The Objectivity-Subjectivity Debate and The Dilemma of Modern Citizenship: From the Modern to the Postmodern

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The concept of citizenship is, in contemporary times, a central theme in political theory. This has made the concept to be hailed as the most objective status that members of a particular socio-political sphere can experience. However, this paper argues that citizenship is today entraped in the problematic of subjectivity. The paper discovers that part of the basis for the contention is the declaration that we live in the postmodern age characterised by multiculturalism and the celebration of values and virtues of capitalism such as class politics, the explosion in the concept of rights, the rebirth of the hometown syndrome and the fact that human nature is still a subject of controversy. The paper concludes that the subjectivity that citizenship is enclosed in today might suggest the end of history.

Introduction
Without doubt, a significant portion of contemporary discourse in socio-political philosophy and political theory is dominated by intellectual exchanges on citizenship and the citizen. Interestingly, these discourses present a multi-focal approach to what is considered to be the important items of discussion on citizenship. In fact, today, there are analysis on the connection between citizenship and ethnicity (Oommen, 1997), citizenship and cosmopolitanism (Smith, 2007), nationalism, multiculturalism and citizenship (Kymlicka, 2001), citizenship, social justice and social work (Duffy, 2010), citizenship and democracy (Blatter, 2011) to mention just a few. To this end, one can say that the present world is engrossed with deep questions about citizenship and the citizen from the perspectives of both theory and practice.

There are, of course, valid grounds for this assertion: one, we live in the age of global democratization which places emphasis on the normative significance of the role and place of the people; two, citizenship itself is a democratic ideal a very sustaining factor in the institutionalization of the requirements for democratic processes success; three, globalization is a current phenomenon linking people all over the world, a fact which makes citizenship an important part of globalization. Apart from these grounds, the world is ingrained in talks about citizenship because of the important stake it bears on the notion of identity. Indeed, citizenship speaks, quite eloquently, on what it means for members of a particular political commune to have a sense of identity, that is, a national identity (Oommen, 1997b). The implication is that, apart from notions of religion, ethnicity, class, race, sexism etc., citizenship affords an opportunity to reiterate what the concept of identity is. In a particular political society, to be a citizen is to carry a unique sense of identity in/of that particular society. Significantly, therefore, citizenship is about the most important identity index that bears a universal resemblance and image.

This gives the added impression that we live in the age and the era of citizenship. This picture is true of both advanced parts of the globe as well as the underdeveloped ones. Even societies in the world that are not advanced economically and technologically are all striving towards fulfilling and attaining the standard
requirements of citizenship. Even more interesting is that, today still, citizenship is applied not only to human beings alone but as well to plants, animals and even multinational corporations (Martiniello, 2002:115). Indeed, we have to agree with Marco Martiniello that citizenship has become a political slogan (p. 115). This, perhaps, is one of the reasons why some political theorists and philosophers contend that citizenship has become the buzz word in socio-political debates (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994). The justification consist in the view that citizenship seems to be the most important word that gives enough vitality and intellectual life to some other important concepts in political philosophy such as rights, justice, equality, liberty, freedom. Moreover, the popularity that the modern state seems to be enjoying cannot be adequately qualified and quantified without recourse to the nagging demands and requirements of citizenship in such states. Thus, at the centre stage of modern political and philosophical debates are questions concerning the concept, the significance, the source and origin and the limits of citizenship. Admittedly, any discourse on the idea of citizenship is not only timely but, also, a justified piece. Despite this avid interest and the significance attached to citizenship in the current epistemology and ontology of thoughts and things in the world, theoretical constructions and empirical instances concerning citizenship both point to the fact that citizenship no longer retains the level and sense of objectivity that all along characterized it, especially considering its historical evolution. It appears that the world is desperately and despicably subjective and that this subjectivity has a devastating and debilitating impact on the nature and functioning of the objective surface, state, status and similitude that was encoded, institutionally, into the idea of citizenship.

Will Kymlicka’s publication of the Multicultural Citizenship (1996) presents a seminal attempt at understanding the modern dilemma that citizenship seems to be engrossed in. From this multicultural perspective, subjectivity has become a recurrent, lasting and permanent attribute of contemporary political epistemology. The codified essence that was said to characterize the world seems to have been taken over by a protracted dismembering of the world into bits of difference. This dislimbering scenario makes it impossible to push an argument of objective status in favour of citizenship. In actual fact, the present political reality beggars the belief that citizenship is an instrument for furthering diversity, subjectivity and primordialism. The question is what are the reasons why citizenship, in this age, is conceived more in relation to subjectivity than objectivity? This article is an attempt to offer valid and cogent reasons. To accomplish this goal, the paper shall attempt a careful but brief survey of the history of citizenship particularly within the context of the objectivity-subjectivity debate in political theory. This will be followed by a critical discussion of the rationale behind the subjective phases and faces that citizenship seems to be presenting. The last aspect will form the conclusion of the work.

Citizenship and the Objectivity-Subjectivity Debate

From the outset, it is wisdom to agree with Bryan Turner (1990) that the history of citizenship has been essentially dynamic and never static. Theoretically, when the idea of citizenship was first muted, it was seen as a promising spectacle through which the ideals of political objectivity could and was to be realized. From this perspective, citizenship was defined in terms of the existence of objective standards for measuring public performances, political rights and political astuteness. This is because concepts long associated with politics such as freedom, representation, participation, responsiveness, responsibility, public probity, efficiency etc. were all tied to the rarefied status of citizenship. Hannah Arendt (1977: 153) tags citizenship as a symbol of excellence opened up by participation in the polis. It was not surprising that, in its early days, subjective considerations such as one’s tribe, ethnic affiliation, and religious commitments were not conceptually important in relation to citizenship. Even where they existed, their existence was minimally insignificant in defining what the true contour of citizenship was.

