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The New Face of Citizenship: Uncovering a Radical Notion of Freedom

According to Levinas, “man’s freedom is that of an emancipated man remembering his servitude and feeling solidarity for all enslaved people”.¹ Taking this statement into consideration, one cannot help but ask, what exactly does Levinas mean by “freedom” and what might Levinas’ unique conception have to offer the debates around “citizenship”?² This paper will address the political philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, his critical reorientation of the conception of “freedom” that has long dominated Western thought, and by extension, a reorientation of “citizenship” itself.³ To this end, I will take up the work of one who, from his earliest writings in 19th century Germany, played a key role in expressing the dominant characteristics of Western philosophy, and solidifying the modern notions of “right”, “citizenship”, and “freedom”: G.W.F. Hegel. The discussion of Hegelian thought is intended to invoke the weight of the Western tradition in shaping our current socio-political institutions, highlight the complexities of thinking “freedom”, and challenge Levinasian thought to move beyond its own boundaries on both theoretical and practical levels. The intent here is to show the promise that Levinas’ radical notion of freedom holds for a contemporary democratic spirit.

Freedom and Citizenship

My inquiry employs the work of Levinas in order to reveal the ways in which dominant European narratives have repeatedly fallen short in theorizing the condition of freedom and various attempts to embody “free human subjectivity” in the traditional “citizen” form. Through his uniquely critical approach, Levinas illuminates the inadequacies in Hegel’s work, and the history of Western thought in general as it pertains to the meaning of freedom. More specifically, Levinas draws attention to an underlying commonality that runs throughout the seemingly diverse accounts of freedom that have shaped, and continue to have considerable bearing on, the development of political thought and institutions. Western political theory’s canonical texts can be grouped according to certain themes that reappear in a variety of efforts to think “freedom”. Such theorizing tends to gather along the lines of either the Hobbesian conception of humans as self-propelled beings who are only free when conforming to their own “natural” capacities for endlessly pursuing individual desires without restriction, or the Kantian understanding of humans as rational beings who, in order to be free, must comply with political and legal structures that they rationally create for themselves. Thus, freedom as an absence of impediments to life is often set up against freedom as life in accordance with limitations constituted by reason as universality. However, such conceptions of freedom are not as radically different as immediate appearances might suggest. In all of these accounts, freedom is uncritically accepted as self-assertion. Even Marx’s emphasis on “freedom” as self-directed action that enables humans to shape themselves and their own life situations, results in a reformulated version of the dominance of the will, or will to power. While left relatively intact by previous theorists, the supremacy of the “first philosophy” of power is taken up as a starting point for Levinas’ own critical inquiry into

a freedom beyond one's own free will, or the "freedom of the I". These varying accounts continue to have a substantial impact on shaping the very institutions and mechanisms that are designed to uphold free and democratic existence of citizens in Western society.

In recalling the main features of a "free citizenry", it is generally agreed upon that for a "free people" to become "free citizens" they must not only be subject to their own law, but also, have a political voice in their governing body. As detailed by Quentin Skinner:

[This requires] a system in which the sole power of making laws remains with the people or their accredited representatives, and in which all individual members of the body politic - rulers and citizens alike - remain equally subject to whatever laws they choose to impose on themselves.⁴

This formulation accepts the idea of "popular sovereignty" and the potential to participate as sufficient principles for grounding a contemporary notion of "democratic politics", although in actual practice, participation is almost exclusively mediated through representation, and the freedom of civic engagement is enacted through the unfettered exercise of individual rights. The liberal-individualist approach that finds its roots in Locke, and to a certain extent Hobbes, gives primacy to the rights of life, liberty, and property as the fundamental rights of individuals. Notably absent from such accounts, is the desire to accommodate either the social rights that have been advanced through Rousseauan populist theorists, or the economic rights that can be most often traced back to Marx's socialist thought.⁵ Given that opportunities for participation, and therefore, a full expression of one's freedom, in civic life are relatively narrow (even taking into consideration public dialogue and deliberation as means of supplementing involvement in the electoral process), the sphere of emphasis shifts easily to one's participation in the market. This transition is relatively seamless not only due to the pervasiveness of capitalist globalization in all areas of life, but more than that, the shift is facilitated by very notion of freedom we have been examining.⁶

