

CRITIQUE OF VIOLENCE: A STUDY OF THE RELATION BETWEEN  
POLITICS AND VIOLENCE IN SOME MODERN POLITICAL THEORIES

A Ph.D. Dissertation

by  
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POLITICS AND VIOLENCE IN SOME MODERN POLITICAL THEORIES

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I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science and Public Administration.

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## ABSTRACT

### CRITIQUE OF VIOLENCE: A STUDY OF THE RELATION BETWEEN POLITICS AND VIOLENCE IN SOME MODERN POLITICAL THEORIES

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Ph. D. Department of Political Science and Public Administration

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This thesis aims at understanding the relationship between violence and politics in twentieth century political thought. To this end, the study looks at the works of selected thinkers and suggests a threefold categorization of existing approaches: a ‘non-problematization of the relationship between violence and politics’ exemplified in the liberal-democratic paradigm, a ‘non-problematization of violence in politics’ in some critiques of liberal thought and the position of ambivalence, which suggests a historical relationship between violence and politics. The thesis moves to a further analysis of Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault, whose works are considered as representing the third position and discuss their analysis of the relationship between violence and politics with a focus on power and revolution.

Keywords: Violence, Political, Politics, Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, Revolution, Power

## ÖZET

### ŞİDDETİN ELEŞTİRİSİ: MODERN SİYASAL DÜŞÜNCEDE ŞİDDET VE SİYASET İLİŞKİSİ ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

Altunok, Gülbanu

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Bu çalışma, yirminci yüzyıl siyasal düşüncesinde şiddet ve siyaset arasındaki ilişkiyi anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu nedenle çalışma seçilmiş düşünürlerin eserlerine bakıp üçlü bir kategorizasyon önermektedir. Şiddet ve siyaset arasında olası bir ilişkiyi sorunsallaştırmayan ilk paradigma ve şiddetin siyasetteki yerini sorgulamayan ikinci paradigmanın ve şiddet ve siyaset arasında tarihsel bir ilişkinin olduğunu iddia eden üçüncü yaklaşım. Çalışma, belirsiz (görelî) tutum olarak adlandırılan üçüncü yaklaşım içinde ele alınacak ilk iki yaklaşımla belirli bir mesafesi olan Hannah Arendt ve Michel Foucault'nun siyaset, iktidar ve devrim düşüncelerinde şiddetin ne şekilde yer bulduğunu anlamaya çalışacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Şiddet, Siyasal, Siyaset, Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, Devrim, İktidar

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I was a visiting researcher at University of California Berkeley between 2004 and 2005. I want to express my thanks to Wendy Brown for supervising my research during my stay in the U.S. I am also grateful to UC Berkeley and the New School for Social Research for the arrangement that allowed me to attend PhD seminars at New School on Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault, offered by Jay Bernstein and Agnes Heller respectively. Many people in Berkeley were very kind and friendly and I remember all of them with gratitude.

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**PART I**  
**CHAPTER I**

**AN INTRODUCTION TO STUDY OF THE RELATION  
BETWEEN POLITICS AND VIOLENCE**

World history has shown itself the history of violence, if we consider the number of wars, civil wars, mass killings and many other forms of cruelties (Keane, 1996; 2004, Buffachi, 2005, Ferguson, 2006). Although we could claim that civility obviates violent practices and violent relations by pointing out the declension of cruelty for entertainment, human sacrifice for superstitious beliefs, slavery for labor or torture and mutilation for punishment (Elias, 1939, Foucault, 1979, Pinker, 2011 and Muchembled, 2011<sup>1</sup>), the magnitude of violent events, new technologies of destruction, and number of the victims of violence in the last century challenge these propositions (Wolin, 1963: 20).

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<sup>1</sup> Elias's famous sociological analysis, the "civilizing process" suggests the taming of violent practices by modern cultural norms and structures. Muchembled (2011), like Elias, argues invented systems of controls (the deployment of sanctions by civic and state authorities and a parallel rise of discourse and norm of non-violence) over male aggression engendered the decline of violence. For Steven Pinker (2011) the decline of violence is due to an increased human ability to reason. Foucault's historical analysis on the transformation of violence into disciplinary forms includes the discussion of rationality, however in a different tone. His argument will be presented in detail in the coming chapters.

During the twentieth century two world wars, numerous civil wars, concentration camps took place. Then there were Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Algeria and Bosnia. For this reason, some theorists call it as “the long century of violence” (Keane, 1996: 2; 2002: 32) some as the “age of extremes” since “more human beings had been killed or allowed to die by human decision than ever before in human history” (Hobsbawm, 1994: 12)

Apart from the question, which asks, whether violence has declined throughout the ages or not, violence also emerges to be a predicament of our era, because in this age we start to problematize the phenomenon. It is in this age we have come to consider violence as a malady, look for its causes and think about the ways of preventing it. Sheldon Wolin (1963) argues this is due to a curious fact of the modern world. In many contemporary western societies, where political and social institutions have effectively restricted the private and public forms of violence, “our capacity for enduring violence has diminished” while “the *intensity* of violence in certain instances has increased” (Wolin, 1963: 21, emphasis original). As exemplified in the terrorist activities and wars of this age, a greater scale of violence is needed to breach the protective walls of modern socio-political orders. The violence of modern times, when employed, engenders an intensified level of fear on the part of the individuals for the relative elimination of violence in daily lives contributes to its unexpectedness.<sup>2</sup> Hence, a growing interest in the phenomenon of violence.

A quick literature review reveals that there are numerous empirically grounded studies on the topic of violence and human aggression. There are

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<sup>2</sup> Wolin (1963:23) even argues that it is this unexpectedness of systematic violence that gave way to the population’s perplexity and bewilderment under the rule of totalitarian regimes.

studies that explore the causes and the dynamics of civil unrest in different contexts: youth violence, violence against women, violence against minorities; many works focus on terrorism in different contexts, civil wars, military conflicts and so forth. Nonetheless, research into the definition and theorization of the concept violence is limited (Keane, 1996: 6).<sup>3</sup> “Political theorists have rarely reflected on violence as such,” writes Arendt (1969). This might be because political theory usually deals with rights, equality, liberty, justice: that is, as normative ideals, rather than with apparent facts like violence. This is also due to the fact that the concept of violence is inherently ambiguous and its relation with politics is complex and multifaceted.

In mainstream political debates, violence is generally conceived as the illegitimate or unauthorized use of force. Within this perspective, Wolff (1969: 606) writes, “thence, murder is defined as an act of violence, but capital punishment by a legitimate state is not”. This definition suggests a distinction between force and violence even though both terms do imply a physical act with an impact of intervention or prevention. It is evident that in the evaluation of the former a neutral or affirming attitude is present. Force implies an authorized or natural action. The term violence, on the other hand has a normative dimension when we consider its affinity with violation. In politics, furthermore violence is considered within the framework of concepts like legitimacy, authority and legality. Such a conception, however, has given way to further confusions and controversies in modern political theory. A genuine distinction between violent

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<sup>3</sup> Some attempts of philosophical reflection were evident during the sixties and seventies against the background of civil rights movement and the Vietnam War and I will refer to them whenever it is needed. A philosophical-political interest has revived in the last decade to reflect on the implications of the terrorist attacks of September 11 and of the U.S.’s “war on terror” (for instance, Agamben, Zizek). These reflections, however, do not deal with the issue of violence as such or present an analysis on its relation with politics.



and nonviolent political action does not seem to be possible in terms of legality since legality itself may fall short of justification at times. For Wolff, for example, no political authority is legitimate (1969: 608): “it is mere superstition to describe a policeman’s beating of a helpless suspect as ‘an excessive use of force’ while characterizing an attack by a crowd on the policeman as ‘a resort to violence’” (Wolff, 1969: 609). Similarly, upon observing the detention practices of the United States at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (that avoids the application of the terms of the 1949 Geneva Convention<sup>4</sup> with the discourse expressed by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld classifying Guantanamo inmates as “battlefield detainees,” rather than “prisoners of war”), in 2002 Judith Butler (2002a) wrote

Just as a distinction is drawn between legitimate violence and illegitimate violence according to whether the combatants are affiliated with states, various forms of political violence are now commonly called “terrorism,” not because there are distinguishable valences of violence, but as a way of delegitimizing violence waged by, or in the name of, authorities deemed illegitimate by established states or, indeed, those that threaten the hegemony of the nation-state itself.

Another rather recent tendency we see in the literature, which contributes to a further confusion, is the broadening of the range of the concept of violence. Accordingly, psychological, verbal or even symbolic acts that transgress a limit, violate a right or cause an unequal relationship, or give way to a form of discrimination are called violence. Therefore, we do come across concepts such as symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), linguistic

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<sup>4</sup> The Geneva Convention is an international convention initially signed after the Second World War in 1949 and established the standards of international law for the humanitarian treatment of the victims of war.

violence, normative violence (Chambers, 2007<sup>5</sup>), epistemic violence, or cultural violence (Galtung, 1969; 1990) in the literature. According to Johann Galtung (1969: 168) for instance, violence is the cause of a difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is. Considering developments in technological and medical areas, a person's death from tuberculosis (which was a common and may be normal incident in eighteenth century) in this age is violence for Galtung (1969). He, therefore, introduces a distinction between direct violence and structural violence. Accordingly, while direct (also called as 'personal violence') violence is defined as a physical and personal force, which involves an immediate relationship between the perpetrator and the recipient of violence, structural violence is built into the socio-political and economic system and is disguised in the unequal distribution of power, income, education or opportunities. Thus for Galtung (1969: 171) "when one husband beats his wife there is a clear case of personal violence, but when one million husbands keep one million wives in ignorance there is structural violence."