The broadness of Aristotle’s mind not only made him to offer a painstaking analysis on citizenship but also guided him to regard citizenship as the most important attainment and status for the polity. Unlike Plato who ignored the idea of citizenship in his political philosophy, on account of his preference for philosopher-king, Aristotle transcended this obvious defect in Plato’s philosophy by placing citizenship as the central subject matter of politics. In a sense, for Aristotle, citizenship
places spectacular focus on man not only as a political animal but also as a rational animal. Interestingly, this picture of citizenship carved and created by Aristotle showcases the connection between citizenship, human nature and equality. Indeed, from this analysis, it means that citizenship is about celebrating the equality of all humans.

Additively, sharing in the public space was also part of what citizenship entailed during the Greek-City state during the time of Aristotle. These two qualities or elements translated into the ideal of political objectivity. Equality makes the public space or realm a common property with all the responsibilities. Thus, what makes sense in the public space is citizenship and nothing else. This created enough room for objectivity to grow and be groomed in the public realm. This objectivity was tied to citizenship. Under this model, citizenship was not rightcentric but duty-centric. Aristotle never considered rights but duties and responsibilities as the ideal basis for Greek citizenship. In fact, as reported by Turner (1990: 202), unlike the Cynics and Epicureans who advocated and legitimised individual autonomy as the acme of citizenship, Aristotle, on his part, devoted attention to the idea of collective virtues. This received support in the views of Marcus Aurelius who hinted that citizenship meant membership in a common political community on the basis of the fact that human beings qua humans have a common rational faculty (Sabine, 1963: 174).

Medievalism was not sympathetic to citizenship inasmuch as it emphasized little of the public space and the collectivism it accommodated was defined essentially as a religious dogma. Man’s nature was construed using irrational spectacles and concepts. This was inimical to development and progress and thus veered away from the frontiers of objectivity. Citizenship of the world was a thing of scorn in medieval thoughts. Being a good citizen was different from being moral and living the good life. The good life was more exciting than being a good citizen. Again, political objectivity was wrapped around the good life not citizenship. In fact, citizenship was not a basis for the good life and thus could not be a focus for the exercise and exemplification of political objectivity. Thus, the aspiration in medieval thought was how to live the good life not how to become a good citizen. Admittedly, citizenship suffered its place in the enthronement of political objectivity. It was the installation of the modern age that corrected these anomalies in medieval thoughts about citizenship.

With the commencement of the modern age, particularly with its emphasis on universalism, de-contextualization, essentialism, foundationalism, it was thought that political subjectivity could pose no threat for, in relation to citizenship, political subjectivity was not only in abeyance but was moribund. Two periods in the modern age are significant: the renaissance and the enlightenment. But the enlightenment was closer to modernity than the renaissance even though the idea and ideal of man was the major discovery of the renaissance. During the period of Western Enlightenment, for instance, one of the aims and goals of the movement was the postulation that all humans are citizens of the same world. Admittedly, citizenship was, by all standards, very important to the thinkers of that movement. In fact, enlightenment thinkers contended that all humans are citizens of the world whose citizenship is not limited by or subject to national boundaries. The idea was that man is man everywhere.

Modernism, with its important agent being science, was not interested in the celebration of subjectivism but in objectivity. What was true of modern philosophy became associated with modern politics. Citizenship, in a significant sense, shared part of that modern ideal; modern idea of citizenship was enraptured in the idea and ideals of rationality, virtue; the modern citizen is one without any attachment with kinship ties. This explains the commencement of political objectivity with citizenship taken as the acme of what objectivity in political affiliations and exchanges can be. As a matter of fact, what explains the ruling and noble principle of citizenship in relation to political objectivity is Synoecism. For Synoecism, citizenship connotes and embodies a sense of spatial and political unification trailing and trading on principles such as fraternity, equality, liberty, expressing a unified and harmonious polity. Citizenship is a universal status; the citizen is a universal being without tribal loyalties. Such contingent factors are disruptive of universal citizenship. From the perspective of synoecism, citizenship is, etymologically, cast in the language of unification and universalism. Citizenship, given its original moorings, is odious to spatial limitations and geographical definitions. Citizenship endorses in the citizen intellectual autonomy, political freedom and the ability to think independently of spatial attachments.
The citizen is one whose thinking and cognitive abilities transcend undue attachments to existing authorities, and by extension, local and contingent identities - the Church, religious authorities, the state, and primordial attachments. Indeed, citizenship is a celebration of political objectivity epitomized in and taken to its nth degree in the exercise of the power of human reason.

The bedrock of modern sociological analysis on citizenship with fantastic implication on the objectivity-subjectivity debate was the analysis offered by T. H. Marshall, the English sociologist, political theorist and philosopher. In the first instance, it was T. H. Marshall that offered a brilliant definition of citizenship. This is apart from the other conceptual apparatus adopted in clarifying what citizenship entails. In his words,

"Citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed. There is no universal principle that determines what those rights and duties shall be, but societies in which citizenship is a developing institution create an image of an ideal citizenship against which achievement can be measured and towards which aspiration can be directed (1949: 74)."

From the above, it means citizenship carries a sense of 'fullness' for those who are accorded that status. Thus, there is something fulfilling and filling about citizenship in a way that shows that there is no spatial leftovers for someone accorded the right of being a citizen. Again, just in line with the analysis so far, citizenship also creates equality for those bestowed or endowed with the status. The equality it gives is of course defined in line with rights and duties which is one of the reasons why Marshall’s conception of citizenship is said to be rightcentric. But more than this, citizenship also creates an image of the ideal through which what holds in reality can be ascertained. From these, it is observed that citizenship has severe implications in modifying the tenor and template of the political system in which, as an institution, it operates. Marshall’s division of the institution of citizenship into three - political, civil, and social - shows the great influence that citizenship has over existing political systems. That is why most societies in which the institution of citizenship exists is always and most often seen as a standard for the assessment of the political space in question.

