State-authorizing citizenship: the narrow field of civic engagement in the liberal age
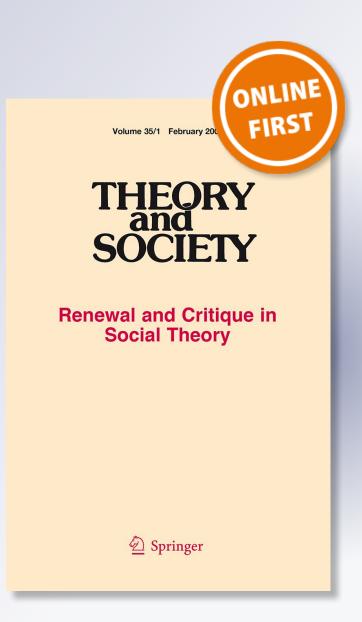
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State-authorizing citizenship: the narrow field of civic engagement in the liberal age

Erica Weiss[1]

Abstract Liberal citizens are held ethically accountable not only for their own acts and behaviors, but also those of their state. Reciprocally, a proper liberal subject is one that metonymizes with the state, merging their fates and moral worth, and taking personal responsibility for the state's actions. I claim that as a result, the liberal subject is not only self-authorizing according to liberal theories of moral autonomy, but also state-authorizing. I demonstrate the above claims through a consideration of changing activist practices among the Israeli political left. I show that the hegemonic model of civic engagement is oriented towards the state and state policy as the privileged and naturalized site of ethical intervention. I then describe the ways this model hampers political endeavors by restricting the sites of intervention as well as structural access to political participation. I also consider contemporary efforts at political engagement that bypass the state.

Keywords Activism · Ethics · Hegemony · Liberalism · Israeli political left · State

Under the norms of modern liberal citizenship individuals are ascribed personal moral worth according to their state. Liberal citizens are ethically laden with responsibility not only their own acts, but also those of their state. Reciprocally, liberal citizens adopt moral accountability for their states in their ethical and political lives. As a result, the possibilities for ethical and political action by liberal citizens are severely restricted by the tacit assumption that the state and its policies are the most legitimate or relevant sites of intervention. Many conventional practices of activism, such as civil disobedience and other familiar "acts of conscience" are oriented towards the state. I demonstrate the above claims through a consideration of activist practices among the Israeli left. Strategic changes in governance have made state-oriented activism less effective than it once was (Author 2016). As a result, a younger generation of activists have

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begun to adjust their mode of intervention, seeking to bypass state politics altogether. Though they, and a few, select others, see radical potential in this approach, I show how their efforts go largely unacknowledged and unsung. Orientation to the nation state, whether in support or dissent, enables someone in a liberal society to establish their ethical personhood, while other interventions go undetected and illegible to the greater public. As such, I argue that the current understanding of moral autonomy is in a binary relationship with the state, restricting imaginable sites for civic engagement, excluding those who do not conform to these norms from the public sphere, and unintentionally bestowing outsized significance and power to the state.

The existence of the "self-authorizing subject" is one of the foundational presumptions of liberal political theory. Self-authorization supposes that the individual is her own source of moral justification. Moreover, ideas of self-authorization are deeply connected to modern ideas of civic engagement. The individual's capacity for self-regulation, self-interrogation, and moral autonomy are key to liberal ideas about citizenship (Rawls 2009 [1971]). The self-authorizing subject has come under sustained critique in anthropology and philosophy for being inauthentic to human experience as well as being Eurocentric (Povinelli 2006, Rose, 2006; Taylor 1991, 1992, MacIntyre 1984). However, less discussed, and less critiqued, is the way the principle of moral autonomy is inextricably tied to the state in the liberal imagination. In *Blasphemy, Injury and Free Speech,* Talal Asad observes the historical connection between the "self-owning" individual, the liberal state, and secular criticism (2009). Here, I want to explore this connection and especially its political implications in greater depth. I show that moral autonomy is understood by political philosophers and activists alike to be fulfilled in the pursuit of good citizenship, a relatively narrow field of ethical life. Further, the proper liberal subject is one that metonymizes with the state, merging their fates and moral worth, even in political dissent, or more accurately, *especially* in political dissent. I claim that as a result, the proper liberal subject is not only self-owning and self-authorizing, but also state-owning and state-authorizing. By state-authorizing citizenship I mean that the state provides an ethical framework by which people evaluate their personal moral worth, that people judge themselves and others based on the ethical evaluation of their states of citizenship, and experience the corresponding ethical emotions, including guilt, shame, and pride, on the basis of citizenship.

My argument is informed by extensive ethnographic fieldwork that I have conducted among the Israeli political left, and especially with conscientious objectors. The Israeli left, comprising largely secular, liberal, ethnically, and socio-economically hegemonic citizens, exemplifies a demographic particularly responsive to the normative expectations of state-authorization. While the orientation towards the state is not equally prevalent throughout society, it is particularly strong among hegemonic citizens, who are overrepresented among the ranks of the political elites and activists. I conducted interviews and participant observation with Israeli conscientious objectors and the organizations that support them. Because of their embodiment of liberal political norms, these elites are credited and feted as upstanding and engaged citizens. I also use as comparison subaltern groups who characteristically do not metonymize with the state, and are excluded from the public sphere and denied ethical and civic recognition. The empirical cases presented here illustrate a number of unsettling aspects of modern norms of liberal citizenship, and on the basis of this analysis I seek to make an

intervention in the current scholarship. This article builds on anthropological work on the state and liberalism, and in particular attempts to document ethnographically liberal subjectivities and ethical norms. It also makes significant use of political philosophy concerning liberal governance, as well as sociological accounts of citizenship.