From this perspective, one may suggest a link between structural and personal violence and argue that the direct (or personal violence) derives from structural violence. The riots that have put France into unrest in 2005, in that sense, can be linked with structural inequalities or socio-political exclusions experienced by the young (particularly those with Muslim or African origin). Drawing on Galtung's approach one can also suggest that there is not much difference between direct and structural violence in terms of their negative

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<sup>5</sup> Drawing on Butler and Derrida, Chambers argues that the idea of normative violence signifies violence that precedes everyday violence and makes it invisible, illegible, non-existent.

value. Derrienic (1972) suggests that if in a given country a number of people dies every day due to the lack of access to health services, then this incident is equivalent to the killings caused by a terrorist organization in the country in terms of its result (Derrienic, 1972). For this reason, defining violence in more encompassing terms, as Galtung (1969) suggests, offers a broader perspective on the analysis of the issue.<sup>6</sup> It also enables one to draw attention to structures and mechanisms of inequality that have the same deteriorating effects violence has. It also increases our awareness on issues that are not readily visible but loom in the background of the apparent.

It is possible to argue however, by labeling any act, idea or form of relationship that produce unintended or undesired results such as negligence, verbal threat or command as violence we might lose the particularity of the phenomenon. What is violence then? Can we categorize any act with unwanted results as violence? Any form of relationship that produces inequality? What makes it different from discrimination or manipulation?

These are questions that cannot be answered easily. Yet for descriptive and normative purposes for analyses, delimiting the concept of violence becomes a necessary task.

In their attempt of marking off their subject of reflection, scholars (see for instance Buffachi, 2005:194; Wolin, 1963) generally start with the

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<sup>6</sup> This definition aims to delineate the contours of the concept of peace; Galtung argues that the peace can be defined as “the absence of violence” rather than the absence of war. With the aim of separating peace theory from conflict studies and relating it to the theories of development, he rejects the narrow conception that views violence as a corporeal impairment (and killing in the extreme form) in the hands of an actor with an intention of harm. His analysis of violence focuses on six dimensions of violence. It can be physical or psychological; can use negative or positive means of influence; might have an object or not; can have a subject or not (personal vs. structural); might be intentional or not; might be manifest or latent (Galtung, 1969). While violence is treated as a phenomenon having two major sides, personal and structural, peace denotes a twofold condition: absence of both direct and structural violence.

etymological analysis, which is based on the Latin root of the term *violentia*, suggests vehemence, a passionate and uncontrolled force. The notion of force primarily denotes physical energy, which is approved or demanded at times. Violence, in this sense denotes an excess—an excessive force, an undesired situation that exceeds its limits. From a pragmatist perspective for instance, John Dewey (1916) argues violence is the destructive but more importantly is the wasteful use of force; it is objected because of this feature.

Other underlined characteristics of violence are its imposition by an external source, its suddenness and radicality of its impacts (MacCallum, 2009:117-119). For Sheldon Wolin (1963) one needs to understand violence as an intensified, unexpected and unpredictable form of power, which in the end gives way to an unusual destruction in order to address its political significance. As pointed out, force is a dispositional concept; it refers to an ability or potentiality. Violence, on the other hand, is something “always *done*, and it is always done *to* something, typically a person, animal or piece of property” (Audi, 1971: 50 in Buffachi, 2005: 196). Violence differs from force by having a ‘subject’ and ‘intention’ (Keane, 2004) of the act and the result/impact of ‘violation’.

John Keane marks the relational aspect of violence in the sense that with the exercise of violence the victim of violence is regarded not as “a subject whose ‘otherness’ is recognized and respected, but rather” treated “as a mere object potentially worthy of bodily harm, or even annihilation” (Keane, 2004: 36). It is marked with its negation of the other’s existence and its will of annihilation.

It is also important to note that violence is ‘embodied’. It “directly touches the body of its victim even when (as in the deliberate poisoning or gassing or irradiating or besieging of others) it takes time to make its mark” (Keane, 2004: 36).

Therefore, as an ‘ideal-type’, violence can be defined as the *intentional* employment of physical force by a *subject* that *violates* bodies, souls, rights etc. of some other subjects.

As the definition suggests, the specific and normative dimension of violence derives from the idea of ‘violation’, which means to infringe, or transgress or destroy a norm, a limit, or boundary. We can only answer the question “What constitutes violence?” once we have negotiated the norm, limit or the boundary of the object in question. The limit is set when we talk about rights, values, or about integrity and dignity in human affairs, and when we decide upon what constitutes an assault to these rights, values and integrities. We can then start talking about violence, about the possibility of its justification or of means of reparation.

To sum up, it is possible to talk about three uses of the concept of violence in the literature, which is called by some as the ‘central’, ‘extended’ and ‘peripheral’ use of the term. There is the narrower (but more familiar) view, which relates violence to the excessive use of force (for instance Audi, 1971 or Keane, 2004)<sup>7</sup>. There is the extended version that offers a broader view, which relates violence to violation (for instance MacCallum, 1993), and finally we do

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<sup>7</sup> Buffachi (2005) calls this approach as the “minimalist conception of violence (MCV)” which is analytical, advisable to strive for precise, tight definitions of key concepts. For him, however MCV misses out too many other important dimensions of the phenomenon of violence by restricting acts of violence to intentional, direct, physical acts against other persons, such as highly vigorous psychological abuse.

have the metaphorical, hence peripheral use of the concept (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

In this study, my intention is not to take up the matter of assessing the best definition. Upon presenting the ambiguity of the concept as a subject of theoretical reflection and noting that there is not one set of criteria for delimiting the matter, I would like to assert that my treatment of violence will combine both the ideas of force and violation but it will not extend the use of the term to cover the whole range of possible uses. So, I exclude, for instance, violence as distortion (“do violence to a text”), and violence as psychological harm (“do violence to the dignity of someone”). Therefore, I will use the term violence to refer to the employment of physical force by a subject (individual, collectivity, institution etc.) that violates that subject, some other subjects or to some extent, other objects as well.

In doing this, I do not imply that violation of certain rights, limitation of personal autonomy and manipulation are acts that are less harmful than overt forms of violence. I do think that defining violence in broader terms has a particular value in terms of its success in challenging traditional ways of thinking on violence that somehow obscure our cognition about the operation of hidden mechanisms of oppression. As suggested before, I do think, however, a restriction in the use of the term violence is needed for analytical and descriptive purposes. In many instances, (I have mentioned above) where violations of rights take place or inequalities and injustices are caused by socio-economic or political mechanisms and dynamics, it is possible to employ terms that specifically address these issues. For instance, as Galtung (1969) himself notes, the term “structural violence” describes the conditions of what has been

called as 'social injustice'. For this reason, having appreciated its provocative potential, I would like to refrain from using the concept of violence in instances where other terms are available.

Apart from the broader use of the term for provocative purposes, I do value naming certain practices (such as 'psychological abuse') as violence as an effective strategy where such 'naming' has material implications. Naming husbands' battering of their wives as 'domestic violence' is an example of this. In accord with the demands of the feminist movement and the development of women's human rights discourse, we see that there is an increased awareness of violence against women. With such developments, the women's movement succeeded in the integration of the term 'domestic violence' into legal frameworks. Violence in the domestic sphere has come to be considered as a crime and a policy issue today in many countries. Such recognition, in my opinion, is important for the adoption of preventive and rehabilitative measures and regulations, and for the imposition of sanctions on perpetrators by legal authorities. Raising the issue as a structural problem is also crucial for considering alternative ways to deal with it with a broader perspective.

Having noted the preference for a limited definition (with reservations and exceptions), I would like to also note that the concern of this study is *political* violence. Thus, I will not deal, for instance, with psychological studies on the causes of human aggression or with sociological works that query the issue of youth violence. With the insertion of the term 'political' in front of violence, however, I do not intend to bring clarity to the issue nor do I think I will be able to do that. This is due to the fact that as the concept of violence is ambiguous so is the 'political'. The latter is a further contested and a

historically overloaded notion (Valentine, 2006; Heller, 1991; O'Sullivan, 2002; Alexander, 2010; Hauptmann, 2004).

Recently, we see increasing debates on the definition of the concept of political. Some assess the emergence of a focus on 'political' to be neologism (Hauptmann, 2004). They argue that the concept has emerged as a theme of philosophical reflection due to the recent challenges brought by postmodern theory, radical feminism and multicultural theory (O'Sullivan, 2002: 739) to the traditional understanding of politics. Accordingly, "orthodox liberal ideas" of politics have false assumptions such as viewing the political as a neutral arena and politics as a process of arbitration (O'Sullivan, 1997: 739). They also operate on exclusionary mechanisms that leave out women, other minority, and disadvantaged groups from the domain of politics (both at theoretical and practical levels). For some others, on the other hand, the problematization of the 'political' goes back to mid-nineteenth century Europe when the critique of the absolutist state began (Heller, 1991; Alexander, 2010). While throughout the eighteenth century politics was an activity related with the state (for it was a function of the state) with the eventual separation of the two, the definitive terms of politics has come to be problematic in modernity (Heller, 1991; Alexander, 2010). Without a 'political' subject par excellence i.e. monarch, and without a 'political class' e.g. aristocracy or the male-property owner citizens of Ancient Greece (Heller, 1991) we lost a criterion to judge what is political and what is not.

The recent hypostatization of the adjective 'political' into a noun is indicative of the elusiveness of the term. In fact, the concept is "the name of a problem, which traces the conceptual and empirical incompleteness of politics"



(Valentine, 2006: 506). As a theme of philosophical reflection or as an object of knowledge, the 'political' is argued to fall short of its pure or Ideal conceptualization and of the empirical phenomena through which the existence of concepts is established (Valentine, 2006: 506).<sup>8</sup> This failure is suggested to be evident and due to the distinction between 'politics' and the 'political'. Whereas the former denotes an ordinary, nominal and material process, the 'political' recalls a space or a ground, foundation or cause of politics, which is included and present within the 'political' at the same time (Valentine, 2006: 506).