The conception of freedom as a self-assertive expression of the individual will in accordance with reason is both foundational to the modern institution of citizenship, and highly compatible with the neo-liberal economics.⁷ No longer relegated to the realm of citizenship theory, "freedom of the I" is concretized and perpetuated through law. Individuals are not only regarded as striving wills, but must also be legally determined as such in the form of a "rights-bearing citizen"; prominent among those rights (especially if we recall the work and influence of Locke's "possessive individual") is the ability to freely enter into exchange. As a result, individuals have the right to pursue their interests with minimal restriction, and capital is legitimized in its trajectory of growth and expansion. Within capitalist society, a "free" existence refers to the individual freedom of maximizing profits by: choosing between various locations within any given market; determining which commodities to produce; deciding how to most efficiently structure labour; and selecting goods for personal consumption. Identity formation occurs through the acquisition of private property. The key characteristics of citizen-subjectivity continue to be reinforced by the drives and desires of capitalist market forces. Individuals in society are valued as accumulations of their characteristics, which are modes of being in the present.⁸ Levinas understands this notion of the "I" as self-sufficient and assertive, effectively functioning to "nourish[es] the audacious dreams of a

restless and enterprising capitalism”.⁹ Striving and self-assertion are now channelled into citizen-consumer subjectivities: individuals exercise “free will” by choosing between commodities, often driven by the promise of being able to spend money in ways that will reflect their own personal identities, thus reaffirming purpose in their lives. Consequently, these one-dimensional “selves” lack the ability to engage in meaningful relationships with other human beings.

The question that immediately arises in light of the relation between the experience of “citizen life” and the role of freedom: what in “freedom” lends itself, not only to legislation that intends to guard against harm, but also to domination, coercion, and oppression? In response, we must return to the commonality that emerged out of our previous discussion - the meaning of “freedom” in Western thought carries with it the underlying force of self-assertion. Yet, in order to pursue our hope of reorienting citizenship, the question remains as to why “freedom” is so closely tied to “striving”, and whether it is possible to recuperate a non-dominative notion of a “free citizenry”? Levinas’ argument against understanding freedom as self-conscious intention, can be understood through his critique of ontology, or the “philosophy of power”, and on a more concrete level, of imposing one’s will upon others (or even on oneself).

The Privileged Space of “Right”

Turning briefly to Hegelian freedom, we can observe the priority of self-assertion in his insistence that “freedom” refers to exercising one’s will in accordance with sufficient reason. Here, the task of philosophical thinking is not merely to provide normative guidelines for human existence. But rather, as the “thought of the world”, philosophy must move toward truth, the unity of form and content, or freedom.¹⁰ Although the scope of this paper does not permit an in-depth examination into “willing”, it is important to note that, as the point of departure for “right”, the will is necessarily comprised of, and directed by, freedom.¹¹ Just as the will has no content without freedom, so too, freedom cannot be actual without the will, or subject. In order to attain the true and absolute moment of freedom, willing must move the individual’s decisions and actions toward becoming entirely in accordance with his/her “nature of being”, thereby locating humans as not merely “ethical” but also “political beings” and revealing the will’s capacity for rationality and universality. Although freedom is the experience that the consciousness expects to be given, as Hegel points out, it is instead what you must become. The will must be determined, superseded and idealized, and then return to itself in order to fully grasp and express itself as freedom.¹² With this final moment of immanent transcendence, the individual’s existence takes on the character of rational, self-aware self-determination, thus enabling freedom to become actual for the individual and in the world.¹³ The acquisition of these elements is then linked with a set of principles and institutions - most notably “citizenship” for our purposes - that embody both the rational and the universal in society.