It is in this sense that citizenship is seen, also, as an objective basis for evaluating the nature of politics in such realm. As a matter of fact, in Marshall’s analysis, the beauty of citizenship consists in the fact that it is an institution on its own with a very high possibility in acting as a practical basis for measuring progress, achievement and aspiration within that society. It is from Marshall’s analysis that one gets the idea that the rise of citizenship coincided with the rise of capitalism in Europe without citizenship losing its insightful focus and grip on the salience of equality as a sacred principle. The impression is that citizenship cannot be divorced from equality which is its objective parameter and ruling principle. In other words, it follows that citizenship is one of the means by which political objectivity is promoted and exercised in societies of the world.

As a politically objective status, citizenship is all-encompassing in the sense that it has no regard for a particularistic or partial definition of membership in a given society where it is installed. It transcends some of the limited conception often utilized in making claims and counter-claims about entitlements in societies. As a matter of fact, citizenship sponsors an identity image that transcends myopia embedded in the culture of segregationism and promotes aggregative idealism thus making citizenship one of the most objective clues to the formation of what is tagged national identity in a society. This is in line with the history of citizenship especially western history. The invention of citizenship leaves us with the impression that the corrosive elements in diversity had to be curtailed and corrected in order to enhance social equilibrium by a status that everyone had a right to irrespective of the partial and state-threatened identity that might have been in place.

This is why the space for citizenship encounter and participation in the Greek City-State, according to Bryan Turner (1990: 201), was a realm where what transpired was nothing but the free exercise of rationality, freedom and collectivism. The same holds for the modern conception of citizenship. That is why the image of the city is crucial and significant for what is meant by citizenship for, without the city, citizenship
cannot be defined and the definition of citizenship in the light of the city speaks volume about the sense of objectivity that is thought to be associated with citizenship. According to J. J. Rousseau, “houses make a town but citizens make a city” (1973: 175). Admittedly, the city image becomes synonymous not with size or location but a metaphor for conveying what the essence and the form which the city carries. That is why H. Arkes (1981: 3) contended that, “when the city is valued, it is valued as the theatre of diversity, the centre of a cosmopolitan culture, the breeding ground of freedom and tolerance.”

However, despite this elevated conception of citizenship, drawing from modernism and synoecism, citizenship is today encoded in sets of dilemma which has rendered it clustered in political subjectivity which has a corrosive effect on its objectivity. This only proves that the objective status often attributed to citizenship is an artificial one. With artificiality in place, it is actually impossible to erect and construct a picture of political objectivism concerning citizenship. The implication is that the objectivism construed and constructed by Descartes and other modern philosophers after him no longer makes an appeal in the world again. The success of objectivism within the context of modernism was then a possibility given the sway and swoon of science. The search for objective truth was propelled by the ability ingrained in science’s quest and determination to distil that which was certain and tangible from that which was intangible and therefore not real.

Thus, reality and certainty became defined along the line of what was verifiable empirically. Thus, to be certain and real was constituted in what can be seen and experienced in a way that was determinable through the method of science. The definition of objectivity was cast in this light. It was this compelling thought and reason that led modern philosophers who were themselves scientists to conclude that there was something real out there and whose possibility can only be determined through the instruments adopted and utilized by science. This was what both philosophers and scientists of the age regarded as objective truth: a truth that is universally true and not limited by context. But this definition of political objectivism was not bound to last. Pityingly, citizenship, on account of the age of subjectivism lost its central elements which were the idea of rationality and universality. It is in this sense that citizenship no longer entails the status of objectivity that it once had and that was characteristic of it. Drawing from the biblical parable, citizenship, once known to be wheat like, is now ensnared among tares. There are several reasons for this and the rest of the paper is devoted to the articulation of the reasons in support of the contention.

Citizenship, the Postmodern Condition, and the Regime of Subjectivity

Theoretically, the precursor to the intensification of political subjectivity in most societies can be traced back to the emergence of postmodern thoughts in politics and philosophy. The postmodern condition is defined using the language of subjectivism or, properly stated, relativism. The postmodern postulation, the emphatic reiteration of subjectivism and relativism, had its origin, first, in ancient philosophy, in the assertion of Xenophanes and the dictum of the Sophists and, secondly, from the thoughts of Friedrich Nietzsche, the German Existentialist. Anaxagoras contended that no one has absolute knowledge but by seeking, that is through research and by findings, one gets to know better and better. The Sophist, on their part, contended that absolute knowledge was impossible and non-existent. Precisely, Protagoras claimed that no opinion is truer but one opinion may be better than another. Truth and knowledge, from this angle, cannot be absolute. Friedrich Nietzsche opined that there is nothing like universal Truth but that truth is a subjective construction. This position can be declared as one of the fantastic peculiarities of continental philosophy of which postmodernism is an obvious representation.

Postmodernism challenges the modernist view that events, ideas and knowledge in the universe must be looked at from the perspective of a universal truth obtainable somewhere in the world and which serves as the litmus test of the nature of truth. It is thus the rejection of the project of modernism that began with the Cartesian quest and search for a single absolute truth. As reiterated by Solomon and Higgins (1996: 300), postmodernists such as Jean Francois Lyotard and Richard Rorty, claim there no longer exists Philosophy with a capital P. There are only philosophies. There is no longer Truth, only discourses. There is no centre, only rapidly expanding margins. The implication is that, for postmodernists, legitimation of first-order situations is to be grounded in plural, local
universal notions of justice, law, democracy, and citizenship no longer exist but multiplicities of justice, jurisprudence, democracy and citizenship. According to Fraser and Nicholson, (1997: 135) Lyotard’s project can be seen as “the offering of a normative vision in which the good society consists in a decentralised plurality of democratic, self-managing groups and institutions whose members problematise the norms of their practice and take responsibility for modifying them as situations require.”