The ambiguity around the concept of 'political' has given way to different treatments in political theory. For instance, there is one that avoids a

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<sup>8</sup> The noted distinction between ordinary 'politics' and an ideal 'political', as a matter of fact, has constituted an important theme of an academic debate in the American context in the past decades. A group of scholars from University of California, Berkeley made an assertion with regard to the notion of the 'political' and 'political theory' from late 1950s onwards (Reid & Yanarella, 1975: 297-302; Hauptman, 2004). The 'Berkeley school' (Wiley, 2006; Reid & Yanarella, 1975), represented by scholars like Sheldon Wolin (1960; 1969), Hanna Pitkin (1972), Norman Jacobson (1963) and John Schaar (Schaar and Wolin, 1963), formulated the 'political' as distinct from 'politics' and defended 'political theory' as a form of reflection different from 'political science'. The latter was argued to be epitomized with its reliance on positivism, behavioralism and empiricism (exemplified in studies on voting behaviors, political coalitions and decision-making procedures), and was criticized for neglecting the critical aspect of reflection on politics and political issues. Some scholars also differentiated the enterprise of 'political theory' from political philosophy (Schaar and Wolin, 1963; Pitkin, 1972) and argued that while both theory and philosophy are engaged with the investigation of fundamental concepts of life, language and politics in terms of their logical-conceptual consistency, 'political theory' is concerned with the discrepancy between the concept and practice (Pitkin, 1972) i.e. between 'what it is' and 'what it should be' or 'what it can be'. The 'political' conceptualized and defended in such works, then, denotes a mood of transcendence of private and personal concerns, a care and interest in 'public' matters and a will to intervene and transform the world. Notions like 'freedom', 'participation', 'equality' and 'democracy' become constituents of the 'political'. For further information on the debate and the details of it see: Reid, Herbert G. and Ernest J. Yanarella. 1975. "Political Science and the Post-Modern Critique of Scientism and Domination". *The Review of Politics*, 37: 286-316; Pitkin, Hana Fenichel. 1972. *Wittgenstein and Justice*, University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles; Wiley, James. 2006. "Sheldon Wolin on Theory and the Political" *Polity*, 38(2): 211-234; Wolin, Sheldon. 1969. "Political Theory as a Vocation" *The American Political Science Review*, 63(4): 1062-1082; Wolin, Sheldon. 1960. *Politics and Vision. Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*. Princeton University Press; Expanded edition (January 9, 2006): Princeton, New Jersey; Schaar, John H., and Sheldon S. Wolin. 1963. "Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics: A Critique." *American Political Science Review* 57:125-50; Jacobson, Norman. 1963. "Political Science and Political Education," *American Political Science Review* 57(3): 561-69.

discussion on the definition and meaning of politics, which is exemplified in the work of John Rawls (Alexander, 2010a). A second one rejects a formal definition of politics with the argument that any definition is inevitably arbitrary. Accordingly, meanings are subjective, shaped by power relations and are hegemonic. Although avoiding an exact definition such an approach views politics as a process of continuous contestation that is argued to be the case in the radical democratic theories of Laclau and Mouffe (Alexander, 2010). A third approach, on the other hand, attempts at providing a philosophical definition, albeit with some limitations. Weber, argued to define politics narrowly, as ‘the acquisition, distribution and exercise of state power’ (Alexander, 2010).<sup>9</sup>

I have already argued that despite its controversial nature, I will limit my understanding of violence to a combination of use of force and violation and not extend it to cover literal, symbolic or metaphorical uses. In the case of the political, I will not offer a comprehensive definition either. My primary concern will be to understand the relationship between violence and politics in the works of political theorists. In this attempt, I will further assume that the definition of violence and the relation between violence and politics mainly derive from the construction of politics or the political.

I think neither the existing empirical research nor debates that dwell on the denotative or connotative aspects of the term violence can solely settle the

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<sup>9</sup>Acquiring the third attitude Alexander (2010) argues that a metaphorical, abstract but limited definition for a sense of the idea is possible. A philosophical definition, for him, first of all, “should define the nature and the limits of the metaphorical use of a term” and also “the elements of tension or contradiction within the limits of its metaphorical use” and “should offer no more and no less than an abstract understanding of what is fully and metaphorically meant by the term no matter how the term is used in practice—in any particular situation or partial sense. A philosophical definition has to include particularity but does not have to limit itself to it” (Alexander, 2010: 2)

question of “What is the relationship between violence and the politics?” Is violence an intrinsic feature of the ‘political’ concerning its historical role in the moments of revolution, political foundation and its function in the preservation of political order or instrumental? Is it possible to justify the use of violence in politics? Is it possible to make a distinction between different forms of violence? Is there a difference between violence, force or terror? Is violence different from the legitimate use of force? Is it possible to develop a critique of violence? Can we oppose violence and if so on what grounds?

I would like to think of my endeavor as an attempt of a critique. With this, I do not mean some sort of criticism but a certain way of thinking and elaborating on the issue, which also includes the review of existing perspectives. Although the word ‘critique’ has come to be used interchangeably with ‘criticism’<sup>10</sup> with a negative tone as a practice of fault finding in the English-speaking world (Gasché, 2006: 8), it has a longer and complex history in the philosophical thought. The term ‘critique’ was the basic concept of Enlightenment philosophy, instanced with Kant’s (1999a) famous dictum ‘our age of ... [Enlightenment]... is in especial degree, the age of criticism, and to criticism everything must submit.’ Kantian critique denotes a negative attitude towards prejudices, the tradition, dogmatism, and the refusal of turning to persons or sources (such as a pastor, a book or a doctor) for guidance. It rejects any dictates over one’s thinking. By being autonomous and not beholden to

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<sup>10</sup>The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers a twofold definition for criticism: “expression of disapproval; finding fault” and “the critical assessment of literary or artistic works”. The *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary Online* provides a wider range including critique as synonymous. Accordingly, criticism refers to “the act of criticizing usually unfavorably”; “critical observation or remark”; “critique”; it is “the art of evaluating or analyzing works of art or literature; *also*: writings expressing such evaluation or analysis <an anthology of literary criticism>” and “the scientific investigation of literary documents (as the Bible) in regard to such matters as origin, text, composition, or history.”

traditional authorities such as church and the state, critique requires the use of reason and becomes an essential component of it. By being part of reason, it has also acquired a positive connotation and necessitated a final judgment on the matter of concern. In its intellectual span from Kant's account of the imperative of critique to Nietzsche's critique of morality, from Hegel's immanent critique to Marx's critique of capitalism, one can argue that a critical enterprise connotes a systematic inquiry of established forms of authority and knowledge by making distinctions, development of criteria for an objective analysis, which led to the passing of an autonomous judgment (Brown, 2005; Hanssen, 2000). The existence of an ideal or an alternative, again, characterizes the critical attitude and philosophy of modernity. The oppositional attitude of the modern critique, "highlights the disparity between what is taken as given and what should be", hence the affinity of utopia and critique (Bernstein, 1988; Benhabib, 1987).

Over the last several decades, the Enlightenment critique, some of the characteristics of which I have listed above, has been challenged by a group of theoretical and political positions e.g. feminism, poststructuralism and deconstructivism in terms of its premises. While those who undertake the task of salvaging the critical potential along with a progressive notion of Enlightenment emphasize the necessity of a normative ground, those who have suspicions about the ideals of Enlightenment and who resist the idea of a normative foundation offer a different conception of critique (Hanssen, 2000). The former, which we can call the modernists, looks for clear definitions of notions such as subjectivity and true knowledge reached by the light of reason with the aim of developing a critical reflection on politics, passing a judgment and more importantly for envisioning and forming of a principles and policy.

The defendants of the latter, the so-called poststructuralist, deconstructivist or postmodernist camp argue that the modernist group's categories, such as their notion of subjectivity, are abstract and homogenizing; the rationality they presume to be universal and objective is totalizing and their vision of politics is exclusionary if not dominating. They therefore contend that 'critique' is a valuable tool for its capacity to challenge these constructions and established systems. A critical enterprise is important for this capacity to challenge, to struggle and to resist not for its final and eventual judgment or for its capacity of emancipation. Michel Foucault, who among the ardent defenders of the latter position, asserts that "by critical ... I don't mean a demolition job, one of rejection and refusal, but a work of examination that consists of suspending as far as possible the system of values to which one refers when testing and assessing it" (Foucault, 1988: 107). In his late essays in 1980s on Kant, Foucault pays a particular attention to the question of critique and its relation with Enlightenment. Surprising many of his readers, he further argues that his work can be read as an example of a type of Kantian critique. The path of critique he follows, nonetheless, differs from the other stands he defines as the 'analytic of truth' that aims to search eternal truths and works for the establishment of reason. This can be conducted in scientific domain with an emphasis on positivism, and in other domains with the arguments of scientism and scientific rationality. For Foucault critique can be understood as an ethos, an attitude developed in modernity; it denotes the courage that the process of *Aufklärung* needs to challenge the epistemic order and questioning and resisting given forms of knowledges with a will of transformation not emancipation. Following a Foucauldian line of thinking, Judith Butler (2002b: 213) too writes

critique “is precisely a practice that not only suspends judgment ...but [also] offers a new practice of values based on that very suspension” to question the limits of our most sure ways of knowing and acting. She (2002b:215) states, “one asks about the limits of ways of knowing because one has already run up against a crisis within the epistemological field in which one lives.”