The Western tradition, and indeed Hegel’s own project, privileges ontology or the “philosophy of power” and embraces its defining characteristics, including totality, comprehensive knowledge, and a universal system. The notion of Being, “esse”, or “essence”, that rules the Western intellectual tradition, is described as an “all-pervasive interestedness” focused on perpetuating and developing itself in a “managing of presence”, effectively absorbing any disturbances that threaten its trajectory. Being asserts itself as independent to the extent that being’s existence requires no examination,

nor reference to anything outside of itself; “being is” has no need of conception. As such, being’s identity is not an assemblage of elements or characteristics, but instead, conveys both sufficiency and “absoluteness”. The human condition tends to be viewed as a limited form of being. And as a result of the tradition’s inability to relinquish its fixation on ontology and the ontological categories of “truth”, “rationality”, and “knowledge”, the desire to transcend our own finitude and achieve the Absolute has succeeded in perpetually excluding other serious investigations into humanness.¹⁴ For Levinas, “a philosophy of power, ontology is, as first philosophy which does not call into question the same, a philosophy of injustice”.¹⁵ However, the order of ontological Totality is not all-encompassing.

In order for freedom to exist as “other than” striving, the “ethical relation” must be recognized as ‘the beyond’ of Being. To this end, Levinas engages with Hegel at various moments in his writing in order to reveal that which is prior to ontology.¹⁶ The act of juxtaposing Levinas and Hegel has the potential to unsettle much of the canon by uncovering points of crisis, reversing entrenched presuppositions, and submitting for judgement a dynamic and radical notion of “freedom”.¹⁷ Levinas’ contribution is clearly distinct from both the philosophical tradition of freedom in the Ego that wills, and the non-freedom of restriction. Ultimately, it is his privileging of “the ethical” over ontology that marks his most significant contribution to our understanding of freedom, and what we are as free beings.¹⁸ While left relatively intact by previous theorists, the supremacy of the “first philosophy” of power is taken up as a starting point for Levinas’ own critical inquiry into a freedom beyond one’s own free will, or the “freedom of the I”. As we have mentioned with regard to Hegel’s work, through negation and synthesis, the subject is able to transcend the particular, identify with, and recognize himself as Spirit, the realm of totality and complete self-consciousness, which allows for the manifestation of absolute freedom.

Yet, as Levinas warns, it is through such operations of consciousness that everything is potentially under the control of “I”, or the same; the structure of the same is then perpetuated through the philosophical project of continuously striving to construct totalities in thought.¹⁹ But while Hegel describes this as the progression toward the absolute truth of being, Levinas emphasizes that, too often, the history of philosophy can be understood through its reduction of all experience to a totality for the purpose of placing events within an all-encompassing realm of knowledge. At times, Hegel seems to suggest that there is nothing external to consciousness.²⁰ For Levinas, there has been little resistance to this form of totalization, which has enabled traditional ontology, in its privileged position in Hegel and other thinkers, to continue an exercise of tyranny. As Levinas states, “the visage of being that shows itself in war is fixed in the concept of totality, which dominates Western philosophy... {Philosophers} found morality on politics”.²¹ Instead of perpetuating a first philosophy of power that subverts all possible significations external to the “freedom of the I” as expressed through the proper “citizen subjectivity”, Levinas strives to determine freedom and goodness within a society where I can ethically relate to, rather than oppress and exclude, others.²² This treatment of ontological categories and concepts, not only functions to highlight the dynamics of will, striving, and individual assertion that are embedded within the modern conception of “freedom”, but also serves as a critique.

Responsible Subjectivity Beyond Self-Assertion

For the purposes of this paper, it is important to note that, according to both theorists, what we are as humans and how we encounter each other, constitutes “freedom”, determines our existence as free beings, and ultimately, our socio-political arrangement or “citizen life”. The foundation of Hegel’s sociality can be read in terms of his well-known master/slave dialectic, the original human relation depicted as an inevitable conflict between two subjectivities. When one being comes into relation with another, a struggle for recognition must occur where one of the subjectivities withdraws into submission while the other takes a position of dominance in order for consciousness to be achieved. The other is initially viewed as a limitation to be overcome.²³ However, it is the one who succumbs to his fear of death, takes up his position as the slave and emerges, in what Hegel describes as the most human moment, as the self-conscious subject. The experience of being faced with one’s own death, reveals Negation, the possibility of a self-conscious life, and thus, marks the inception of a process eventually reaching Absolute Freedom. A strikingly different account of engaging with others and facing mortality is found in Levinas. In his critical encounter with Hegel, Levinas reformulates the master/slave dialectic in order to acknowledge crucial dimensions of our humanness that have been previously overlooked, or excluded. Whereas Hegel seems to regard the other as a competitor or temporary obstacle in the process of ascending to self-conscious, Levinas seeks to unsettle the priority of the self-asserting and self-conscious subject. Such a disturbance can only emanate from the “relation without relation”, an ethical encounter with the other, who does not address me as a conscious self, but commands me as conscience.²⁴