I begin this article by describing the ways the proper liberal subject effectively metonymizes with the state, which becomes the privileged and naturalized site of civic engagement for the liberal subject. An examination of the intellectual genealogy of liberalism demonstrates that this metonymization is central to liberal ideas about good citizenship. I also describe attempts to launch alternative political projects that bypass the state, as well as the ways that these efforts are stymied at the domestic and international levels by would-be political allies due to liberal expectations that one demonstrate their moral worth through national politics. I then describe the ways the liberal state-authorizing citizen model hampers political endeavors by restricting the horizon of potential political practices and structural access to the public sphere, as well as reinforcing the cultural hegemony of elites. I diagnose three specific problems: 1) that the state-authorizing citizen model is elitist, 2) that it allows the state to engage dissent on its own terms, and finally, 3) that it reflects a bad faith commitment to the lived reality of the social contract.

Merging moral fates: The liberal subject's metonymization with the state

Israel has implemented a universal draft for its Jewish citizens since the founding of the state in 1948. In the early years of the state, those who did not want to serve in the military would try to receive an exemption on an individual basis, either through disqualification or self-injury. But in the 1980s during the first Lebanon war, soldiers began an organized opposition to Israeli military actions and policy, and they created a conscientious objection movement. This movement has continued in waves of refusals since. Members of this group enlisted in difficult combat positions as a result of their desire to fulfill social expectations of good citizenship, which are explicit in Israeli society. But once they became disillusioned with military policy, their public refusal of military service was also triggered by similarly civic-minded motivations. I have found Israeli conscientious objectors, and other activists in the Israeli left, to have a high level of metonymization with the state.

Metonymization with the state means more than identification or a sense of belonging. It means that individuals see themselves as part of the national project, and their own personal fate and moral worth as embedded within the fate and moral worth of their country. Carol Greenhouse describes this as "a personal association of self and state in which the 'nation' is not hyphenated to the state but … to the self" (Greenhouse 2011, p. 195). Israeli conscientious objectors often narrate their family history as an allegory for Zionist redemption, in which the personal and national ethical identities are congenitally joined (Weiss 2011).[1] Although they commit an act of civil disobedience through refusing mandatory military service, it would be a mistake to say that their refusal is an act against the state. In fact, it is motivated by deep concern for the "soul"

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[1] The material presented here is based on fieldwork conducted between 2007 and 2009 and renewed ongoing fieldwork among Israeli activists from 2012-present.

of the country and a willingness to sacrifice personally to rescue the collective. Of particular note was the way they merged their personal identity with the state's, even as they criticized it.

A significant part of their activism was the public telling of their personal stories of moral breakdown and redemption, which served as a model for the political process they hoped to enact on the level of state politics through their activism. In these personal testimonies, conscientious objectors went further than declaring their loyalty and patriotism. Rather, they rhetorically adopted the moral responsibility and guilt for state policies, individually and collectively in the name of their fellow Jewish citizens, referring to "I" and "we" as occupiers. For example, it was common to hear conscientious objectors make statements like the one Michael told an audience in 2008. "Most Israelis think this is a mutual conflict. But, in reality, we are the criminals and they are our victims." This critique of the state is simultaneously a personal mea culpa and a moral claim that circumscribes the individual and the state as ethically synonymous, in other words, metonymization with the state. For the activists, this civic engagement is meant to reduce further the painful gap between the individual and the state institution by bringing state policy more in line with the individual's understanding of the moral good.

We can also see an example of the state-authorization model of civic engagement in a recent public statement made by the head of the human rights organization B'tselem, who sought to justify his controversial testimony about Israeli human rights violations before the United Nations:

> I spoke at the United Nations against the occupation because I am an Israeli. I have no other country. I have no other citizenship and no other future. I grew up here and will be buried here. I care about the fate of this place, the fate of its people and its political fate, *which is my fate*, too. And in light of all these ties, the occupation is a disaster…. I don't understand what the government wants the Palestinians to do. We have ruled their lives for nearly 50 years, we have shredded their land to bits. We wield military and bureaucratic power with enormous success and get along just fine with ourselves and the world… We must not carry on like this. I spoke at the UN Security Council against the occupation because I am striving to be a human being. (El-Ad 2016, emphasis added)

We can see in this testimony that state policy is both the means of establishing ethical personhood as well as the site of ethical problematization. The choice of the term "striving to be a human being" instead of "good citizen" demonstrates the casual conflation of state and personal ethics that I call state-authorizing.

Nowhere is this practice of state-authorization more apparent than in the annual Alternative Memorial Day service. Israeli Memorial Day, a day that honors those Israelis who died in the IDF or in terrorist attacks in Israel, is a significant national holiday and one observed with somber and emotional ceremony in Jewish Israeli society. Scholars have noted how the rituals of Israeli Memorial Day serve to establish collective memory and national solidarity (Handelman and Katz 1995, Lomsky-Feder 2004, Zerubavel, 1997). The conscientious objector organization, Combatants for Peace, have for several years held an alternative Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day ceremony on this date. This initiative was the result of ethical dissatisfaction with the one-sided approach to mourning in the mainstream Memorial Day celebrations, and it

seeks to acknowledge that the victims of violence include both Jews and Palestinians. The alternative ceremony imitates the mainstream ceremonies in both tone and content, featuring eulogies from family members interspersed with solemn music and poems. However, in lieu of the mainstream odes to military fraternity, the alternative ceremony offers visions of Jewish and Palestinian co-existence.

This mirroring demonstrates that these activists believe that the official and mainstream ceremonies are not independent from them, but, on the contrary, reflect on them ethically as individuals, the signature characteristic of what I describe as state-authorization. These activists do not take an apathetic stance towards the mainstream memorial day, by avoiding ceremonies and state practices that do not reflect their beliefs. Rather they have chosen to replicate state practices including form, order and rhythm, bureaucratic logic, and ceremonial inflections such as long pauses and moments of silence. They adopt language, dialect, and accent, only altering the semiotic content. In doing so, they seek to offer an alternative vision of the state, but without introducing any separation or distance between themselves and the state. They are not turning their backs on the state, but offering themselves up as a more moral alternative to the state. Their shadow ceremony seeks to demonstrate its capacity to rise to the occasion at any moment to be the official stance of the Israeli state, embodying state formalism, even in dissent.