As noted by Brown (2005) and Hanssen (2000) crisis is an important notion both for the contemporary world and for the enterprise of critique. In fact, for the historian Reinhart Koselleck (1988: 104) ‘crisis’ and ‘critique’ were etymological twins deriving from the root ‘*krinein*’. The noun, *krisis*, stemming from *krinein*, was a jurisprudential term and was also denoting a juridical process. It referred to “distinguishing the true from the false, the genuine from the spurious, the beautiful from the ugly, and the right from the wrong, distinctions that involved weighing pros and cons of particular arguments, that is evaluating and eventually judging evidence, reasons, or reasoning” (Brown, 2005: 5; Koselleck, 1988: 103). In his historiography, Koselleck (1988) presents how the judicial use of the critique had lost its significance in Middle Ages. The word criticism was incorporated into national languages only in the seventeenth century but this time with a different connotation. Criticism came to denote “the art of an objective evaluation” of ancient, literary and biblical texts by the educated strata. Within this discourse, increasing emphasis was placed on rationality, neutrality and impartiality. The discourse of the rational and objective critique of a topic served further special purposes as well. It provided legitimacy to the practice of criticism in the eyes of the public and also gained self-assurance to the intellectuals in justifying their views and expanding their analysis to a range of subjects and institutions (Koselleck, 1988: 104). When

once the biblical interpretations were put under the scrutiny of critique, other matters such as public concerns, and political decisions of the state and even the sovereign itself also came to be debated by those learned men. Then, as I have depicted above, within Enlightenment philosophy critique came to be associated with the notion of reason. While the word *krisis* lost its juridical significance after Antiquity, in another vein, it came to be used in the field of medicine throughout the Middle Ages. It implied a ‘critical’ point, which may be either exceptional or chronic, in the course of a disease. For Koselleck, after coming apart and re-entering languages through different routes, the link between ‘critique’ and ‘crisis’ revived in the analyses on political and economic sphere. Crisis now refers to unstable point, shattering of the foundations and a condition demanding urgent attention and prompt action (Brown, 2005: 5). The amalgamation of the two became epochal concepts in philosophy and history “most dramatically since the last third of the eighteenth century” (Koselleck, 2006: 365-375).

Within this context, it is possible to argue that while terms and promises of critique are debated by different theoretical positions for all of them an engagement with critique signifies awareness of and an assessment of a crisis. This point has been also underlined by Seyla Benhabib (1986: 19-21) in her reflections on Critical Theory when she argued that “crisis diagnosis” is one of the irreducible aspects of philosophical criticism. In fact, as one scholar has noted (Slomp, 2009: 3), for many thinkers, crisis functions as a revitalizing source, it prompts the thinkers to reflect on the questions that are waiting for solutions. For Eric Voegelin “the fundamental problems of political existence in history are more apt to come into view than in periods of comparative stability”

(Voegelin 1999: 88; also in Slomp, 2009: 3) and for Sheldon Wolin (2006 [1960]: 9; also in Slomp, 2009:4)

the theories of Plato, Machiavelli, and Hobbes, for example, are evidence of a ‘challenge and response’ relationship between the disorder of the actual world and the role of the political philosopher as the encompasser of disorder. The range of possibilities appear infinite, for now the political philosopher is not confined to criticism and interpretation; he must reconstruct a shattered world of meaning.

Crisis might emerge within established forms of knowledge, authority or power relations. Critique, then, might be either in the form questioning the limits of ways of knowing as Butler (2002b) suggests or may take an interventionist, corrective or emancipatory role as Benhabib and others have argued. For Hannah Arendt the crisis of the political structure (ways of thinking, knowing and acting) of our age became manifest with the catastrophic events of the twentieth century—a century of wars, revolutions, mass destructions, totalitarianism, racism—”hence a century of that violence which is currently believed to be their common denominator” (Arendt, 1972: 105). Therefore, in her view, violence denotes a crisis, which demands a critical engagement with the phenomenon.

Against this background, as I have stated above, this study aims to engage with a critique of the relation between violence and politics. The enterprise will be considered as a way of thinking and elaborating on the issue, which includes the review of existing perspectives in political theory. I will try finding answers to the questions (raised above) that interrogate the relationship between violence and politics by surveying some contemporary political theories. I will also think on the possibility of the judgment concerning the role



of violence in politics. In the face of violent conflicts, upheavals and tragedies of our times what stand we should take and which arguments we should use will be some questions I will have in mind.

In the coming chapters, I will firstly present my review of some contemporary theories. Based on this review I will suggest three approaches on the relationship between violence and politics. There is a major paradigm in the literature: the liberal-democratic approach, which claims that politics, as an order and a process of consensus with reference to reason, does not involve violence and there is no relation between the two. Hence, this approach is characterized by a non-problematization of the relation between violence and politics. The idea of “non-problematization” may sound problematic. One can argue that the liberal-democratic approach has a certain judgment on the place of violence with respect to politics and I would agree with that by saying that place is the “outside”. My contention is that this approach excludes violence from political discussions as a phenomenon by labeling it as illegal use of force or an irrational act. Violence is constrained within the social, cultural or private domain and deemed apolitical at almost every instance. School shootings, which have become common in the United States or in some other western countries, for instance, in that sense are debated within the framework of youth aggression, failures of socialization etc. Yet their links to the overall gun culture, discourses and practices of violence are hardly debated. Hence, the approach is called as non-problematization. I will present Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls as exemplary figures of this approach and explicate the contours of their work in the next chapter.

I will then argue that a variant of the critique of the liberal approach conceives and presents the relationship between violence and politics as an intricate one. While the first approach conceives and presents violence as an apolitical phenomenon by not taking into account the structural aspects of it, this approach we will see emphasize the link. At times, violence is celebrated first for its destructive capacity of the existing order because it is considered as defective. Further, it is seen as a constructive force in politics. Historically and even ontologically, the “illiberal” approach argues politics involves violence. In that sense, it is even possible to argue that this approach is characterized by a non-problematization as well. The relationship between violence and politics is affirmed positively and absolutely. I will show the illiberal front, or the critique of the liberal-democratic approach finds its most fervent expression in Carl Schmitt’s works, which assert that politics and violence are essentially interlinked. Walter Benjamin’s famous piece *Critique of Violence* is another example of this view, although he was concerned about the implications of his argument. According to Benjamin, violence and modern law are inextricably connected: both the act of founding and the act of the preservation of law includes violence. While Schmitt affirms the link between violence and politics for the rejuvenation of the political spirit, Benjamin is at pains to overcome the dependence on violence in the establishment of a new political order and in the protection of it. Another example of the critique of the first paradigm is Frantz Fanon who attacked western humanism with his argument that in the colonial contexts western rule is always violent and it operates as a destructive force on both the bodies and psyches of the native people. Like Benjamin’s theory of violence the colonial theory of is historical and it is further context-specific; it

also aims at overcoming the existing type of violence with a revolutionary and emancipatory anti-colonial violence. A contemporary figure Slavoj Žižek will be also reviewed to explicate the contours of this approach. Žižek we will see offers a critique of the contemporary discourse on violence and terror by pointing out the link between visible forms of violence and the political order of liberalism and capitalism.

A third position, I call as the “position of ambivalence” I will argue leaves the answer to the question on the relation between violence and politics open. In contrast to the liberal-democratic paradigm that marginalizes the phenomenon of violence, this perspective understands violence as a rational phenomenon. Accordingly, violence has a particular objective. It has an expressive character in politics and at times, it is an efficient means in reaching political goals. Such a perspective differs from the first view by accepting that violence is a component of human relations. It differs from the second perspective, one that treats violence almost an essential feature of politics by treating the issue as a historical occurrence. Some works of the Marxist revolutionary thinkers, criticizing the liberal-democratic tradition for disguising the fundamental systemic violence of capitalism, exemplify this position. Yet still, the Marxist critique fundamentally views revolutionary violence as a historical necessity for the elimination of the exploitative and violent mechanisms of capitalism.

In the introduction to his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant introduces a conceptual framework with several distinctions. He makes the epistemic distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge and the metaphysical distinction between ‘necessary’ and ‘contingent’ propositions. *A priori*

knowledge is knowledge postulated by reason excluding experience; *a posteriori* knowledge, on the other hand, is derived from experience. For *a priori* knowledge, there are two criteria: necessity and strict universality. The claim that necessity is a criterion of the *a priori* ends up with the statement that all knowledge of necessary propositions is *a priori* but not all propositions known *a priori* are necessary. In other words, necessary propositions are propositions the truth-value of which remain constant, namely true across all possible worlds.

Against this background, I think, despite their opposing positions both the liberal-democratic approach and the illiberal critique present “necessary propositions” with regards to the relationship between violence and politics. The knowledge on the relationship between violence and politics presented is a postulate of reason, hence *a priori*. Although theorists of the critique of liberalism seem to derive their arguments from *a posteriori* we will see both in Schmitt and Benjamin, violence is part of the definition of politics. The necessity of violence for the destruction of the ‘violent’ order defended by Fanon and Žižek, on the other hand, in Kantian terms, is presented as a practical necessity—necessity stemming from *a priori* determination of the will; not subject to the approval of any further end, but is an end in itself. In that sense, my contention is that the first two positions do not to recognize the contingent nature of the relationship between politics and violence. In fact, I think they successfully address different aspects of the analytical questions with regards to violence and politics (what counts as violence or not, whether violence is involved in politics or not). We know politics involve violence that there is violence at the establishment and during the sustenance of a political

order thanks to Schmitt, Benjamin and others. We also know a continuous fact or threat of violence deems politics impossible. Non-violence, abstention or control of violence is required for the persistence of an order, the liberal-democratic paradigm tells us. Yet, the two positions diverge from each other in very clear terms, it seems that we have to choose either one or two and take an *a priori* stand—being for or against political violence.

In the face of political violence, statements like “I am against all forms of political violence” seem as naïve as the question “why do they hate us?” since they evade the responsibility of facing the historicity of violence and its relation to politics. Similarly, the idea that “the violence of the oppressed is not the same as the violence of the oppressor” should not rule out the possibility of judging certain acts of violence and the possibility of searching ways for non-violent politics. As a result, my contention is that knowledge and propositions offered by the two positions on the issue of the relationship between violence and politics do not solve the problem of understanding the relationship between violence and politics in historical contexts.