According to Levinas, it is not through conflict, but in extreme vulnerability that the other first appears to me, fully exposed to death, violence, and murder.²⁵ It is not the threat of my own destruction that confronts me, conjuring up the fear of death, but rather, the death of the other person. The face of the other, as an expression of mortality, summons me - both accusing and appealing to me as though the death of the other were my concern. I am called upon to be dedicated to, and wholly for the other.²⁶ This view of mortality is not simple negation. Instead, it signifies my non-indifference to the other, and thus, reveals sociality as the most authentic moment of the human whereby, prior to any human intention, I am infinitely responsible for the other. In the destitute face of the Other, one whom I can “neither assimilate nor possess”, the oppressive and arbitrary force of my will is met with an ethical resistance. The “freedom of the I” is thrown into question by my encounter with the other person.²⁷ Although I may have done nothing wrong, it is only in acknowledging my original responsibility that I am then able to grasp myself and move toward a new possibility of freedom.

The asymmetrical dynamic of the intersubjective relationship is crucial. From the other’s location of height, the I is positioned as responsible for and to the other, without pausing for reciprocity.²⁸ Regardless of my consent, this responsibility is infinite and inexhaustible to the extent that my debt to the other expands in accordance with the degree to which responsible activity is taken up. As Levinas points out, “it is as though I were destined to the other before being destined to myself”.²⁹ This reformulated understanding of subjectivity positions the I as a realm where the subject cannot be substituted, nor absolved of its responsibilities. Consequently, freedom can now be recognized in the *infinite obligation to the Other*.³⁰ Levinas further describes this as a

freedom older than the ability to decide and act, with significance prior to the ontological privileging of presence, intentionality, and knowledge. Moreover, freedom through responsibility to the other gives meaning to humanity that is not a measure of a “thought *of*”, but is from the beginning, a “thought *for*”³¹. By facing the other, the neighbour, the stranger in his destitution, the inescapable question of my own right to be arises (which is already my responsibility for the other’s death). The question that comes forth from the other evokes the meaning of existence beyond ontological comprehension. For Levinas, this is the “ethical meaning of the justice of being”.³² More than the desire for alterity, or the call to act on behalf of those who cannot defend themselves, the response as responsibility is what we are as free human beings.

Justice Otherwise Than Law

Sociality as the original human moment, or the primary encounter, is not only significant in an abstract sense, but is influential on a concrete level as well. The most political - and arguably most important - embodiment of freedom, according to Hegel and much of Western thought, is to be found in the legal tradition of individuals recognized by, and incorporated into, the state. For Levinas, this functions to synthesize all of being into unity, reduce ethics to politics, and perpetuate the hegemonic “economy of the same” or the “politics of equality”. In addition to universal legal principles, Hegel’s theoretical trajectory culminates in “an attempt to comprehend and portray the state as an inherently rational entity”.³³ Contra Hegel, Levinas highlights the necessity of looking beyond universal law and state-legitimized forms of citizenship for freedom’s ultimate manifestation. This does not involve merely substituting universal principles in favour of particular laws. Nor does it call for replacing one arrangement of state structure for another. Rather, the urgency for something other than the state, and the traditional elements of ethics and politics that have been institutionalized in citizenship, is suggested. In what seems to be a direct engagement with Hegelian thought, Levinas insists that a meaningful form of freedom can come into existence without the complete obliteration of social and political institutions; however, responsibility cannot be encompassed by, or directed toward, totalizing principles and universal laws. Instead, the subject must be held responsible beyond the boundaries of objective law.³⁴