Although not everyone metonymizes with the state to the degree of these activists, this state-authorizing orientation earns them a significant degree of civic recognition that others do not receive. The state, while fighting conscientious objectors and their message, legitimizes, privileges, and supports these activists and their form of civic engagement in comparison with other types of activism. I was told by numerous military personnel, including a military prosecutor, that they hold respect for the conscientious objectors who are willing to sit in jail, because it proves that they are trying to help their country and are refusing for ethical and not selfish reasons, as misguided as those efforts may be. The state is much more comfortable with conscientious objectors, those who choose self-sacrifice in the name of the state, than with those whose actions suggest that the state is not the center of ethical life. By contrast, those who refuse to serve in the military for reasons other than intervention in state politics are not recognized for their civic virtue.

For example, both ultra-Orthodox Jews and Mizrahi (Middle-Eastern) Jews refuse military service in equal or greater numbers than formal "conscientious objectors" who are almost all upper class Ashkenazi (European) Jews. Ultra-Orthodox and Mizrahi military refusers that I interviewed refer to the military and the state as "them" rather than "us," one indication among many of failure to metonymize with the state. Moreover, while both groups consider their reasons for refusal to be ethical ones, neither see these justifications as identical to, or overlapping with, the ethical legitimacy of the state, further evidence of a lack of ethical fusion between the state and the individual that characterizes state-authorization. The ultra-Orthodox Jews metonymize with the state far less due to the prominence of religion as their primary identification, and also refuse to serve in the Israeli military en masse. But because they offer religious justifications rather than justifications in the liberal political grammar, their acts are widely considered neither ethical nor political, despite the fact that they are understood as such within the community (Weiss 2017). The same is true of Israel's subaltern Mizrahi military refusers. This group most often offers justifications for refusal in terms

of economic necessity rather than in objection to state policy. As a result, these refusers are labeled draft "shirkers" (*mishtamtim*) rather than ethically credited with the title of "conscientious objectors" (*sarbanei matzpoon*), despite the fact that their refusal speaks to long-standing social inequalities in Israeli society (Weiss 2017).

The hegemonic citizens of the Israeli left are worthy of consideration both because their subjectivities are representative of the activist communities (left and right), and also because of the ways they are so often celebrated up as examples of model citizenship. Susan Sontag, Slavoj Zizek, Noam Chomsky, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu have all heaped praise on the activism of Israeli conscientious objectors. Conscientious objector groups have received numerous prestigious awards, and Combatants for Peace was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2017. Also, an entire body of philosophical and legal scholarship was generated to support conscientious objection as an example of virtuous citizenship. Combatants for Peace and similar organizations on the Israeli left who likewise target state policy, such as Breaking the Silence and B'tselem, maintain a very high level of visibility both domestically and internationally.[2]

Their activities are lauded, and perhaps most importantly, funded. Organizations that present a challenge to Israeli state policy receive millions of dollars from organizations like The New Israel Fund, the European Union, several European governments, notably Norway, Switzerland, and Germany, several progressive churches such as Bread for the World and Christian aid, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and Oxfam. NGOs oriented towards state-policy attract a significant amount of funding from donors who, understandably, are interested in improving the dire political situation and making an impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But only certain types of citizens are seen as having the potential to improve the situation. While elite Ashkenazi NGOs receive public funding to carry out political protests (directed at state level politics), Mizrahi NGOs are given funding only for pragmatic work like helping poor women enter the neo-liberal job market and become economically productive (Lavie 2014, p. 61). Similarly, those working in non-state oriented NGOs have expressed to me a certain degree of frustration in what they have described as a "hierarchy" that privileges state-authorizing NGOs. An acquaintance working at an environmental organization told me "It's a challenge because it feels like we are 'second-class' (*soug bet*), as compared with those that are pro-Israel or pro-Palestinian- whichever you support. For funders, they are much more sexy. But we want to improve everyone's lives, but for some reason it is hard to get people as excited about that."

The political evolution of moral autonomy

Nationalism is a strong force in Jewish Israeli society, and the hegemonic framing of the state as the redemption of the Jewish people has meant that many Jewish Israelis identify strongly with the state project (Zerubavel, 1997). Nevertheless, I argue that the bind between the individual's moral autonomy and the state is not specific to Israel, but is built into the assumptions of liberal morality. In fact, the codification of beliefs regarding freedom of conscience is historically tied to the emergence of the modern nation state (Schinkel 2007). More specifically, the historical development of the ethics

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[2] There are also those who call these activists traitors and deny all ethical content to their intervention.

of liberal individualism, and conscience more specifically, emerged out of the context of persecuted minortarian religious beliefs during the Protestant Reformation (Brown 2008). In these cases, state persecution of religious dissenters led to the eventual development of political norms of freedom of religion and conscience. Freedom of religious/conscience *from state coercion* is the implied clause. This historical link has meant that in liberal political theory the citizen's natural right to freedom of conscience is balanced with the duty to use this conscience for the benefit of the state through civic engagement (Habermas 1991). Reciprocally, in the liberal moral imagination, state regulation is the privileged site of ethical problematization.