Within this context, my contention will be that that the third perspective can be characterized by contingent claims, based on *a posteriori*, knowledge since it is unclear how pure thought or reason could tell us anything about the actual world as compared to other possible worlds. This stand does not neglect violence as an irrational, unconceivable phenomenon *nor* exalt it as an *élan vital* or an inescapable fact of political life. By accepting it part of human history and politics, it enables an analysis of violence in terms of its emergence, functioning and impact. Such analysis and understanding of violence as we will see in the

coming sections might vary from disapproval to excuse or to legitimation; hence, present multifariousness.

Within this framework, I will pay a particular focus on Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault, two contemporary political thinkers whose works have had significant impact on students of political theory. Both Foucault and Arendt cannot be associated with any political tradition; in fact, their reflections on politics include important critiques of traditional understanding of political concepts and phenomenon. Especially, their conceptualization of power diverges from classical analyses that incited me to read their works with my question asking the relation between violence and politics. I will try understanding their critique of and judgment on the relationship between violence and politics by reviewing some critical works.

The structure of the dissertation is as follows: In the following chapter, I will firstly provide a *précis* of the two paradigms, the approach that excludes violence and the one that views it as an essential aspect of politics in order to better elucidate my categorization. Chapter II will discuss the liberal democratic paradigm that I argue constructs politics on the basis of reason and order which does not problematize violence and its relation to politics and categorically excludes violence from politics. I will review Habermasian conception of politics and its confrontation with violence and then will discuss Rawls' political justice to understand his treatment of the relationship between violence and politics. Chapter III will present a brief review of the second approach with its critique of the liberal-democratic approach. Carl Schmitt's theory of the political, Benjamin's critique of law and violence and Fanon's ideas on colonial and revolutionary violence and Slavoj Žižek's reflections on contemporary

violence will be reviewed as the representative of a second position that views the relationship between violence and politics as constitutive of the politics. Chapter IV will present the contours of a third paradigm that can be characterized with an ambivalent attitude towards the relationship between violence and politics. I will argue that this paradigm adopts a historical approach, treats violence as a structural, rational and even expressive phenomenon. It attempts to understand the relationship between violence and politics by looking into historical dynamics, structural conditions, the rationality of violence and its meaning within politics. Such an approach differs from the first paradigm with its recognition of the relationship between violence and politics and from the second with its rejection of an approach that claims violence is intrinsic to politics. I will argue that it is possible to assess divergences within the third position and at times theorists of ambivalence face the paradox of committing themselves to a position with respect to the use of violence in politics. These ambiguities or paradoxes with respect to the relationship between politics and violence may be considered as the limitations of the position of ambivalence. It is also possible to argue that they constitute its strength for its potentiality for a richer analysis.

After stating that in Part II I will move to Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault, two unorthodox thinkers in terms of their relationship with traditional political thinking and try to elaborate their view on violence and politics. By juxtaposing their views, I would like to broaden the vision of the understanding of violence and politics. Chapter V will discuss Arendt's critique of traditional understanding of power, which is sovereignty based views rule as domination, and therefore is closely linked to violence, despite its discourse of rejection. I

will then move to the presentation of her phenomenological attempt of the refinement of the meaning of power, politics, action and freedom. Power, we will see, is a non-violent phenomenon and a result of collective free action. Chapter VI will review Foucault's problematization of the traditional understanding of relations of power with the argument that a focus on sovereignty, law and violence carries the risk of overlooking modern forms of subjugation that operate in non-violent yet effective ways. Chapter VII and Chapter VIII will discuss Arendt and Foucault's views on the relationship between violence and revolution, respectively. I will show, despite her acceptance and recognition of the role violence played in revolutionary moments, Arendt refutes violence to be the marker of revolution for the latter is not an act of destruction but of foundation. She associates violent upheavals with liberation, a pre-political act in her opinion and argues freedom that is non-violent way of establishing political freedom should be understood as revolutionary. Foucault's views on revolution, I will show, will stand in a striking contrast to Arendt. In his appraisal of the Iranian Revolution, he celebrates the will to 'liberation' in Arendtian terms. It is the argument, presented in Chapter VII that asserts the functioning of modern relations of power, in their disciplinary and bio-political forms render revolutions impossible in western contexts. A reincarnation of a political spirituality that engenders a massive act and a total negation of the present system, in Foucault's view is astonishing and should not be denounced immediately. While Arendt commits herself to a non-absolute, not a priori non-violent position, Foucault, we will see side with a radical ambivalent position, like



Žižek that may even celebrate violence in history. Chapter IX will be a concluding review of the discussion.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FIRST PARADIGM: NON-PROBLEMATIZATION OF THE RELATION BETWEEN VIOLENCE AND POLITICS

This chapter will review the main tenets of the liberal-democratic approach, which excludes violence from the political. I will argue that the exclusion is based on a specific conception of politics. Such exclusion does not mean the rejection of (all forms of) violence from a moralist-pacifist standpoint, exemplified by Tolstoy or Gandhi. Rather, it denotes the exclusion of violence *as an issue of politics* by treating violence as a non-rational, hence non-political phenomenon. The only recognized form of violence is its use by the state as ‘legitimate use of force’.

In early modern liberal thinkers such as Hobbes<sup>11</sup> and Locke violence was a major concern (Buchan, 2001: 27; Creppel, 1996; Baumgold, 1993). For Thomas Hobbes (1968) violent conflict was an aspect of human interaction due

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<sup>11</sup> I should note here that although Hobbes has not been regarded a liberal in its true sense, some scholars have claimed that he is among the founders of liberalism. For such a view see Frank M. Coleman. 1977. *Hobbes and America: Exploring the Constitutional Foundations*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press & Peter. Berkowitz. 1999. *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Hobbes’s name should be included within the list of liberals because he had a significant impact on the later liberal thought in terms of being a source of inspiration and of the target of criticisms.

to individuals' continuous will and desire for power. In the absence of an overarching force, individuals do fight over limited sources of property, necessity and over other sources and symbols of power. Violence emerges in the case of anarchy; however, in Hobbes's account it constitutes a threat to individuals' well-being and property. In his famous *Leviathan* he wrote, "where there is no common Power, there is no Law: where no Law, no Injustice. Force, and Fraud, are in warre the two Cardinall vertues" (Hobbes, 1968:188). From a Hobbesian point of view, a reckoning about the costs of state of nature (the fear of a possible violent death) would end up with the decision of leaving the insecure state of nature and entering a compact with the absolutist monarch. Rather than being killed by an arbitrary attacker the citizens are expected to choose a relatively secure order and to obey an absolute ruler. The presence and even the threat of violence, therefore, justify the foundation of state authority. A stateless order does not necessarily lead to a state of war nor does anarchy denote a lawless condition for John Locke (1980: 10); yet for him arbitrary and excessive violence is an evil that should be avoided in the state of nature too. The state is needed for the regulation of violence, i.e. punishment of those who trespass the natural law and social order. Thence, constraining violence at civil and state level was an important part of early liberal theory; the choice of emphasizing one over the other has become a source of tension as well. This we see in Kant, the optimist and pacifist Enlightenment philosopher. Even though he seems to trust in the capacity of Reason in human beings, Kant follows Hobbes's depiction of the state of nature and contends that the lack of state would denote a chaotic condition and a brutal life. For this reason, he opposes anarchy at any cost; even the worst form of government is better than anarchy

(Kant, 1989b: 118). In works such as *Metaphysics of Morals* (1999b), *On the Common Saying* (1989a: 81) and *Perpetual Peace* (1989b: 118), he explicitly rejects the citizens' right to use violence. It is not possible to overthrow a government with violent means even if that government does not act in conformity with the principle of right. Furthermore, he argues, "everyone may use violent means to compel another to enter into a juridical state of society" (Kant, 1999b: 116). For him, someone who does not want to be a part of the lawful society cannot be exempt from law since his outlaw status represents a threat to the freedom of those who are part of a political order. The right to freedom requires and affirms the enforcement of those to join the political society and to live under positive laws.

Early liberal thinkers, therefore, desire a political order based on a certain type of rationality and they require citizens' agreement on that rationality. Such a depiction also foresees the enforcement of the 'rationale' of body politics to everyone *via* coercion. As a result, as some have argued liberalism's fear from "spontaneous, uncontrolled and chaotic violence" (Buchan, 2001: 30) gives way to a paradox that they cannot manage to solve. The desire to escape from uncontrolled violence ends up with the attempt of taming and constraining it in the hands of the state. A strong state holds the right to use force against possible threats of violence, which by being outside the boundaries of the political order and out of the control of the political authority is defined as barbaric, irrational, and dangerous.

According to Buchan (2001: 28), among contemporary liberals, almost alone Judith Shklar paid attention to the question of violence. Her engagement concluded that a pervasive and ineradicable fear of violence, or 'cruelty' in her

words, defined as “the willful inflicting of physical pain on a weaker being in order to cause anguish and fear” (Shklar, 2004: 156), particularly of “invasive or arbitrary acts of cruelty by the state,” constitutes liberalism’s solid foundation” (Shklar, 1989: 29 in Buchan, 2001: 30). “This fear of state violence is an important feature of liberal thought,” Buchan (2001: 30) writes, but it is no more so than the fear of civil violence. Despite the noted role violence plays in the construction of the political in early modern state theories of Hobbes and Locke, and despite its claimed impact over the tradition, the contemporary liberal-democratic theory has remained mostly silent on the subject of violence. The argument John Keane (1996: 8) rose in his *Reflections on Violence* when he says that contemporary “theorists have clothed violence with ‘an aura of strangeness’ and absented it from the mainstream discourse then should be explored if not true.