Having said this, the potential impact of Levinas’ reformulated notion of freedom in the realm of politics is not obvious. According to some, the work of Levinas is at its most practical as a critique. Often cited are the extreme expressions used to describe responsibility and the ethical relation, including; “infinite”, “responsibility of the innocent”, “substitution”, “hostage”, etc., which appear consistently in Levinas’ writings. These are not familiar terms for challenging the limitations of citizenship structures, technologies, and the values (liberty, equality, right) that ground them. Yet, this intensity, this disruption from outside the location of privilege, which can be described as a space of “radical passivity” (otherwise known as “weakness”) is necessary in order to unsettle philosophical systems that, perhaps unintentionally, serve to justify the ubiquity of individualism, extreme selfishness, self-assertion, and even war, in contemporary society. As we have seen, Levinas understands the foundational principles of citizenship as largely constituted by a misrepresentation of “humanness”, and thus, institutionalized “citizen subjectivity” as an insufficient and even detrimental expression of human freedom.³⁵

Levinas' contribution can be recognized in his successful illumination of a key dilemma for contemporary freedom: even for those of us privileged enough to be included within the parameters of "rights-bearing citizen", the conception of freedom that subtends its institutionalization, is not merely an insufficient account, but also detrimental to the possibility of "citizen-individuals" achieving free existence in a more meaningful form. At the same time, the space of "citizen life", and the set of rights that aid in demarcating this space, is not entirely void of meaning and significance. Here, we must refer to the myth that even those counted among the citizenry have the ability to act upon their "rights and opportunities"; accompanying such a notion of freedom is the inevitable fact that some will be more "equal" and more "free" than others. This is also to say nothing of the extreme suffering and persecution that those who are excluded from these rights, but nevertheless subjected to these operations of "freedom", almost inevitably experience. Accordingly, only a radical form of critique is capable of rupturing such entrenched assumptions. Only in a society that has moved beyond the violence of ontology and a politics of war, a new context for freedom can develop. Yet it is important to note that, despite Levinas' skeptical engagement with the various strains of theorizing that have been charged with constraining the movement of an authentic and practical expression of freedom, he does not detail an alternative procedural approach for reformulating citizenship, or even a general program for social change. Responsibility is not a duty or virtue that can be fulfilled or limited to a set of rules or institutions. Nor can freedom be obtained by simply adhering to a set of ethical norms and guidelines. However, it is only at the very least, that Levinas' work can be understood as a form of critique.

While there have been relatively few interpretations of Levinas' conception of "freedom" in recent scholarship, even less attention has been paid to drawing out the consequences of this freedom as it unfolds on a more practical level. With an eye to the reconstitution of citizenship, our task now becomes an investigation into Levinas' work on "freedom", but not simply as a contribution to radical critique or a call to something other than the aggressive politics that are currently in place. We have to recognize that, by its very essence, Levinas' "freedom" cannot be content to remain wholly within the confines of intellectual abstraction. This new expectation of ethics cannot be expressed apart from politics. At the same time, the ethical must not, for Levinas, be assimilated by the political. Rather, it is in the point of intersection between the infinite demands of ethics and the everydayness of politics that freedom must be sought after and examined.

With the opening quotation in mind, I have attempted to offer an interpretation of "freedom" as the "freedom of the I" discovering its own injustice, the urgency of taking up one's own infinite responsibility to the Other, the destitute, and the impossibility of turning away. I contend that Levinas seems to be fully aware of the need for freedom to be located anywhere from large-scale social organizations to the minutia of everyday life. Herein lies the potential to interrupt the complacency that maintains freedom as self-assertion, and perpetuates the resulting institutional injustice. The worth of this project is expressed in the force of Levinas as an "ethical" thinker who attempts to move beyond both the inadequate notions of a "life of freedom" found in the tradition of Western citizenship, and its continuing operations and technologies of violence. The implication of a freedom other than that of self-assertion, or the dominant legal order, reveals the potential for shifting beyond institutional limitations and discovering other arrangements

for a more human mode of interaction. It is both the urgency and possibility of such alternatives that I hope to have drawn attention toward.

¹ Emmanuel Levinas, Difficult Freedom. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), p.152.

² This refers broadly to debates across the literature, from the relationship between “natural rights” and “citizenship rights” as treated by C.B. Macpherson and John Chapman, to questions around procedural issues raised by Taylor and MacIntyre, and finally, although not exhaustively, to the critical inquiries around citizenship as a strategy of Othering as illuminated through the work of Said, Isin, Tajfel et al.

³ At the very least, I hope for a reorienting and rethinking of questions and their meanings that may be brought to contemporary debates around “citizenship” and “citizen subjectivity”.