It is widely acknowledged that the historical origin of liberalism and the politics of individual rights can be found in the seventeenth-century struggles for religious tolerance (Rawls 2009 [1971], p. xxiv). Relatively less is made of the fact that this process is also deeply interconnected with the emergence of the international state system of the same century. Europe before the Protestant Reformation was characterized by multiple centers of overlapping authority and jurisdiction, the Holy Roman Empire, the pope, princes, local lords, local churchmen, etc. In this heteronomous order, authority was largely located outside the individual, in various institutions and forces. Political and ecclesiastical powers and influence overlapped and intertwined (Phillips 2010). The Protestant Reformation disrupted this system and set off a series of wars, violence, and religious suppression throughout Europe, culminating in the Thirty Years War. The Peace of Westphalia ended this brutal conflict, separating political authority from religious authority, creating both the modern state system as well as instituting individual rights with emphasis on freedom of conscience (Asch 2000; Mahmood 2012). Moral authority turned inward, ushering in the era of the self-authorizing individual and the rise of modern conscience as we know it (Schinkel 2007).

Moral and political authority were divided in this process, yet remained very much entwined. Today, modern liberalism understands the purpose of moral autonomy, freedom of conscience, to be the improvement of the body politic.[3] Freedom of conscience is more than a protection against state coercion; it is part of the ethical self-cultivation and practice of virtue required of citizens to fulfill their democratic duties. It is, as American political philosopher Jacob Needleman puts it, the work of "inner democracy," that is the use of personal conscience for the improvement and undergirding of the "outer democracy" in which we live (2003). Similarly, Rawls's theories rely on the citizen's use of their moral autonomy to enable their sincere and active engagement in deliberative democracy. Thus, there is a direct relationship between conscience and civic engagement that does not allow a proper citizen to abstain or opt out. For Rawls bringing conscience into political reasoning is one of the duties of citizenship (2005, p. 217). Furthermore, Rawls sees his model of political liberalism, which brings moral autonomy to bear on public reason, as an extension of the process that led to the twin births of the secular state and the freedom of conscience: "Were justice as fairness to make an overlapping consensus possible it would complete and extend the movement of thought that began three centuries ago with the gradual acceptance of the principle of toleration and led to the nonconfessional state and equal liberty of conscience" (2005, p. 154).

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[3] While personal autonomy is oriented towards freeing the individual from social constraints, moral autonomy is a process of self-determination and self-control.

Thus, conscience and the state are inextricably entwined in modern liberalism. Further, this fact is so hegemonic as to make it difficult for modern liberals to imagine another site of moral intervention. One can liken this condition to one Bakhtin has described as the "authoritative discourse," that is, an a priori immutable knowledge on which other discourses depend, but which is not itself available for critique or modification (1981, p. 346). Thus, for example, discussions of activist efficacy or methods do not question that the appropriate object of civic engagement is state policy, which is a given. We can see examples of this orientation if we look to the cultural heroes of "acts of conscience," including conscientious objectors in Israel and elsewhere, as well as figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Gandhi, and others who stand up to state injustice.

Ethical life outside the state

I also conducted fieldwork with a youth group comprising those who had serious doubts about their military service. They were upper-middle class, mostly Ashkenazi residents of Tel Aviv, the economic center of the country. The group met weekly to discuss their options. In 2007–9, the conscientious objection movement had already been very well established by previous generations. Seeing the impact that this group was able to make, through television appearances, interviews in newspapers, and international attention, the young people in this group sought to join their ranks. However, prior to their enlistment, the military changed its informal policy regarding refusal. It shifted its approach from disciplinary to incentivization, and as a result, these would-be conscientious objectors were released from service without any formal sanction. For the military, this was part of a broader effort to remove the signature of the state from its most criticized polices, restructuring its policies of motivation and punishment, and by nominally withdrawing from symbolic sites of injustice, such as checkpoints in the Palestinian west bank, through neoliberal techniques like privatization. As a result of this shift in governance, much of the activism directed against the military found it difficult to "pin down" the state or force it to assume accountability as it had in the past. In other words, state-authorizing civic engagement of the type described above, was being foreclosed by a shift in state policies meant to defang exactly that type of activism (see Weiss 2016 for a full account).

Faced with a new reality in which public conscientious objection was essentially ruled out, the would-be conscientious objectors went through a process of collective reevaluation of the norms, assumptions, and interpretive possibilities of traditional activism that resulted in a change in approach. Over the nearly two years I spent working with this group, I witnessed a marked shift in the way they thought about the relationship between ethics and political intervention. Specifically, they moved from seeing their ethical fulfillment in anti-state activism, to achieving ethical fulfillment in a more local politics of everyday life. They abandoned anti-state activism and developed a new approach focused on making ethical and political interventions that bypassed interactions with the state. Their approach was loosely guided by various sources culled by members of the group in their search for alternatives, especially feminist contributions to thinking about ethics and politics. This shift was slow and often halting, and certainly not every

member of the group moved in complete harmony. But I did observe a move from one relative consensus to another over the period of time I was conducting fieldwork.

Comparisons with the older generations of conscientious objectors were a constant topic of conversation among the members of the group. In part, their exclusion from this mode of politics made them turn against it.

> Talia: They are really using the whole image of a tough man's man, hero soldier to get attention. But that is the only reason people are interested in listening to them.

> Shira: They are like, "Hey! Pay attention! I'm sitting in jail and sacrificing so much. But they are only doing it for their own ego. This whole hero thing, they go out in public and everyone is drawn to them. But you can only do it if you are a man.

> Yael: … and blonde, and a combat soldier, and ideally, handsome.

> Talia: Yeah, and also they are trying to use this hero stuff because it makes people in this crazy militaristic society pay attention, but by doing this they just support this. They are always drawing attention to themselves and going on TV and saying their opinion. But it is just for them. It doesn't do any good.