In consequence, postmodernism sponsors and celebrates the project of fragmentation in the world. This means a fragmentation of cultures, of meaning, of politics and political concepts, of ethics and moral truths, of the idea of justice. In this sense, postmodernist politics elicit and accommodate the idea of splintered political ideals. In concrete terms, pluralism is the major and lasting characteristic of the world and of political realities. The overall effect is the success in projecting and developing a new paradigm in the understanding of politics and political concepts such as citizenship. It takes the notion of politics and citizenship in each society away from its foundationalist structures built on the idea of universality to its contingent, partial and plurally situated character, thereby making room available for what was conceived hitherto in an exclusionary manner. The gain therefore is the exposure of groups to a sense of meaning and belonging.

From the above, the implication of postmodernism on citizenship can be seen in a number of ways. In the first instance, since the notion of a unified citizenship has been demystified, then, it presents the notion of fragmentation in the understanding and conception of citizenship. To this end, it transcends the thesis of synoecism that presents citizenship in a politically unified and holistic sense. Roughly, postmodernism posits the existence of locally, plurally and subjectively defined idea of citizenship. Moreover, postmodernism de-emphasizes abstract universality in the definition of citizenship creating room, globally, for hitherto excluded groups. This, inevitably, is the precursor to cultural citizenship unlike what modernism presented before now.

Cultural citizenship, as provided for by postmodernism, presents new conditions by which citizenship criteria are to be defined. On the basis of cultural citizenship, access to rights are played on cultural tunes. This is one of the bases of postmodern contention that meta-narratives of a historical sort which lay claims to abstraction and universality are completely out of tune with the way the universe is. The universe is a constructed piece and reality within it is also constructed not naturally given. All realities are human constructions including citizenship. Indeed, it contends quite admirably that a major feature of the universe is difference, relative difference and subjective difference. Based on this, objectivism is a myth; objective citizenship is equally a myth. It is no wonder that, on account of postmodernism, wars and conflicts having their root in ethno-nationalism became, in a sense, justified. The summary is that “difference” is a significant phenomenon in explaining social reality thus giving legitimacy to the idea of political subjectivity.

Citizenship and the Rebirth of the Hometown Syndrome

Closely related to the above is the potential influence of the hometown syndrome and its telling effect on contemporary citizenship. The hometown concept is to be distinguished from place of birth. In proverbial terms, the Yoruba people of south-western Nigeria having a saying that odo kii san ko gbagbe orisun meaning that “a river does not flow so far that it forgets its source”. The idea also receives popular corroboration in the famous expression that “every people that does not want to lose its identity must link up with its past” (Ruch and Anyanwu, 1984: 13). In these senses, therefore, there is a close and very cordial link between one’s hometown and one’s identity. In actual fact, it is believed that one’s hometown and the cultural feelings, values and the several instances of symbolic, spiritual, mental and physical emotions attached to it accounts for the identity that a man carries with him everywhere he finds himself.

According to Bryan Turner, the hometown concept creates an attitude of irony especially when discussed in relation to contemporary citizenship. The irony comes to place when an individual has to distance herself from her local or regional interests to serve the interests of the global or the national interests. This irony creates a picture of pretence or suspension of feelings in my own estimation. From this reading, it shows that the hometown principles trade tackles with the principle underlying cosmopolitanism. According to Turner, cosmopolitanism gives preferences to national interest and fails to imbibe ‘a careful
engagement with cultural issues such as the protection of so-called primitive cultures and aboriginal communities which are clearly threatened by the globalization of culture’ (2002: 59). Again, this kind of ironic attitude teaches one to ‘distance’ oneself from one’s homeland and way of life, adopting a skeptical attitude towards ‘grand narratives’, and accepting the provisional nature of our ‘final vocabularies’ (Turner, 2002: 58–9; Rorty, 1989: 73).

But, how many people have the capacity to imbibe this cosmopolitan requirement is a major question of political sociology. What is implied is that the hometown creates an ironic citizen who, on one hand, has deep attachment to her place or hometown and, who, on the other hand, adopts a self-reflexive in her dealings with those who are not members of her hometown, who are strangers and members of other cultures (Turner, 2002: 58). The ironic feeling is created just because the attachment to one’s culture is already in place. According to Turner, the ‘irony may only be possible when one already has an emotional commitment to place’ (Turner, 2002: 55).

Evidently, from the perspective of the hometown concept, African political practices lack the cosmopolitan virtue and has succeeded in creating the ironic citizen whose commitments to the hometown has downplayed the self-reflexive attitude that citizens, on account of cosmopolitan virtue, are expected to possess. The problem associated with the hometown concept, particularly in the context of citizenship, can be buttressed in election matters. In 1993, for instance, after the annulment of the Presidential Election in Nigeria reported to have been won by Chief Moshood Kasimawo Abiola, by the military regime of General Badamosi Babangida, the crisis that engulfed the Nigerian State evoked a clear understanding of the problematic of the hometown concept. The episodic recrudescence of the hometown problem can be validated and corroborated in the following observation by Africa Watch. According to the report,

The tragedy of the present crisis is that Nigerian citizens, who in the election seemed to have overcome a legacy of ethnic conflict by crossing ethnic and regional barriers to vote for Mr. Abiola have been forced once again to narrow their sights and put their ethnic identities first, rather than their citizenship as Nigerians...(1993:6).

The other part of the annulment which opened the way for the re-birth of the hometown syndrome in Nigerian politics had to do with the mass movements of Nigerians from their place of domicile to their hometown. Again, The Guardian captures this succinctly in its report:

...in the past few weeks, tens of thousands of Nigerians have fled the cities for their home villages, fearing the outbreak of widespread ethnic violence. Southern rage has been ignited, and anti-Hausa sentiments are increasingly given void. In the north, Hausa who supported Mr. Abiola have been stung by the recent anti-Hausa backlash and are withdrawing back into their ethnic and regional identities (1993:5).