⁴ Skinner Quentin. Liberty Before Liberalism. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.74. This general formulation can also be found in the work of Kant, Rousseau, Rawls, Habermas, et. als.

⁵ In addition to theory that operates to justify “better” and more inclusive citizen rights, we have also seen the rise of debates, (largely spurred on by Said’s *Orientalism*), around citizenship-formation as a technology of exclusion. This is clearly visible in the creation of “opposite others” through discursive mechanisms, as well as in the implementation of rights and policies. Whether it is due to what Taylor refers to as the need for a “high degree of cohesion” or what Isin terms the -work of exclusion, a history of citizenship can be read into the current context as a history of “othering” couched in the language of encouraging “democratic progress” or advancing rights.

⁶ I must also caution that this is not to suggest that as an extension of citizen rights, one’s economic participation is the only experience of the “freedom of the I” as dominative, it is however, an important example among others.

⁷ This idea is also touched upon in David Harvey’s A Brief History of Neoliberalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.5-7

⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, Otherwise Than Being (Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1998), p.41-2.

⁹ This is noteworthy as he tends not to refer specifically to capitalism, possibly because his general critique of distorted understandings of freedom and sociality becomes so broadly applicable to the increasingly dominant interests of capital and the pervasiveness of capitalist subjectivity, which is currently bolstered by neo-liberalism, and as we have seen, maps onto the traditional Western conception of Subject. *On Escape*, p.50.

¹⁰ G.W.F Hegel. Elements of the Philosophy of Right. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.22-3.

¹¹ Ibid., p.35.

¹² Ibid., p.42.

¹³ Ibid., p.10. In Hegel’s discussion of the rational and the actual, as interpreters like Knox and Avineri point out, the German term for ‘actual’ is *wirklich* which derives its meaning from its root in the verb ‘to act’ (*wirken*). Thus, what is actual is not merely a passive given, but rather, a consequence of action. This is a further example of Hegel’s attempt to overcome the limitations of Kant’s “formal freedom”.

¹⁴ Levinas, “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism” p.4.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.46.

¹⁶ Levinas’s most direct and sustained encounter with Hegel can be found in the arrangement of *Totality and Infinity*.

¹⁷ Although Levinas does refer favourably to Marx and others who attempt to disrupt entrenched systems of injustice.

¹⁸ This is not the traditional European ethics of moral imperatives, or the prescriptive “ought”. Instead it is the hospitality and indebtedness that provides the foundation for the original encounter with another person.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.45-6.

²⁰ For Hegel, absolute thought represents consciousness of the self, and at the same time, consciousness of the whole.

²¹ Emmanuel Levinas, Totality and Infinity (Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p.21-2.

²² Here, power has no alternative but to face the Other and the impossibility of murder, and in doing so must consider the Other in a mode constitutive of justice. Ibid., p.47-8.

²³ This movement of domination eventually culminates and is expressed in the concrete state.

²⁴ There seem to be two possible experiences of the ethics of the face to face relation in Levinas' work. On the first level, there is the face of the poor, the hungry, and the destitute. A second level brings forth the face of the commander or teacher.

²⁵ "Notes on Meaning" in Of God Who Comes to Mind P.162-3.

²⁶ The command against murder that is produced in the face of the other offers up my freedom for judgement. And it is only when this judgement is not of history, but of God that the notion of "infinite responsibility" appears. Ibid., p.243-4. ("Question the Meaning of Being")

²⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, Totality and Infinity (Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p.82-4.

²⁸ Ibid., p.215.

²⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, "Notes on Meaning" in Of God Who Comes To Mind (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), p.165.

³⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, Totality and Infinity (Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1969)., p.245.

³¹ Emmanuel Levinas, "Notes on Meaning" in Of God Who Comes To Mind (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), p.161.

³² Ibid., p.171.

³³ Ibid.,p.21.

³⁴ Ibid., p.247.

³⁵ While "citizen subjectivities" could be also be used here in attempt to more directly acknowledge the vastly divergent, multiple, and shifting modes of embracing one's "citizen life", the singular is instead employed in order to stress the common threads that run through forms of "successful" citizen engagement, and the technologies that encourage these commonalities in accordance with the prevailing interests of the day.