elements that underlie the modern concept of citizenship. The philosophical and dogmatic analysis of citizenship legislation, whether national or supranational, represents a necessity, as it opens new horizons for research and debate.

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<sup>75</sup> *The Corinthians*, 12:27



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