

# Digital Citizenship, Safety and Hygiene

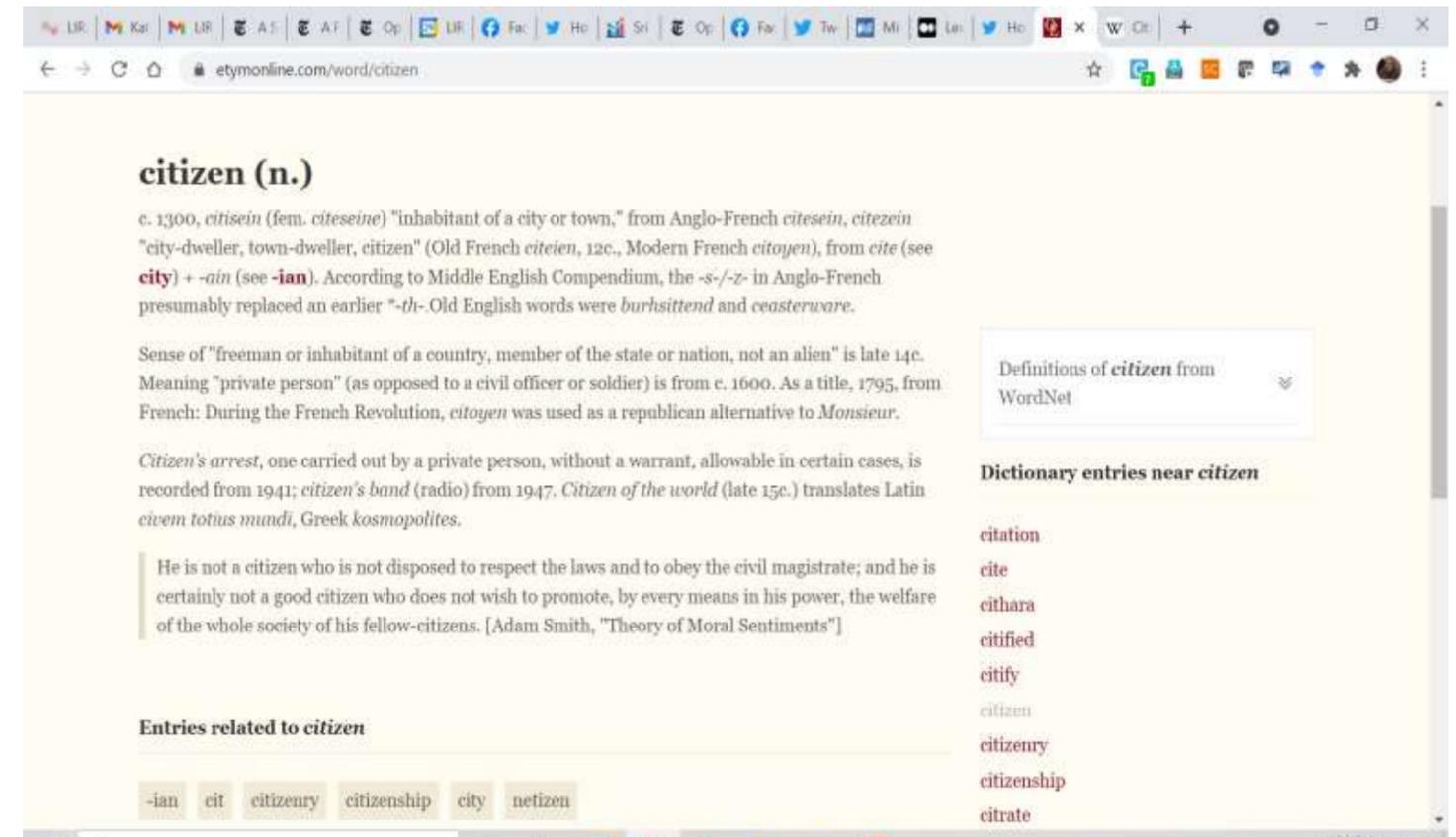
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*31 August 2021*