It is against this background I will take Habermas and Rawls as the two contemporary figures of the approach that deem violence mostly as invisible, irrational and non-political phenomenon. In the following sections, I will present a précis of two thinkers’ views in order to better elucidate my argument on the silence of liberalism on the issue of violence. Being aware of the vast literature that explores the differences between two philosophers, I would like to note that their divergences are beyond the scope of this discussion. My treatment of Habermas and Rawls within the same category derives from the assessment that they share a similar normative ground. I contend that both value the neutrality and universality of human reason to establish a moral ground for a political order. Both argue that legitimate political systems sustain the co-existence of differentiated yet benign interests, opinions and identities within

modern societies. The establishment of such systems is only possible with the proper understanding and functioning of the notion of ‘public reason’, they found in Kant as valuable. In their respective attempts of reformulating the concept of public reason, Rawls relies on the notions of ‘reasonability’ in order to develop his political conception of justice. Habermas, on the other hand, emphasizes an intersubjective conception of reason and offers communication as a politically relevant action. As I have stated above, in these conceptions, neither constitutive nor disruptive violence is taken as a problem. Both Habermas and Rawls, we will see, eschew the question of violence; they view it as an irrational, unreasonable and therefore non-political phenomenon. In the next section, I will firstly present a brief overview of Habermas’s critical project, his theory of politics and its treatment of violence wherever it can be found.

## **2.1. Habermas and Communicative Action**

According to Bernstein (1992: 207), Habermas’s work can be read “as a rethinking and rewriting of the Dialectic of Enlightenment<sup>12</sup>”, as it systematically seeks to fulfill the emancipatory promise of modernity and overcome its shortcomings and contradictions. While agreeing with Weber and Frankfurt School thinkers in their assessment that the project of Enlightenment is at jeopardy with increased domination of instrumental reason over socio-cultural life and nature in modern societies, Habermas argues that a pessimist

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<sup>12</sup> In the *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Habermas lays the contours of his critical approach and explains how his endeavour differs from the first generation of Frankfurt School. See, Habermas, Jürgen. 1987. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. Frederick Lawrence, tr. The MIT Press: Cambridge.

view would do an injustice to the Critical Theory and to the promises of Enlightenment.

In his earlier works, closer to those of the Frankfurt School, he suggested to understand the Dialectic of Enlightenment: that is increased rationalization equated with objectification socio-historically. In his attempt to reformulate Critical Theory, he paid a particular attention to the functioning of the political, economic and cultural institutions and the contradictions of 'late capitalism'. Contrary to the orthodox-Marxist view, for Habermas, in late-capitalist modern societies, class-conflicts were smoothed *via* state's increased intervention into the economic domain in the forms of "credits, price guarantees, subsidies, loans, secondary redistribution of income, government contracts guided by business-cycle policy, indirect labor-market policy, etc." (Habermas, 1976: 35). However, being limited in nature, these interventions did not eliminate the class-based conflicts inherent to capitalism. Rather, they were transferred to the political sphere, turned "into normative crises, and eventually crises of the whole state" (McCarthy, 1976).

Another important historical transformation one witnesses in late capitalism is the entwining of the state and society, epitomized with the social welfare state and mass democracy (Habermas, 1974). As we will see in the following chapters, Habermas, as Arendt does, opposes this development. He argues that the public sphere, an important heritage of bourgeoisie culture of the eighteenth-century, started to lose its mediating role and its critical function in modern societies. The public sphere was the domain where citizens engaged in rational-critical debates in the formation of a public opinion on the matters of general concern. Furthermore, it served the purpose of a civil control

mechanism over the state and its use of power. This domain enabled the rise of ‘enlightened parties’ and engendered democratic transformations in western societies.<sup>13</sup> In the so called “social welfare state mass democracy”, however, even though fundamental rights have been extended, the notions of public and the public sphere have structurally transformed. The function of the latter has been lost. Conflicts of the private sphere now intrude into the public sphere and dominate politics. Public debates and practices have turned into arcane policies of special interests (Habermas, 1974: 55).

Habermas after focusing on the structural transformations brought forward by late capitalism, shifted towards the search for normative basis for the revival and of sustainment of democratic politics in his later works. In fact, he never returned to the analysis of capitalism, which he assessed to be crisis-ridden both in economic and political terms. Rather, his specific attention was paid to the idea of reason, the seed of a productive approach found in Kantian epistemology and ethics. In his attempt of reformulating reason as a capacity relevant for politics, Habermas also aimed taking guard against the postmodernist and deconstructivist views of Enlightenment reason as a ahistorical conception with its claim to universality, totalizing in character and yet instrumental and ideological in its use.

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<sup>13</sup> Habermas’s idealization of public sphere receives criticism on several accounts. For a critical interrogation that points out the exclusionary character of the bourgeois public sphere and reconstruction of it *via* mechanisms such as by enabling subaltern counterpublics to contest the wider public or creating plural public spheres see, Nancy Fraser. 1990. “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy”. *Social Text* 25/26: 56-80. For a remedial work that points out an emphasis on culture see: Seyla Benhabib. 2002. *The Claims of Culture. Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*. Princeton University Press: New Jersey. For an intervention that aims to include other form of communication such as greeting, rhetoric, and narrative to the traditional ‘Western’ ways of argumentation for an inclusive public sphere see Iris Marion Young. 2000. *Inclusion and Democracy*, Oxford University Press: Oxford.



The central argument of Kant's critique according to Habermas is that reason rather than being an instrument of contemplative activities is a practical faculty to be employed in moral and political domains. Separated from strategic and instrumental implications, reason is associated with freedom and autonomy in both domains. In developing knowledge of existing practices, the world, of one's own understanding and in ruling self without any guidance or interference from another, freedom is seen as the prerequisite and result of the capacity of reason.<sup>14</sup> In its private use, the rational faculty is treated as a source in reaching universalizable principles, which further provides guidelines for one's moral actions. As we know, for Kant there are two different ways of justifying an action. One can either claim that the purpose of action would be good, or refer to a principle or rule, which is self-evidently good. The 'categorical imperative', in this sense, becomes the central concept of Kantian moral philosophy. Defined as an unconditional principle valid for every person and justifiable at every time, it obliges every person to act in accordance with the maxim, which can at the same time make itself a universal law (Kant, 2002).

Habermas agrees with Kant on the point that moral judgments do and should have a rational basis with an appeal to reason and that they can be justified accordingly. He also affirms that the ideal of constituting society can be realized both on rational and moral bases (McCarthy, 1994). Though

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<sup>14</sup> In *What is Enlightenment* Kant (1989: 55-56; emphasis original) writes, "The *public* use of one's reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among men. The *private* use of reason, may quite often be very narrowly restricted, however, without undue hindrance to the progress of enlightenment. But by the public use of one's reason I mean that use which anyone make of it *as a man of learning* addressing the entire *reading public*. What I term the private use of reason is that which a person make of it in a particular *civil* post or office, which he is entrusted. Now in some affairs, which affect the interests of the commonwealth we require a certain mechanism whereby some members of the commonwealth must behave purely passively so that they may, by an artificial common agreement, be employed by the government for public ends (or at least deterred from vitiating them). It is, of course, impermissible to argue in such cases; obedience is imperative."

appreciating the merits of Kantian reason, he argues that Kant's overall conception of reason is "monological" (Habermas, 1987). The monological character of reason implies that the universal principles supposed to guide and justify the motives and ends of one's actions are derived from the self, regardless of its supposed impartial position. Hence, it is subject-centered. It is also abstract because the principles of reason operate at the cognitive level and miss contextual and historical particularities. Not giving up the ideal of universality and normativity, Habermas proposes an intersubjective conception of reason, which can be translated into historical and practical contexts. For Habermas, the notion of "communicative rationality" provides the basis on which universality and normativity claims can be grounded. For him (Habermas, 1984: 10), communicative rationality, "the unconstrained, unifying, consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech," is a central experience in the lives of human beings. Thence, it is unavoidable and universal. As opposed to other forms of actions, the communicative praxis is oriented towards the reaching of a truth *via* argumentation; therefore, it has the potential of becoming valid and morally binding for the participants.

The theory of "discourse ethics", based on such an approach, outlines the requirements of the claims of universality and validity of a contested norm within an argumentation and consensus-reaching process. "Argumentation insures that all concerned in principle take part, freely and equally, in a cooperative search for truth, where nothing coerces anyone except the force of the better argument" (Habermas, 1990: 198). The discourse ethics has to also assure that no agent affected by the norm in question is excluded from the debate. Each participant is required to have equal possibility to present and

criticize the validity claims of arguments. Participants are assumed to be willing and able to empathize with each other's validity claims. Existing power differences are neutralized so that they do not affect the communicative process of consensus reaching. Finally, participants explicitly state the contents of their goals and intentions and prove their non-strategic content. Upon the guarantee of such discursive presumptions, anyone holds in dialogical practice, an agreed norm is held to be valid if all "the consequences and side effects that its general observance can be expected...for the satisfaction of the particular interests of each person affected" (Habermas, 1990: 120) are accepted freely by that all affected.

The first implication of understanding rationality in communicative terms is that it presents a new view on political subjectivity, different from the atomistic conception of classical liberalism and also from the organic conception of republicanism, which tends to see the citizens as a unit-mass (Habermas, 1996a). By being social creatures, individuals engage with communicative and co-operative actions from motives other than self-interest. The political subjectivity, herein, not only is derived from the capability of deliberation, but also offered to be 'practiced' *via* rational argumentation, mutual understanding and consensus-formation.