Over the time that I worked with the young people from this group, there was a shift of focus from intervention on the level of state policy (i.e., efforts to end the occupation through protest and refusal) to a more local and everyday orientation. This shift was inspired by the feminist insight that the personal is political. Take for example an exchange that took place at one of the meetings:

> Tamar: Today, I am just going through the day trying to remember that I need to be fair to everyone I meet, so I try to say "how are you?" to the bus driver, and I don't avoid certain neighborhoods just because there are Arabs, I don't try to cheat people, I try to be nice to my parents. It sounds like something small, but it is hard to remember.

> Ori: Because most Israelis think it is enough to do military service and then you never have to be ethical again in your life.

> Tamar: Yeah, but the conscientious objectors also think like that. They think they refused and that was enough sacrifice for the country. In the end all they did was sit in jail. It made them feel good about themselves, but who did it help?

Actions that had previously been designated as politeness were newly invested with ethical significance. Ethical efforts were focused on justice and kindness in daily interactions, though across a wide range of issues. These included challenging active and tacit anti-Arab racism and segregation that they encountered as well as volunteering with local social justice initiatives and veganism. In the

modified politics of civic engagement, state-politics are intentionally ignored. Tamar decided that part of her investment would be to learn fluent Palestinian Arabic. She spent an hour a day studying and made quick progress, as I saw when she took every opportunity to practice. She told me "I can't change what the government does, but I can choose to live close to the people I care about. How can I be close to Arabs in Hebrew?" Likewise, gentle speech that contrasts with hegemonic speech patterns was often adopted, as well as gender-neutral or feminized grammatical structures. Many of the new practices were oriented towards countering their own social and ethnic privilege on a personal scale, as well as challenging the daily forms of discrimination they found deeply embedded in social norms and conventions. Many of these interventions required major investments of time and energy and in most cases could be strongly felt in their day-to-day lived experiences. Members of the group often contrasted this major effort with the sporadic and limited effort they saw required in conventional activism, which nevertheless earned its practitioners the status of leftist heroes. In some ways, their path mirrors poststructuralist approaches that reject majority histories and deprivilege the nation-state narrative.

They also argued that their alternative political project had a bigger impact in the long run, though it garnered less attention. Despite the often significant investment and abnegation on the part of these young people, their efforts were often illegible at both the domestic and international level. On the domestic level they found themselves ignored by potential allies who failed to recognize their efforts. For previous generations, military refusal and imprisonment served to secure a dissident identity and serve as both context and "credentials" for their participation in the public discussion. Just as those who wish to be spokespeople for the state often rely on qualifications such as elite military service, also dissenting activists depend on similar economies of qualifications. News outlets seeking the "leftist" perspective would turn to mainstream state-authorizing activists. Webb Keane has shown that ethical acts and interventions are not conducted in private. Rather, we depend on the recognition of our acts by our community. This recognition takes place on a more fundamental level than "approving" of specific actions or supporting them. Rather, this recognition includes acknowledgment that our actions are ethically motivated, that they are a kind of intervention, that they mean something (Keane 2010). The younger generation faced a situation in which they failed to achieve legibility or recognition and as a result, they suffered for this socially, even among the left.[4]

This illegibility also took place in the transnational ethical regime. Michael, a member of this youth group, was an aspiring musician. He had been working on his first studio produced album and updating the group regularly regarding the process and his progress. When he was designing the cover for the album, he searched for artwork that would express his vision. He found a photograph by an artist that he really liked. The artist was in Europe but had a website and Michael wrote to him about the possibility of using the photograph on the cover

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[4] There is a small audience for these efforts, and others who are involved in these types of efforts, for example, Jewish Israeli women who bring Palestinian women and children to visit the beach for the first time. However, even within the small and shrinking Israeli left, these efforts are often marginalized.

of his album. Michael was primarily concerned that the artist would request a large sum of money for the use of his photograph. The next day the artist wrote back in an email:

> I am surprised from your email. Maybe you know that the world does not agree with what you are doing to the Palestinains [*sic*]. I cannot allow an Israeli to use my photograph as well I would not allow a white person of South Africa to use my photograph before during apartheid. I wonder do you write about the Palestinains in your songs?

Michael did not tell anyone about this email right away. Later he told me that he was embarrassed.

> I was angry and embarrassed. At first I was defensive, and thinking about all the things I feel I do to support Palestinians. But then I thought—just a second, what did he ever do? Just because he was born in France he is innocent? Maybe he is bad to everyone around him every day, but it doesn't matter because his passport is red.

Referring to the red European passport in contrast to the Israeli blue passport, Michael lamented the taxonomic power of citizenship.

> Michael wrote back:

> Actually, I do not agree with the occupation or what the army is doing. And yes, sometimes I do sing about Palestinians. I interact with them and other Israelis with kindness and fairness.

The reply:

> I do not understand. If you don't agree, why do you not just leave the country?

Michael was indignant.

> I am 18 years old! At what point was I supposed to leave my parents house? With what money am I going to live some place else? I don't even have another passport or rights to get another passport!

Here we see the myth of the social contract in action, linking the actions of the state and personal moral accountability through the assumption of consent. This position, holding Israelis personally responsible for their state's actions while defending one's own virtue through ethically superior citizenship was frequently evident in interactions with foreign activists visiting and working in Israel. It has often heard from international visitors that came to visit the West Bank and joined tours of Combatants for Peace or Breaking the Silence. It was dominant in the discourse of European and American attendees to the War Resisters International conference I attended in the peace village of Neve Shalom, who repeatedly called on their Israeli counterparts to make a

bigger and more public show (preferably in English rather than Hebrew) of fighting against the state so that foreign observers would know they had domestic allies in Israel. Indeed, interactions between Israeli leftist and international activists often involve non-reciprocal calls for Israelis to demonstrate their struggle against the state publicly.

In the following I offer a critical analysis of the hegemonic model of state-authorizing citizenship and civic engagement. I focus on three problematic themes, the elitism of this model, the way it allows the state to dictate the terms of dissent, and the way it perpetuates the political myth of the social contract.