General Obasanjo seems to picture better the ills and the depth of the problem that this attitude has always generated for the average Nigerian. For him, this attitude lies critically at the heart of the survival of Nigeria as a collective entity. In his words:

Our recent experience of mass migration because of the clowning of some of our political leaders is indicative of the depth of the problem.... It is rather unfortunate that after 33 years of our corporate existence as a nation, our national psyche is still easily affected by the hue and cry of disintegrationists. Worse still, the recent mass migration is also reminiscent of our sad experience in the late 60’s (1993:3).

But more than this timely observation, Obasanjo’s analysis seems to picture, better, the larger ills prevalent in the continued entrenchment of this kind of psyche. According to him, the idea of mass migration not only
shows that the hometown is a relative sphere of security for most Nigerians but that, on the other hand, it projects a feeling of alienation for some others. After residing for 20 years in another state that is not ethnically one’s state of origin, a Nigerian still experiences feelings of being alienated even though she had contributed significantly and meaningfully to the growth and development of the place economically, politically and socially. One of the fallouts of the politics of hometown, apart from the problematic of alienation, is the view that a Nigerian citizen cannot contest for an election in another state. A citizen should be free to contest elections or hold responsible positions in any area he lives. Summarily, Obasanjo retorted that:

_The nature/settler’s question cannot be reduced to just the issue of proprietary over land... the dimensions involve political right, developing and deliberate cultivation of a sense of belonging and the creation of a wholesome and enabling environment that would empower all Nigerians to actualize their potentiality wherever they may reside_ (1993:1).

No doubt, one of the indices of Nigerian social life that continues to have an effect on citizenship and its right in Nigeria is the projection of overall identity, in the first and primary sense, in the light of hometown appendage, the primordial background and linkage to the ethnic root. But this trend has a logic in the history of the Nigerian State. Aside from the fact that the Nigerian idea or identity is fast becoming evanescent, it is factual that the Nigerian identity has not been able to meet any specific need or circumstance of major importance. Hence, the recourse to hometown as a basis for identity claims and projections. This explains why Jagun protested on the needlessness of Nigerian citizenship. In his words:

_I am asked to love Nigeria, to want Nigeria, to perforce remain Nigeria. What would be my gain if I so remain, I could not fathom. For if I so do, I shall forever lose the surest thing I could hold unto, my heritage, the one my community gave me. And yet I shall get nothing in return from Nigeria. Nothing except shattered hopes, battered dreams, nothing except a citizenship derided, defied and defiled, is this Nigeria to me?_

### Conflicting Theoretical Perspectives on Citizenship

Theories of citizenship are multiple. Different scholars point out different ideas as the main distinguishing elements and meanings of citizenship. In the same vein, the acceptance of certain ideological world view provides fresh insights into one of the reasons why there are conflicting opinions concerning what citizenship is. This is no wonder why Barbalet (1988) contended that there is no acceptable theory of citizenship that is comprehensively accepted to the academic community. It follows that the sense of predictability that is ingrained in theory construction appears absent when it comes to understanding citizenship from a global perspective. In the end, what this shows is that citizenship is, from these hordes of conflicting theories, centrally subjective and nothing more. The literature on citizenship is replete with different and sometimes irreconcilable theories of citizenship. Interestingly, these theories are products of contemporary reflections on the meaning, limit and the significance of citizenship.

For example, liberals contend that the foundation of citizenship is constituted in civil rights and that this foundation is supplied through an evolutionary process which generates both political and social rights as accompanying rights in the sustenance of equality within the society (Gauba, 2003: 274). This position was clearly articulated in T. H. Marshall’s seminal paper _Citizenship and Social Class_ (1949) where he defended the view that citizenship is antagonistic to capitalist society where class is the ruling principle. This liberal theory has been criticized for its sweeping and unjustified defence of individualism (Sandel, 1982; Taylor, 1994), exaggerated optimism about equality in society and for prescribing a picture of citizenship that is unrealistic and untrue empirically (Miller, 2000:4; Gallie, 1983:225; Giddens, 1982.). On their part, libertarians argue that citizenship is a product of free will and choice and the basis of that choice is a social contract among individuals. This theory is most
commonly associated with Robert Nozick (1974) who argued that the contract that produces bonds of citizenship is concocted on the basis of rationality. The bane of this theory is that it is too individualistic in the sense that it sees citizenship as existing without any sense of solidarity or commonality.

Communitarians see citizenship as meaningless outside the community and the state. It resents the libertarian view as too individualistic believing that citizenship is all about a-coming-together. Citizenship is all about occupying the public space and participation is the key word. It follows that communitarians reject passivism and claims that citizenship is not a private affair. Some contemporary political philosophers such as Hannah Arendt (1958), Michael Walzer (1983) and Benjamin Barber (1984) are clear exponents of this theory. Citizenship is equally about projecting and protecting the public, communal sphere. Common interest or the common good and its enforcement are the basis of this theory of citizenship. Apparently, Jean Jacques Rousseau’s political philosophy is inspirational to this theory. This theory, however, overlooks the fact that most communities in the world today are so complex that the diversities presented, that are meant to be merits in themselves are, today, the major threats to integration. Citizenship has been affected by these complexities that communitarians have not accounted for.