The second implication of the idea of communicative reason relates to the conception of politics. Formulated in his later works Habermas argues that his theory of communicative action and the discourse ethics prescribe a participatory and "deliberative" model of democracy. The deliberative model is differentiated from the liberal-contractual model, by not viewing politics in terms of the coordination of divergent interests among private persons in the

image of a market-structured network. Habermas's 'deliberative democracy' underlines the importance of "the institutionalization of a public use of reason jointly exercised by autonomous citizens" (Habermas, 1996a: 23). Habermas's previously mentioned vexation on the political crises mass democracies face in terms of their losing legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens and of weakening of political engagement is offered to be overcome with this intervention as well. Accordingly, in a political system all rules must be subject to rational discussions by relevant social agents in order to test their validity by receiving participants' opinions, reservations and oppositions. This principle, it is argued, guarantees the system's inclusiveness and sensitivity to the differences within a society. This form of politics also emphasizes the formal processes through which democratic, rational claims are brought forward and translated into political rules. The provision of an autonomous public sphere for rational debates to take place among citizens, opening channels of communication between the state and society and of incorporating them into legal-institutional structure are the prerequisites of a viable democratic politics.

A third implication of communicative rationality pertains to the claim of legitimacy of a specific law and of the legal system in general. By ensuring the freedom and autonomy of the public use of reason, its practice by every political actor and the validity of claims *via* rational debates and institutionalization of the commonly agreed norms, the tension between legality and democracy is overcome. This approach also enables one to bring modern law, popular sovereignty and human rights together, securing both private and public autonomy in a balanced manner (Habermas, 1996b: 129). Furthermore, since law making (formulation of constitution, laws, policies, regulations etc.) is

conceptualized as an ongoing process and as an indispensable part of democratic politics, reflexivity of a political system and its openness to change are considered providing the legitimacy the system needs. Within this context, we might ask whether violence intrudes into such process of democratic process and if so on what terms.

*Habermas: "Did Somebody Say Violence?"*

It is apparent from a Habermasian perspective politics is a rational, dialogical, empathic and even therapeutic process. The reaching of a consensus is emphasized within this process with the employment of only the force of the better argument. For that matter, the issue of violence (and even conflict) becomes tangential if not absent. Violence does not have a place in the political domain nor it is touched upon within the theory of communication because it does not have an expressive character. From a Habermasian perspective, we can argue violence does not induce a claim to be verified, debated or rejected by the public. Hence, it is mute. By being coercive and counteracting the freedom and equality of the members of a given community, it is muting as well. Violence would undermine politics and cannot be a part of it. Even in the early works, which deal with the problem of legitimacy crisis in modern societies, Habermas does not reckon or give an account of cases where crises turn into violent conflicts. This is despite the fact that he did live through the Second World War and the violence of the Nazi regime. In fact, in his essay entitled *Learning from Catastrophe* he criticizes approaches that "oblige us to look at the gruesome features of a century that 'invented' the gas chambers, total war, state-sponsored genocide and extermination camps, brainwashing, state security apparatuses,

and the panoptic surveillance of entire populations” (Habermas, 2001: 45). These approaches are missing the reverse side of catastrophes. From a Habermasian view, Enlightenment in itself is an emancipatory process and it has no inherent totalitarian potentials. The catastrophes we have witnessed, in fact, are indicators that it remained an unfinished project and the task should be to bring this project to completion. For him, in this sense, the twentieth century, particularly the 1945 represents a ‘turning point’, a turn toward something better, toward the mastering of the force of barbarism that had broken through the very foundations of civilization in Germany (Habermas, 2001: 40-45) by looking for and establishing a new normative ground. The postwar period with the Cold War prevented the eruption of a hot war, the decolonialization process ended the dependence of colonial countries, and finally the establishment of the social welfare state sustains stable economic growth and relatively just redistribution systems (Habermas, 2001: 47-48). Witnessing these developments, Habermas writes, even the “Marxist historian such as Eric Hobsbawm to celebrate the postwar era as a ‘golden age’” (Habermas, 2001: 48). Thus, he chose not to look into the phenomenon of violence. Not only is the debate on the direct use of force excluded from his theory. A whole range of means, which might be used to influence others’ will and opinions such as threats, persuasion, manipulation, or agitation is not differentiated either. He lumps them together in the category of instrumental use of reason, places them in stark contrast with communicative power and excludes from the public sphere. Politics is about rational communication and mutual understanding. Emotions such as passions, fears or jealousies, partialities like prejudices, or situations such as misunderstandings do not belong to the political sphere;

therefore, as argued, Habermasian politics inevitably becomes blind to social antagonisms (Palacios, 2009: 64-65).

The eruption of violent acts is treated as either exceptional phenomena or the result of “distorted communication”. In the *Learning from Catastrophe* essay, his depiction of the Cold War period and the arms race that took place between the US and the USSR reveals his treatment of the issue as an irrational, excessive and mad phenomenon that can be assessed in his discourse as well.

He writes,

The continuing spiral of an *arrogant, exhausting* arms race certainly succeeded in keeping directly threatened nations in a state of continual fear. Nevertheless the *mad* calculations of a balance of *terror* - MAD was the self-ironic abbreviation for mutually assured destruction - did prevent the outbreak of a hot war (Habermas, 2001: 47; emphasis mine)

At another instance reviewing Herbert Marcuse’s excitement and celebration of the 1968 student movements, he criticizes the Frankfurt theorist’s reading of youth revolt to be linked with revolution “a conception of the total transformation of the whole” (Habermas, 2001: 161). The “*illusory* equation of rebellious youth with a revolutionary vanguard” is a result of the “*impulse* of a philosophy of life, *tinged with Freudianism*” and it “secured Marcuse’s wide influence for the *grandchildren’s* generation” (Habermas, 2001: 161; emphasis mine). For Habermas, only the approval of the impulse to revolt could explain Marcuse’s “ambiguous comments on the question of the use of violence” when he asserts, “I have in no way equated humanity with nonviolence. On the contrary, I have spoken of situations where a transition to violence is precisely in the interest of humanity” (Marcuse in Habermas, 2001: 161). Against Marcuse, Habermas argued that the employment of violent means by the

student protestors was “game-playing with terror” and had “fascist implications”. In the late 1960s, in his journalistic writings, Habermas entered debates with the leaders of student movements and accused Rudi Dutschke, (one of the most prominent figures of the German student movement in 1960s and the leader of the *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*) with “leftist fascism” (Habermas in Specter 2010: 115; Wiggershaus, 1995: 619). One scholar (Specter, 2010: 115) notes that he corresponded<sup>15</sup> with Marcuse in July 1968 and asked him to clarify his argument that presents employment of violence as a natural right during protest movements in his *Repressive Tolerance*. Apart from the astonishment he felt in the face of Marcuse’s defense of violence, Habermas notes differences between Germany and the U.S., asserting that it is the ground that constitutes Marcuse’s reflections (Habermas, 1969; Specter, 2010: 115)<sup>16</sup>. His remark quoted by Specter (2010: 115) verifies Habermas’s position on the extremity of violence and almost the impossibility of its justification within politics:

Violence can be legitimately volitional and can promote emancipation only when it is enforced by the oppressive sway of a situation that enters consciousness as something totally unbearable. Only this kind of violence is revolutionary; those who ignore this fact wrongfully carry the nimbus of Rosa Luxemburg aloft.

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<sup>15</sup> Specter (2010) notes the data of the correspondence as, Habermas, Jürgen . 1969. “Letter to Marcuse”, *Krausharr, Frankfurter Schule* 2:323, 625.

<sup>16</sup> In *Toward A Rational Society*, he (1969: 29) writes

In the United States the underprivileged of the black population and the war in Vietnam are two acute, clearly defined and obvious conflicts, which daily produce new violence and therefore provoke counterviolence. In Germany, manifest conditions of a comparable order of magnitude are lacking. Naturally in the Federal Republic there are the permanent conflicts of organized welfare-state capitalism and the particular conflicts of a divided nation. But we have no ghettos that could possibly serve as the basis for urban guerrilla actions, and no students who are drafted to fight guerrillas in Southeast Asia...The attempts of our activists to challenge and make manifest the violence of institutions are therefore a bit superficial compared with the actions of the New Left in the United States.



The argument of ‘distorted communication’, on the other hand, points out the problems when strategic forms of rationality dominate lifeworlds, economic inequalities surmount and deprive individuals of their capabilities for autonomous participation to political life, when a group of people is excluded by the system or some others act under the impact of fundamental ideologies, communication channels become distorted. Violence, in that sense, is read as a symptom of the dysfunction within political system.

The issue of global terrorism, which received particular attention in the aftermath of September 11, is analyzed within these parameters as well. In a series of interviews conducted by a scholar (Borradori, 2003) Habermas expressed his reflections on the issue of terror with the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. While Derrida considers terrorism as a problem intrinsic to modernity, according to Habermas, terror is a response to the structural problems brought by the uneven globalization process, intensified by unfledged and damaged channels of communication. However, he warns against the particularity of the phenomenon of terror. Accordingly, there is a difference between the global terror and violence that is seen in the paramilitary form of guerilla warfare. While the Palestinian and Chechnyan violence exemplify the latter form of ‘terror’, 9/11 carries

“anarchistic traits of an impotent revolt directed against an enemy that cannot be defeated in any pragmatic sense. The only possible effect it can have is to shock and alarm the government and population...Global terrorism is extreme both in its lack of realistic goals and in its cynical exploitation of the vulnerability of complex systems” (Habermas in Borradori, 2003: 34).