The elitism of state-authorization

In this article I claim that the expectation of state-authorizing civic engagement, based on metonymization with the state project, is politically problematic for the purposes of true democratic dissent, by which I mean the opportunity for inclusive and effective political influence. One reason is that such a model is elitist, because it aligns with the political subjectivities of the elites, and because of structural issues of access. Both of these concerns are apparent with the Israeli conscientious objector community. One of the first things apparent about this activist community is the exclusive make-up of the group, nearly all Jewish Ashkenazi, native-born, Israeli men of middle- or upper-class backgrounds. For these activists, this often seem incidental and secondary to their own personal ethical journeys, since they themselves did not base their activism on this identity and would welcome anyone into their ranks. However, collectively this homogeneity is significant.

Part of the explanation for this can be found precisely in the state-authorizing subjectivity held by this group. In previous work, I have shown that seeing their own lives as part of the state project is in fact what enabled them to imagine their military refusal as an ethical intervention on the state scale (Weiss 2011). That their personal biographies align seamlessly with the official national biography (European Zionist origins, Holocaust, national redemption, native born looks, hegemonic masculinity, and cultural tastes, etc), is a transparent fact that allows for smooth metonymization unavailable to most Israeli citizens. Many marginalized citizens never identified with state project to begin with and have understood military service as a contractual means to full citizenship rather than an ethical endeavor, thus muting dilemmas such as military refusal. As members of a privileged ethnic and social class, conscientious objectors are the only ones able to "afford," literally and figuratively, to incur the "price" of public refusal, again, literally (time not working spent in jail, being fired) and figuratively (damage to public reputation) (see also Mehager 2016).

It is not only in the example of conscientious objection that one can see the elitism of state-authorizing citizenship in Israel. A brief review of Smadar Lavie's work on Israeli subalterns, which highlights the ways the state works for elites and against its majority, illustrates that metonymization with the state is virtually impossible for those citizens "crushed by the system" and tortured by the state bureaucracy as they try to receive basic services (2014, p. 100). This lack of metonymization is often occluded by fact that many Jewish Israeli subalterns are highly nationalistic. However, this does not translate into metonymization or thinking that the state represents their interests. "This love for and dependency on the state prevents Mizrahi single mothers from speaking

about the pain they suffer from bureaucracy" (Lavie 2014, p. 100) The lower classes, in Israel and elsewhere, are taught that to have their basic needs met, they must please and persuade officials. They are taught to keep quiet, to be demure, to keep returning to uncooperative officials, to nudge but not push too hard (2014, p. 101). This lack of metonymization with the state and literal dependence on its good will prevents their public dissent, despite being marginalized by the state project of Ashkenazi Zionism.

External state pedagogies and disciplining reinforce these class distinctions and directly contribute to the elitism of what I call state-authorizing citizenship. Yehuda Goodman and Nissim Mizrachi found that when discussing the relationship between the Holocaust and Israel, Ashkenazi students are asked to engage in more "critical thinking" than their Mizrahi counterparts in the periphery, who are taught through rote memorization (Goodman and Mizrachi 2008). Thus, the upper classes are trained to take ownership and ethical responsibility for the state and the national trajectory, as well as to ask critical questions about it, in other words, to become state-authorizing citizens. By contrast, Mizrahi political interventions are often criminalized rather than being acknowledged as attempts at social change. We can see this in the case of Mizrahi "shirkers" who are not considered conscientious objectors and with other would-be political movements, such as the riots in the Wadi Salib district of Haifa in 1959 that protested anti-Mizrahi discrimination and the protests of Rabbi Uzi Meshulam and his followers in 1994 who sought to bring attention to the kidnapping of Jewish Yemenite children. A significant part of enabling the criminalization (and consequent depoliticization) of these attempts at intervention, has been the "failure" of these movements to conform to the liberal discourse (see, for example, Mizrachi, 2011).

Nor is this pattern unique to the Israeli situation. The metonymization with the state, which is necessary for moral authorization of the state, is the domain of the elite citizens. The reasons for this are not difficult to discern. Subalterns are often far from the seats of power, figuratively, and very often geographically. The anthropological literature also emphasizes that the marginalized do not identify with the state, but often fear it and resist its dominance (Scott 2009; Tsing 1993, p. 75), and that furthermore the mainstream sites of political action are inaccessible to the lower classes (Chatterjee 2004, 2011).

The state trap

A further critique of the state-authorizing model of citizenship is that it allows the state to engage dissent entirely on its own terms and structure a game rigged in such a way as to affirm its legitimacy and self-evident importance regardless of the severity of dissent. Even for conscientious objectors, the state-idea serves as a legitimizing discourse for their acts. They find that they must continually claim that their acts were done for the good of the country, otherwise leaving themselves open to accusations of selfish behavior. Their efforts can only be thought of as ethical if they attempt to influence the direction of state policy. Although the source of modern moral authority is supposedly internal to the individual, in private conscience, conscientious objectors must appeal to the idea of the nation-state for authorization of their acts. This is evident in their discursive interweaving of individual and state accountability in the examples above.

Until now, it might be possible to believe that liberal citizens voluntarily take up the burden of moral responsibility for their states, but we should not forget the massive state-sponsored effort to engineer this modern hegemonic expectation. Ferguson and Gupta have shown how banal bureaucratic practices work to establish the state as a privileged site, both "above" and "encompassing" the rest of society (2002). Many other studies show how state investments in infrastructure, education, literacy, have been mobilized to produce what Thomas Bernhard has called "state persons" (Bourdieu 1999). In the Israeli case, Don Handelman has shown how educational training imposes state bureaucratic logic on young Israelis and structures their orientation to the state to give their lives meaning and to organize even the passage of time (2004). Most of these efforts have understood metonymization and identification with the state as part of a modernization project that would turn peasants into proper citizens with full political agency (Anderson 1991; Cody 2009; Murphy, 2004; Weber 1976). In fact, I adopted the metaphor of metonymization from an offhanded remark made by Gyatri Spivak, who defined metonymization with the state project as the opposite of the subaltern experience. She identified metonymization as a requirement for middle-class citizenship and a central condition of possibility for claim making, something positive to be expanded in contrast with my skeptical treatment (2004).