# Is citizenship in cyberspace any different from what it is in “meatspace”?

- Both Sinhala and English roots link citizenship to cities: to living in close proximity to one another, with the actions of one impacting on the lives of others
  - Think fire safety, waste disposal, infectious diseases → negative externalities
  - Think how home values are affected by the aesthetics of a street, the beauty and upkeep of nearby houses, etc. → positive externalities



The screenshot shows the etymology page for 'citizen' on etymonline.com. The page title is 'citizen (n.)'. The definition states: 'c. 1300, *citisein* (fem. *citeseine*) "inhabitant of a city or town," from Anglo-French *citesein*, *citezein* "city-dweller, town-dweller, citizen" (Old French *citeien*, 12c., Modern French *citoyen*), from *cite* (see **city**) + *-ain* (see **-ian**). According to Middle English Compendium, the *-s/-z-* in Anglo-French presumably replaced an earlier *-th-*. Old English words were *burhsittend* and *ceasterware*.

Sense of "freeman or inhabitant of a country, member of the state or nation, not an alien" is late 14c. Meaning "private person" (as opposed to a civil officer or soldier) is from c. 1600. As a title, 1795, from French: During the French Revolution, *citoyen* was used as a republican alternative to *Monsieur*.

*Citizen's arrest*, one carried out by a private person, without a warrant, allowable in certain cases, is recorded from 1941; *citizen's band* (radio) from 1947. *Citizen of the world* (late 15c.) translates Latin *civem totius mundi*, Greek *kosmopolites*.

He is not a citizen who is not disposed to respect the laws and to obey the civil magistrate; and he is certainly not a good citizen who does not wish to promote, by every means in his power, the welfare of the whole society of his fellow-citizens. [Adam Smith, "Theory of Moral Sentiments"]

Entries related to citizen: -ian, cit, citizenry, citizenship, city, netizen

Dictionary entries near citizen: citation, cite, cithara, citified, citify, citizen, citizenry, citizenship, citrate

# Is cyberspace any different? Do our actions on the Internet affect the lives of others?

- The pain of being bullied is no different whether it occurs in a school yard or on social media
- Beyond direct impact, externalities
  - Does trolling in a group affect only the person being attacked?
  - Have the quality of the comments turned you off certain news sites?
- If yes, the obligations of citizenship extend to cyberspace
  - Obligations to each other
  - Obligations to the State

# What's different about cyberspace?

- Transaction costs are lower
  - Compare transmission of rumors over the fence in a village versus in social media
- Constraints of civility (root is citizen) are relaxed because of
  - Absence of immediate facial and verbal responses
  - Dopamine hit from “likes” on social media → incentives to be extreme
- Bridges time and space
  - Difficult to limit effects to a region/country
  - What is said/shown today does not disappear; but can be seen months/years later