In a different style, Marx and Marxism develop a theory of citizenship and rights that centres on class stratification of society. For Marxist, rights accruing from citizenship are acquired as a result of victory in a conflict. The conflict is always between the dominant class and the dominated class. Marx’s analysis of citizenship draws from a critique of the capitalist system that is seen as evil, immoral and unjust. Unless and until capitalism is completely destroyed, citizenship remains undervalued. However, Marx’s analysis is based on the condition of capitalism in the nineteenth century, a condition that has improved. Besides, Marx’s analysis is too steeped in economic reductionism and determinism as if every important aspect of societies are determined only by economics. Even the theory of human nature on which Marxism is based is ridiculously lopsided. Marxism does not give heed to the possibility of complexities of societies and the effect that diversities have on societies and citizenship. This possibility was what gave fresh impetus to the pluralists’ theory of citizenship that citizenship envelopes a family of forms and that it is multidimensional in nature (Held, 1994). The pluralists’ theory furthers the hope of citizenship on one hand and provides a basis for critique of traditional theories on the other hand. Feminist represents one of the plural interests in society. Its critique of traditional notions of citizenship as phallocentric shows the inherent limitation imbued into the idea both theoretically and in terms of its historical evolution. It is true that citizenship research and ideas represent a growing institution but the critique of this growth and conception, from the perspective of feminism and what Antonio Gramsci calls the voice of the subaltern, reveals that, citizenship, both in terms of content and context, has been subjectively defined. This negates the objective status that has been historically ascribed to the institution.

Undecidability of Human Nature.
From a very modest and humble perspective, the idea of citizenship is one of the central means of projecting the worth of man in political societies. In this case, citizenship is about man and his dignity understood from the generic sense. When states construe and construct the idea of citizenship, historically, it is an attempt to titivate man, in society, with the respect that is due to man. In other words, it is an attempt to isolate and bring to fore the salient attributes that man seems to have that makes her/him the crown of the universe. But, then, unfortunately there is an aura of undecidability concerning what human nature is. The question is what is man? If citizenship is about man, then the question is what is it about man that citizenship is out to defend, extol and protect? In other words, if citizenship is about membership in a state, what constitute membership in the real sense? Are there universal principles about and concerning human nature on which citizenship applies generally?

Going by the literature, there are no uniform positions on what constitute human nature. Man has been and is still viewed from different perspective. If citizenship is about man, and there are no uniform claims on the nature of man, it follows that there may not be uniform ideas about citizenship. The implication is that citizenship cannot be perceived in objective and universal sense without appeal to contexts and circumstances. From antiquity to modern times, man has not been viewed in the same way. It follows that
man's position on himself is not objective but from a subjective point of view. Subjectivism is therefore the major rubric on which man not only views his own nature but also every other entity in the world. The human mind is, perhaps, home to subjectivism. It equally follows that, as long as man is the subject, it is actually difficult for man to present an objective view about what the human mind perceives and entertains. This observation is deemed historically true when a survey is made about man's perceptions, conclusions and rational judgments concerning concepts such as knowledge, law, truth, and justice to cite few examples. In fact, these concepts are controversially held such that there is still no unanimity on what they mean and their objective nature. The same fate seems to inundate and enervate whatever conceptual reports scholars seem to have on the idea of citizenship. In other words, citizenship is found entangled in the negativity of subjectivism. At least, contemporary conditions about citizenship stipulate that what surrounds and pervades the air of citizenship is nothing but conceptions that are steeped in conditions of subjectivism. As a matter of fact, the citizen in whatever state and society is still and remains the subject and not the object.

Plato thought that man's nature is inherently rationalistic; man is a thinker who is capable of reasoning. For Plato, this is the highest feature and attribute of man. The other side of Plato's view, however, is that not all men have this capacity. According to Judeo-Christian perspective, knowledge and love are the greatest qualities of human nature in line with the attributes of God in whose image man is made. Of course, this view says man is more than a mere physical entity having a soul and spirit that are indestructible. Darwin challenged this view positing that man is a material being. The same view was shared by Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud: man is a creative and social being whose consciousness of what exists are formed and influenced by social forces; Freud postulates that man is made of three levels of consciousness, the id, the ego and the superego. Feminist have challenged these views contending that they are essentially phallocentric and masculine. Emotions are basic qualities that man possesses which makes him a sentient being. All these portray that what man is has been conceived in different ways. For citizenship, which of these views actually reiterate what citizenship stands for as an objective truth or fact?

The Contested Terrain of Equality
In a very non-productive manner, citizenship is essentially tied to equality. From Marshall’s analysis, the beauty of citizenship lies in the fact that it alone is what in political society connects those that are members to the virtue and value of equality. Substantively, citizenship shares the same political and jurisprudential space and place with equality. Those who are regarded as citizens are said to be equals with respect to rights, duties, respect, dignity, virtue and means of livelihood. There is, of course, a very wide spectrum of contents that are said to be available in understanding the principle of equality which translates to the fact that access to citizenship qualities in terms of equality covers a very wide range of benefits. Equality is not a limited concept nor is it a restricted idea. It has been hailed as the most objective status for people living in civil society; it signals togetherness, unification, integrative ideals and cohesion. The most important and objective attributes of citizens consist in the fact that they are all equal with respect to what is termed basic rights, benefits and privileges. As stated by Kincaid (1973:171), one of the things that citizenship does is to enhance and empower those who are accorded the status of citizens and removes the inability on their part to control the circumstances of one's life in the face of more powerful groups in society. This is no different from what Marshall (1949:87) had said earlier that, as a sociological concept, citizenship refers to the rights and lifestyles embodied in the cultural understandings and normative obligations that define full membership in a society.

This extolling virtue about citizenship notwithstanding, the question, however, is where, in the world, is equality? If citizenship is about equality, and its objectivity is said to be concocted and connoted in equality, how objective is the statement that there is equality in relation to citizenship? The further question is what sense of equality does citizenship carry? Is equality itself objective or just one of the illusions of society among many illusions? These are neither mere semantics nor senseless appeal to the adventure of grammar; indeed, they state one of the most amazing and troubling aspect of life whether indeed there is any sense in claiming that all humans are equal.