Such metonymization does not always produce consent, and it can often serve as the basis of dissent activism (Lazar 2010; Mein 2009), but it nevertheless benefits the state by reproducing its naturalized relevance and allowing it to structure the deep hegemonic assumptions underlying the debates that take place in the public sphere. On this issue there is widespread consent and active collaboration on the part of much of the mainstream activist left. American neo-pragmatist philosopher, Richard Rorty famously supported activists staying within the system and fought against what he saw as a "postmodernist" abandonment of the traditional political sphere (1999). Thus, in a Rawlsian formulation, public action must be articulated for the good of the nation to be considered a legitimate public act. The state's interest in supporting this type of dissent is clear. In this way, the state controls the deep structures of power and maintains sovereign and ethical authority no matter which way the political winds blow. It allows apparent political binaries of "left" and "right" to fill the public debates while concealing more radical possibilities. Bourdieu writes "one of the major powers of the state is to produce and impose (especially through the school system) categories of thought that we spontaneously apply to all things of the social world—including the state itself" (Bourdieu 1999, p. 53). Thus, so-called political dilemmas are often just false binaries within a narrow political vision. Should the state be first Jewish and then democratic, or first democratic and then Jewish? Should it provide limited public health care for the very poor and very old, or a public/private health insurance exchange with individual mandates? Should it refuse refugees on a case by case basis without an overarching policy, or ban them altogether?

Misplaced faith in the social contract

Few would argue that the idea of the social contract reflects ethnographic reality. Even, or perhaps especially, its central thinkers (Locke, Rousseau, Rawls) understood that the idea of the social contract was an historical and political fiction. People never came

together and gave up specific freedoms in return for certain protections from a sovereign. Furthermore, no one in the past or present has gone through a process of consent to the state system or the social contract. There is no opting out and for nearly everyone there is no choice regarding which polity/state to join. Yet, state-authorizing liberal subjects, both activists and even academics, often suspend disbelief to the point of belief.

We saw this in Michael's contentious interaction with the French artist. Not only was Michael held personally accountable for the actions of the state he was born in, but also his failure to relinquish his citizenship and move elsewhere was held against him. The situation is complicated by the fact that it is in fact legally possible to relinquish citizenship, and so this remains a seemingly valid option. But this path is unavailable to the vast majority and is even less realistic a possibility than the myth of social mobility that holds the poor responsible for their fate. Michael was judged under an assumption of consent until proven otherwise. Meanwhile, the artist implicitly evaluated himself as innocent by virtue of his French citizenship, which he implicitly claims is morally upright. I do not seek to render judgment on which state is worse or how one might begin to evaluate such a thing, but I do bring a critical eye as to what this might have to do with Michael and the artist as moral subjects. Here, we see the myth of the social contract embedded in even the most banal forms of nationalism, wherein people are credited or shamed by the political regime that controls the location of their birth.

The myth of the social contract persists as an operating principle on a global political scale. In the liberal political imagination, no citizen can be ethically neutral. States are judged as good or bad on variable criteria, among the most common are: human rights, civic freedoms, imperialism, exploitative capitalism, each of which cast states like the United States, Iran, Sweden, and Israel into global public judgment. What interests me here is not this process of judging states as ethically good or bad, but how this ethical judgment extends to citizens, that is, how citizens themselves become guilty, complicit, virtuous, or noble by virtue of their national belonging. This is not only an external valuation, but also one that citizens readily participate in when they describe pride and shame in their country and their citizenship, emotions that reflect personal ethical worth.

The guilt of a citizen in a controversial state is not indelible but rather only the default ethical condition. They may be redeemed through civic engagements that challenge the state policies (so long as they are legible and recognized as public). But as I point out above, opportunities to do this in a legible way are differentially available. In addition, the opportunities for redemption are circumscribed to a very narrow category—political acts against the state—and do not include a broader evaluation of investment or impact. As such, state-authorizing civic engagement signs on to the fiction of the social contract. It perpetrates the falsehood of metonymization and reproduces its social exclusions and slippages.

Interestingly only citizens of democratic states are personally held responsible in this way. The distinction is perfectly apparent in ordinary language: people who live "under" the rule of a dictator or authoritarian regime are not assumed to be in charge of their state's destiny or policy. This assumes that citizens of declared democracies are willing and consenting participants in their state's policies, as well as the idea that the democratic process works and reflects the will of the people, another social fiction. Elections and (sometimes) demonstrations are the forms of public participation that are available and considered legitimate, yet several anthropologists have expressed doubt at

the ability of democratic elections actually to manifest public opinion or desire. Carol Greenhouse notes "state power is not limited to outcomes that are produced electorally or through representation" (Greenhouse 2005, p. 360). Other studies have demonstrated the gaps and contradictions between the ideology of participatory democracy and the political outcomes the often fail to implement the popular will (Connors 2007; Paley 2004; Abrahamsen 2000; McQuarrie 2013). All of these undercut the expectation of collective ethical responsibility of liberal citizens as well as help to debunk the idea of a social contract as a political reality.