# What can be done?

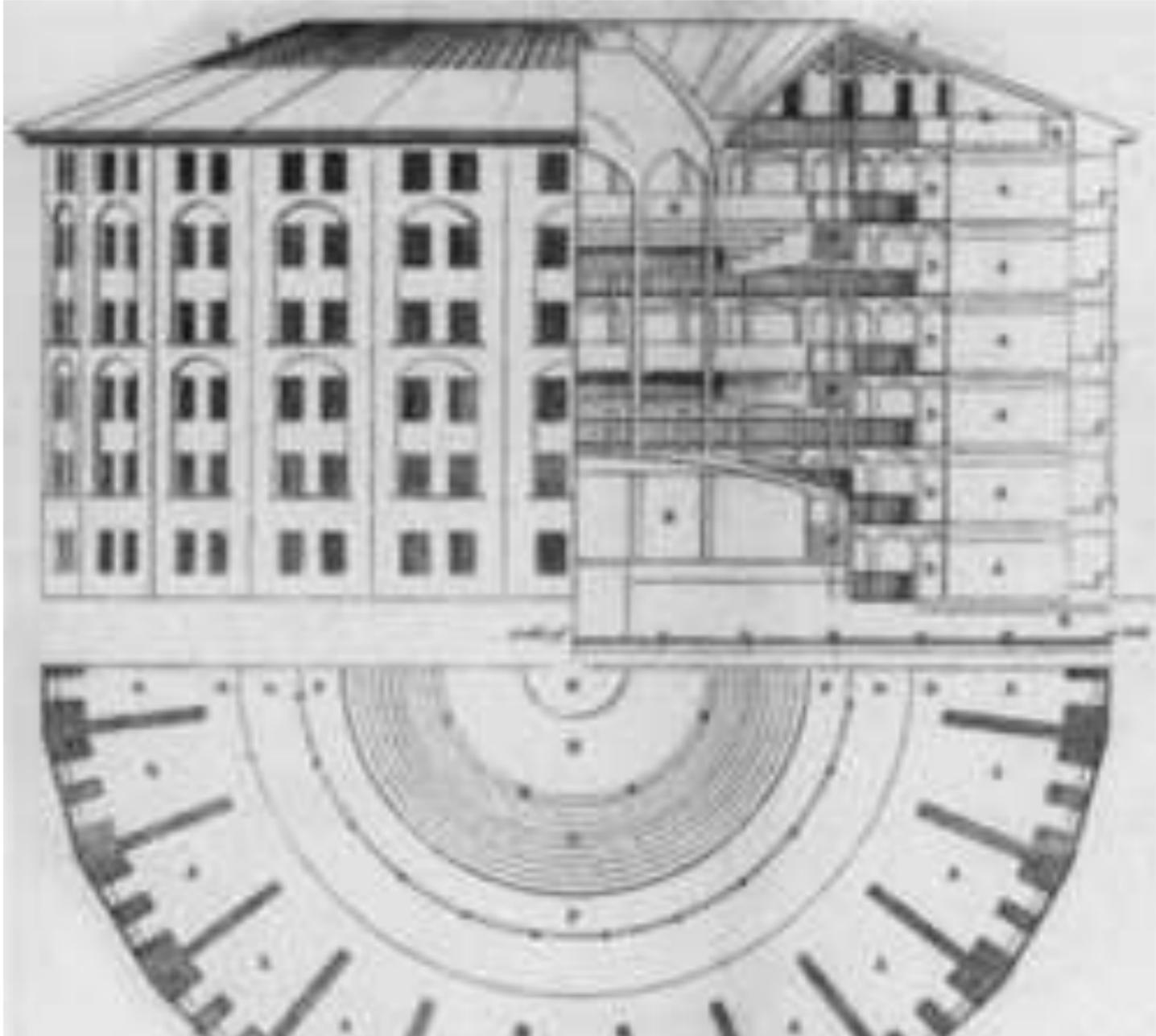
## By citizens themselves

- Set and enforce codes of civility in the communities they belong to, e.g.,
  - Quickly call out bad behavior
  - Threaten to leave a WhatsApp group; then leave
  - Expel bad actors, if possible
- Any different from what happens in meatspace?

## By the State, on behalf of citizens

- Support digital literacy programs that try to build civility
  - Tough job, given meatspace civility evolved over millennia
- Create a backstop, through law, to deter egregiously bad behavior
  - Avoiding actions that are actually about protecting the State against dissent, and do not violate fundamental rights recognized in the Constitution

# Encouraging civility should be the goal, while deterring bad behavior & minimizing damage



- No State, however powerful, can micro-manage the day-to-day behaviors of millions
  - Half the population will be watching the other half
  - The trick is voluntary compliance
    - People actually buying in to the values on which the desired behaviors are based
    - People thinking they are being watched, though the watching and punishment is probabilistic (Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon)

# We need to strive for a safe, but not overly policed, cyberspace

- How to get the balance between safety and freedom is the question