If as a general dictum, then it is not worthy of attention since it convey nothing but illusions. But, if in a restricted
sense, then, that sense must be spelt out clearly. When all citizens are said to be equal, in what and to what are they equal? Are social, political and economic inequality not obvious and a prevailing condition of our world? Equality is not an objective truth; what is empirically and objectively true about the universe is gross inequality from one end to the other. In the same vein, citizenship and equality are never to be regarded as an objective fact. Reflectively, the fact that citizenship strives to institutionalize the culture of equality shows that equality is, indeed, a difficult attainment. This is different from whether citizenship actually achieves the goal of making members of a given society equal or not. Of course, as an empirical fact, it is not out of place to state that equality is still far from being realizable. This is why Idowu (2011: 156) commented that: “

while the pursuit of equality is a desirable one, history tends to show that the state of absolute equality is unachievable as long as human nature remains what it is. The strive toward equality has been there since the beginning of human existence, but equality seems doomed to remain elusive and encoded in forlornness.

The history of debates over the meaning of equality is a very long one and very interesting too. In most discussions concerning equality, scholars have devoted attention on several concepts and notions such as proportionate equality, legal equality, political equality, equality of opportunity, social equality, equality of outcome or result or equality of conditions. In all these, the arguments for equality have not been strong enough to vitiate the lingering inequalities in the world. If inequality is the natural order of the world, the question is whether human effort can actually wipe out inequality when the inequality is inherent in human nature itself. David Hume once described this attempt at equalizing society in the face of disparity as the tendency towards the endorsement of the philosophy of poverty, a philosophy which overlooks the fact that the reservoir of skills, talents and potentials within humans are not the same. For him, these disparities in human endowments cannot be overridden by the recourse or sloganeered campaign towards equality. From these it shows that equality is subject to many interpretations, conceptions and definitions. It all boils down to the idea that there is nothing objective about equality notions and the same subjectivism that inundates equality seem to affect citizenship too. It appears that the reality of objectivism is far removed from the reality that surrounds both equality and citizenship.

The Global Expansion in/Explosion of the Concept of Rights

Citizenship is tied very intricately to right such that to talk of citizenship is to talk of rights. However, today, rights concepts are shifting away from citizenship to other considerations within political society. The explosion in and expansion of the boundaries of and parameters for rights is threatening on citizenship inasmuch as it removes the context for rights requirements away from its avid connection with citizenship. Initially, right conceptualization was restricted to the idea of human rights, the right that every human being is entitled to regardless of colour, race, gender, economic status etc. But, today, there are a number of indices for rights which makes its conceptualization, though not static, but without its stronghold enmeshed in citizenship. In fact, today still, citizenship rights are just one of the innumerable considerations of rights. There are many ideas about what kind of rights should exist, why they should and when they should be guaranteed.

In all these, the aura of significance that citizenship used to bear in relation to right is tending towards a limited sphere of significance. As a matter of fact, the popularity that right concept enjoys globally is more in tune with human rights rather than citizenship right. This is because human rights are inalienable and, so, regardless of the existence of political communities. Human right does not even require the existence of states before they make sense although where there is a state such rights are better guaranteed. But, then, human rights do not need citizenship to make sense. Thus, the right that citizenship gives and accords is restricted while human right is not. A person can be in a state without being a citizen, that is, without certain rights within that community but the political community concerned must and should enforce the human right that such persons are entitled to. From a more global
perspective, citizenship rights are more discriminatory than human rights which mean they are not as objective and universal as was initially supposed. It, therefore, follows that, from the perspective of right, citizenship presents a restricted conception of rights. Furthermore, the mere fact that there are expansions and explosions in right theory shows that citizenship is not the only basis for the demands for rights. This has a corrosive effect on the so-called view that citizenship creates and endorses a universal experience. What it means is that the boundary of importance accorded to citizenship is limited and only relevant only in the light of certain context and not all contexts.

The Advancing Threat of Capitalism and Class Politics

Of what significance is citizenship rights and privileges where most societies are still class divided and class dominated? Of what benefits are rights where most people in some advanced countries and in most Third World countries are class conscious, where there is class division and where there is class segregation? The fact that most societies operate on the basis of class consciousness has a telling effect on the objective nature ascribed to citizenship. Some theories of the nature of societies provide some details on the fact that class is discernible in all societies and that policies are made by these class. The fact that policies are made by these class reduces, in a sense, the potency ascribed to the status of citizenship. Also, the so-called equality that citizenship is known for becomes a thing of nought just because it is true that class segregation encroaches on the so-called equal status accorded to citizens. Although Marshall argued that citizenship promotes equality in a capitalist society which operates by inequality, however, by virtue of the fact that the existence of certain class influence a large percentage of what is done in an average capitalist society shows that citizenship is riddled with problems of inequalities and inequities. The major value setting of capitalism is nothing but the celebration of profit above the pulpit a tendency which reduces the sacredness of citizenship and which provides a perilous pattern and protruding profligacy about what citizenship can do.

Elite theories on the nature and origin of the society clearly provides enough intellectual evidences in support of the view that it is only very few people in society called “elites” that control and influence the seat of government. As explained by Andrew Heywood, elite theory “highlights the concentration of power in the hands of a small minority.” Thus, capitalism sponsors the tyranny of the minority against the majority particularly from both the political and economic spheres. Significantly, Marx attributes to capitalism the right to acquire private property, a right he considers unjust. Many other scholars, apart from Marx, have criticized capitalism in its justification of right to private property (Laski, 1938; Tawney, 1920; Macpherson, 1962). A major defect and problem with private property is that it is a weapon of exploitation and injustice in the sense that it only makes wealth to be the exclusive preserve of the few.