Implications for social theory

Clearly, this case challenges political philosophy in the liberal tradition that orients public action toward the state as described above. But in addition, this case contributes to the critique of the naturalization of the state as a default unit of analysis in the social sciences. Carol Greenhouse has noted the ways that, despite the professed value neutrality of the social sciences, states and state power were routinely and casually written into ethnographies, something she refers to as "tacit nationalism" (2011, pp. 47, 69, 115). Rogers Brubaker, Andreas Wimmer, and Nina Glick Schiller have also argued against the naturalization of the nation-state in the social sciences. Their objections are largely related to the disciplinary myopia caused by nation-state based models and the inadequacy of these models to capture properly the breadth of the social phenomenon they observe. Wimmer and Schiller claim that the naturalization of the state numbs social scientists to the enduring significance of nationalist forces and also causes them to fail to question routinely and systematically the foundational assumptions of their models, a tendency they refer to as "methodological nationalism" (2003). Brubaker finds that the tendency to assume that the nation-state is an immutable political form causes social scientists to misrecognize the variety of nationalistic forces at play and impedes their predictive abilities (1996). He suggests that often other concepts, un-bounded by state borders, such as "ethnocultural nationality"(1996, p. 81) or "popu-lism" (2017), would be categories of analysis more apt to the social realities. In contrast with these critiques, this case suggests that beyond the important question of precision, an orientation to the state as a naturalized and privileged site of analysis is also problematic because it methodologically replicates elitism and it stunts more promising political visions.

In addition to mentioning the above critique of the state itself as a default analytic category, I want to suggest further that some of the other organizing concepts used in the social sciences may also implicitly bear an orientation to the state as a naturalized and privileged site of analysis, and that this might be undesirable in light of the above discussion. Specifically, here, I want to draw attention to the concepts of "rights" and "citizenship," and the implications of treating these as normative models. Both rights and citizenship make implicit reference to the state, in the former case as arbiter and guarantor, and in the latter case as the organizing concept for civil society. I propose that the problems of state naturalization can be replicated even when the state itself is not explicitly invoked. This would imply that "methodological nationalism" is more insidiously entrenched in social science frameworks than previously suggested.

For example, recent critiques of extra-state forms of social justice have contrasted these paradigms negatively with state-backed "rights." Rights are used as an example of an assurance because of its appeal to the state, in comparison with the fickle and unstable nature of non-state regimes of social justice. For example Miriam Ticktin writes, "Rights entail a concept of justice, which includes standards of obligation and implies equality between individuals. Humanitarianism is about the exception rather than the rule, about generosity rather than entitlement" (2006, p. 45). When Erica Bornstein claims that philanthropy "does not offer any rights to its recipients who can make no claims on donors," she confuses legal, state-supplied claims with ethical claims more generally, which in fact, can exist without state backing (see Levinas 1979).

There is also often a rather unreflective faith in the capacity of citizenship, so long as it is equal, to provide a sufficient platform for justice. The influential work of Étienne Balibar argues explicitly in this vein (2015). There is significant work that implicitly encourages the cultivation of citizenship as a political orientation due to its emancipatory potential, perhaps most notably James Holston's *Insurgent Citizenship* (2009) and Will Kymlicka's work on multicultural citizenship (1994). Other scholarship assumes that citizenship is a universally applicable model of experience (Lazar and Nuitjen 2013), while this study suggests that it is more relevant to hegemonic citizens.

I do not claim that rights and citizenship are not legitimate categories of analysis; they remain relevant as long as they exist empirically. Nor am I suggesting that these categories should be subject to changes in definition. Although there are those who seek to think about citizenship beyond the borders of the state (Gordon and Stack 2007), I am skeptical about the analytic usefulness of this move. Rather, I suggest a denormalization of these concepts, carried out in such a way that they become impartial categories of analysis. This would mean that the role of the state in discourses of rights and citizenship not be taken for granted but rather acknowledged. Similarly, it would imply that the use of these categories be justified by the empirical case rather than taken as a default analytic model. In other words, in light of the problems I have highlighted in state-authorization, in order not to duplicate these problems in scholarship, studies should not move forward from the assumption that citizenship is the predominant or ideal form of identification of all. The scholarship of James Ferguson (2013) and Partha Chatterjee (2004, 2011) offer good examples of how scholarship on the state can derive from actual experience rather than a normative liberal model. We must study the state, but we should be careful not to let the state become a default or neutral category of analysis, even through its proxy discourses of rights and citizenship.

Conclusion

The modern liberal state does more than supply political rights and social welfare to its citizens. It also provides them with a framework for ethical judgment and intervention. Through the process of individual metonymization with the state project, there is a merging of both fates and moral worth. This causes individuals to feel morally responsible for the state's actions and also personally to experience ethical emotions (guilt, shame, pride) on behalf of the state. What I term state-authorizing citizenship can be understood as the process by which individuals are not only made accountable for their personal deeds as well as those of the state, and required to provide moral

justification for the state. This is a model of civic engagement that is oriented towards the state and state policy as the privileged and naturalized site of ethical intervention. I show that this hegemonic model stems from the co-emergence of moral autonomy and the modern state system. Furthermore, it is a keystone of modern liberal political theory. It is also the product of heavy state investment in modernization projects to create citizens with this orientation.

I raise a number of problems with this model of citizenship and civic engagement. The young people I worked with drew attention to the slippages in scale that make everyday sites of social investment seem insignificant. In addition, I raise the issue of elitism, wherein state-authorizing citizenship resonates more readily with the life experiences and political subjectivities of the elites, and thus excludes marginalized members of society from participation. In addition, I show how this model of civic engagement allows the state to determine and limit the terms of debates in the public sphere, as well as to maintain its naturalized relevance. Finally, I argue that this model of citizenship and civic engagement perpetuates the myth of the social contract as social fact. While the idea of the social contract was only ever meant to be political fiction, metonymizing citizenship allows this myth of consent to enter ethical life and allows people to be personally evaluated based on their citizenship. I suggest that academic work, while trying to be progressive and liberatory, may unwittingly replicate some of these negative characteristics when it treats state-oriented concepts like rights and citizenship as normative models as opposed to empirical situations.

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