Liberals, who are often sympathetic to the ideals of capitalism, see private property from a different light in the sense that for them what matters most is the provision of free opportunities for individuals to choose what they want to pursue. Unfortunately, the opportunities are not harnessed nor are they utilized in the same way based on the existence of certain conditions and contradictions in society. Predictably, the impact of this on citizenship cannot be overemphasized in the sense that since the minority hold power and distribute resources in line with class interests and motives, those who are not part of the inner caucus are excluded regardless of whether they are citizens or not. Thus, the fact of class still has a disturbing reality on the meaning of citizenship and its sense of objectivity. In other words, class politics and interests is still a very potent instrument in the understanding of citizenship.

The Twilight of Citizenship and the End of History

Even though some couple of years back citizenship was said to be the buzz word in political theory (Kymlicka and Wayne, 1994), it appears that citizenship and citizenship values are entering into a state of ossification, fossilization, and waning syndrome. In the light of what is evident and obvious presently, it is predictable that activities that are associated with the status of citizenship are fast losing out in their appeal on citizens. Citizenship represents the most important and noble aspect of democracy. If that same institution is losing out in its appeal, it may actually suggest that the end of citizenship signals an important part of the end of history pontifically posited and prophesied by Francis Fukuyama (1992). For example, going by citizenship practices, the public realm is
the place where citizen activities are carried out. In this sense, it means that citizenship is an active practice as well as a public status. It means that, in line with Aristotle, participation is the key word about citizenship. In other words, the currency of citizenship, in economic terms, and the life blood of citizenship, in biological terms, is participation. Participation is a broad term but it never denoted, historically, a passive experience. To participate is to be involved, to contribute, to influence and change. In all, citizenship participation in the public realm can be revolutionary and radical creating a demand for change in the public sphere. This is what Robert Asen means when he described citizenship as a form of public engagement (2004: 193). This level of involvement in citizenship activities is a constitutional requirement and, also, a historical reality. But, how is citizenship today in relation to these expectations?

There seems to be a different switch in citizenship activities and expectations in this contemporary time as those activities associated with citizenship are now becoming elusive, illusive and fast losing out in their meteoric occurrences. This has made some scholars to contend that, possibly, citizenship era is coming to an end. This consideration is different from the hordes of dilemma that seems to be rocking the boat of citizenship presently. One may just even say that these dilemmas constitute one of the reasons why citizenship regime is embedded in subjectivity and, more importantly, why citizenship regime is coming to an end. But what is the basis for this end-saga?

Most Third World countries have never been on the good record books in connection with true citizenship. While it is true that there are constitutional provisions for citizenship, those provisions are mere provisions as they are not backed with concrete details that translates into effective instruments of public participation and change. At least, this picture is true of most African countries where citizenship voices is at a very passive and dormant level especially in the face of several years and decades of political oppression, irresponsible leadership, banal and venal testimonies of corruption and, above all, opprobrious decadence in public utilities, facilities and infrastructures that leaves lives in such societies a return to Hobbesian awful state of nature. Regrettably, today, formal citizenship is celebrated more than substantive citizenship. In Nigeria, for example, citizenship is more formal than substantive; constitutional provisions are relied upon than the actual and non-pretentious enforcement of those provisions. In Nigeria still, there are provisions in the 1999 Constitution called the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy which are basic to welfare of citizens but that are not justiceable meaning that no citizen can sue the government over the non-implementation of those objectives. The non-justiceability of those provisions leaves citizenship in a lingering dilemma still.

Across the Mediterranean Sea, where citizenship has recorded great heaps of success, what is today known as citizenship strength is fast fading away. This is what Mathew Crenson and Benjamin Ginsberg meant when they declared that the act and art of citizenship involvement in this modern era is quietly slipping away (2002: 21). Both scholars have the American society at the back of their minds. In the same vein, Robert Asen noted that elites in American society have lost out in the interest on governance and civic issues which are clearly and traditionally within the domain of citizenship. It was Robert Putnam who was decisive about the description of the malady that besets the American public when he opined that Americans have been dropping out in droves from political and associational life and are now turning citizenship into a spectator sports. What Putnam is saying is that citizenship is not a spectator enterprise but an active engagement in society (2000: 341). And the agitations for substantive citizenship based on the solidarity of social rights and social privileges are perhaps very strong causes of dissention, acrimony and conflicts in most modern states. The realization and/or interpretation are that the objective reality that was once said to be behind citizenship is no longer realistic in today's world. This tendency accounts for one of the many reasons why it is so believed that perhaps the age and era of citizenship is on the decline and possibly coming to an end.

Conclusion

That citizenship is an important institution in modern civilization cannot be argued against. What is worriesome is whether citizenship sponsors an atmosphere of political objectivity or subjectivity. This paper has argued that though citizenship started out as an important indicator of the feelings of objectivity in human history especially given the thoughts of social and political philosophers, its contour and anatomy given contemporary experiences seems to suggest that the process of subjectivising human political affairs has caught up with citizenship itself. In a sense, it means the subjectivity that citizenship is ensconced in derives from its campaign against the deep inequalities that are prevalent in human societies. What is remarkable about citizenship, in the statement of Michael Warner, is that any idealized institution which creates attention to itself loses the sense of idealism and objectivity that it has. Precisely, Warner warns that if citizenship calls
attention to existing inequalities as a way of making an argument for equality, such pursuits are counterproductive and self-defeating. This is on account of the fact that to call attention to one’s own particularity is to be less than a universal subject. Making a claim for citizenship by showcasing one’s particularity is equally a way of subjectivising that status. Citizenship seeks to establish a sort of group identity in terms of commonality. However, this attempt on the part of citizenship to project sameness of identity in terms of state nationalism is always truncated by the dilemma that difference, relativism and subjectivism poses. It means citizenship’s major hurdle is how to negotiate and transcend the dilemma that difference has created. This dilemma of difference is one of the major reasons why citizenship is clustered in the dilemma of subjectivity today.

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