The global terror, Habermas argues, also differs from violence witnessed in the form of petty crimes, oppositions and conflicts within Western societies

(Habermas in Borradori, 2003: 34). Even though ‘structural violence’ (i.e. socio-economic inequalities, discrimination, marginalization) is a fact of Western societies and even though it can turn into direct violence in these contexts, he argues “practices that constitute...[people’s]...lives with others...rests on a solid basis of a common background convictions, self-evident cultural truths and reciprocal expectations” (Habermas in Borradori, 2003: 63). In terrorist actions, on the other hand, parties do not recognize each other as participatory members of a community (Habermas in Borradori, 2003: 19). A ‘terrorist’, in that sense is different from a ‘rebel’, who Habermas thinks is a crucial actor of a democratic order, as it will be explained in following paragraphs. For Habermas, one should not confuse a terrorist with an enemy either. He criticizes the slogan of “war against terror” with the argument that such an approach elevates terrorists to the status of enemies in war. Global terrorism cannot be fought within the framework of and by the means of traditional warfare. “Only the effective coordination of intelligence services, police forces, and criminal justice procedures will strike at the logistics of the adversary” (Habermas and Cronin, 2006: 184) and remedied by the western rationality. Since politics is a therapeutic process, it is also the duty of Western nations to re-establish channels of communication by reducing the gap of economic inequalities between western and non-western contexts. In the formulation of nonviolent solutions to the problems of globalization, miscommunication and lack of communication, he emphasizes the importance of intercultural dialogue and cooperation.

As presented, in a Habermasian democratic political system, deep oppositions do not seem to be likely. If there would be any (oppositions) they

could only be in a non-violent form. Habermas's views on civil disobedience affirm this position. When civil protests became widespread in West Germany in the early 1980s in the case of the deployment of American nuclear missiles in the country, he indicated his consent on the form and content of such oppositions. Differing from his previous reactions to the 'radical' student movements in 1968 Habermas wrote civil protest movements are a "constituent part of the political culture of a developed democratic community" (Habermas, 1985: 136). They are also challenges to be answered by a democratic *Rechtsstaat*. These oppositions demand legal corrections, jurisprudential innovations. For this reason, denying their demands or failing in answering them would undermine the legitimacy of the state and the validity of the democratic legal procedures (Habermas, 1985: 136). A 'rebel' in that sense is a potential guardian of state's legitimacy. He writes, "normatively considered, a democratic state is based *equally* on two ideas: the state's guarantee of internal peace and legal security for all citizens and the demand that the state order be freely and rationally acknowledged as legitimate by its citizens." An emphasis on legal security, in a Hobbesian sense, demands 'unconditional' obedience while a claim for legitimacy asks for 'qualified' i.e. rational obedience to the law. Habermas argues even Kant was influenced by Hobbes's fear from unregulated violence and rejected the right to resist, which might lead to insecurity and disorder. Such rejection, however, is problematic since it views any form of resistance as a challenge to state's monopoly over use or force. The alternative approach, promoting a freely and rationally acknowledged political order, tolerates rebels and rebellions. In viewing oppositions as challenges, Habermas states that obedience to the laws and obedience to the constitution are

distinct issues. “The legitimating principles of a constitution must be independently acknowledged whether or not the written laws accords with it. When they clash, obedience to the laws is no longer demanded unconditionally” (Habermas, 1985: 136).

All the same, one has to acknowledge that for Habermas civil disobedience cannot be legalized. It lies in an ambiguous terrain between legitimacy and legality (Habermas, 1985: 137). Civil disobedience “is justified in light of an idea of the *Rechtstaat* which is based on its full realization; but it is not in accordance with positive right as existent within the actual society” (Habermas, 1985: 137). Neither legitimate nor legal, the act of civil disobedience is at the mercy of the political authorities for toleration. In order to gain that toleration, the act is required to fulfill several conditions. First of all, civil disobedience must be “*symbolic* and *non-violent* in character and... [must have]...the intention of appealing to a majority” (Habermas, 1985: 137; emphasis mine). If a demonstration while opposing the launching of nuclear missiles (i.e. state’s preparation for the use of violent means) utilizes force, then it cannot have a rightful claim to ‘civility’ and ‘disobedience’. The argument that civil disobedience must be non-violent implies that the monopoly over the use of violent means belongs to the state only and no civil party can engage with such means. Furthermore, in order to be recognized as a challenge to the *Rechtstaat*, the action must fulfill three conditions: First, the legal procedure as a whole must remain intact. Secondly, the disobedient must accept responsibility for the legal consequences of her actions. And finally, the rebel must be able to ground her disobedience in acknowledged, constitutional

principles regardless of his subjective convictions. What makes a ‘rebel’ rebellious different from a ‘complaining citizen’, Habermas does not explain.

As a result, as we have seen the Habermasian politics is a neat and well designed, thoroughly considered and elaborated theoretical construction. The assessment and presentation of ‘communicative reason’ as an inevitable aspect of human existence and the formulation of democratic politics on this basis are invaluable contributions.<sup>17</sup> However, this politics is possible with the exclusion of too many issues including violence. The exclusion of violence takes place in three forms. First of all, violence is denied an expressive character. It cannot communicate anything; it is a malady and sometimes is a symptom of a structural problem or of the distortion of communicative channels. Yet no analysis that can dwell on the issue is offered. Secondly, violence is neglected as a problem of other domains such as an issue of the private sphere or of trouble of a particular culture.<sup>18</sup> Thirdly, the violence of the system, the coercive mechanisms of the state such as police violence, is not problematized.

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<sup>17</sup> Here a strong challenge comes from Jacques Rancière who argues that politics is not a rational debate between agreement-oriented parties rather is the struggle carried out by one (or group) to be heard or recognized as a voice to be listened. See: Jacques Rancière. 1999. *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis.

<sup>18</sup> The treatment of the issue of violence against women in immigrant communities in Western contexts exemplifies this case. We see that ‘public discussions’ on the issue particularly focus on phenomenon such as honor killing or forced marriages and link them to culture or to religion or to the level of development of the origin country. These discussions not only lead to the stigmatization of a community and to the essentializing a particular culture but also with the display of a disapproving attitude it contributes to the reinforcement of the idea of the superiority of the western norms. Special measures are taken to treat the matter at hand, yet they fail to solve the problem of violence against women in general. A structural approach, on the other hand, might look into the possibility that those practices (re)emerge in the western contexts where immigrant communities feel insecure, excluded from the public, threatened by the dominant culture, and might work on the transformation of such conditions. Furthermore, it might also argue that special measures could only solve the issue at the point yet they fail to link it with the general problem of violence against women within the framework of patriarchy. Hence, there is a possible problem of leading of public discussions from the perspective of western ‘reason’ and within the limits of western discourse, which might be positive rather than critical, therapeutic rather than empathetic.

As we will see in the following section, Rawls is not exempt from these problems either. The next part will present the Rawlsian conception of political; discuss it with references to the Habermasian politics and then will look into its understanding of the issue of violence within political liberalism.

## **2.2. Rawls and Political Liberalism**

For McCarthy (1994: 46), Habermas's theory of 'communicative reason' involves procedural reformulation of Kantian categorical imperative. Rather than deriving maxims from one's reason, Habermas submits them to others' argumentation and tests their claim to universal validity by weighing reasons pro and con. Rawls agrees with Habermas on the moral and political importance of the concept of public reason in the establishment of a just political order within pluralist societies. However, his interpretation of categorical imperative differs from Habermas by being more foundational than procedural. Habermas, as a follower of the Continental political philosophy and its critical branch engages with the emancipatory potential of Enlightenment reason in his works. Rawls, on the other hand, belongs to the Anglo-American tradition, exemplified by social-contractarianism and utilitarianism (Ingram, 2002). As opposed to the utilitarian approach, he wants to rely on the social contract model and offers reason as a moral category, which is thin in substance and limited in scope yet still politically and morally relevant for the organization of a just society. In such a reformulation, violence as an issue does not find a place either.

For Rawls (1989: 234; 1987: 4) the fact of pluralism i.e. the diversity of religious, philosophical and moral doctrines is one of the characteristics of

modern societies. In Middle Ages, the existence of a political community was generally maintained within the framework of such fundamental doctrines, e.g. Christian faith backed up by coercive force of the state. In modern societies, however, diverse perspectives proliferate especially in the absence of a general affirmation one perspective by state's coercive power. Furthermore, since they are generally conflicting and irreconcilable with each other it is unlikely that rational arguments and/or debates on important moral, religious, and philosophical questions would end up with consensus by all parties. Yet still, Rawls argues, it is possible and necessary to establish a political order, which successfully maintains some measure of societal agreement. In Rawls's (1989: 235) words, "an *enduring* and *secure* democratic regime, one not divided into contending doctrinal confessions and hostile social classes, must be willingly and freely supported by at least a substantial majority of its politically active citizen" (emphasis mine).

"Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought," writes Rawls (1999: 3) in his introduction to his famous *Theory of Justice*. This assertion makes it explicit that from Rawls's perspective an enduring and secure democratic regime can be founded only by the establishment of a just order. In the establishment of such an order, Rawls confers a trust upon a sense of fairness, which for him is found in every individual. That common sense might constitute a ground for the conception of 'political justice' for Rawls and for this reason, he asks his readers to think of a hypothetical situation, similar to the 'state of nature' of social-contract theorists. The 'original position' in Rawlsian theory depicts a condition where individuals lack any knowledge about their place in society, their class position or status, or

about their natural assets and abilities, intelligence and strength, and the like (1999: 137). Individuals are also considered lacking of their conception of the good, particulars of their rational plan of life, or of even the special features of psychology such as optimism or pessimism, so that they would not know what effect their decisions will have on their own life conditions (Rawls, 1999). By being behind a “veil of ignorance”, Rawls argues, individuals would be tempted to agree upon the basic principles of a moral and political order. As reasonable beings, they would agree with most extensive liberties compatible with the liberties of others (*equal liberty principle*). Furthermore, they would desire an arrangement of socioeconomic inequalities in such a way that it could maximally benefit the least favored in society. A second stipulation of this principle is that everyone would want to have equal opportunity and equal means to compete for positions conferring socioeconomic advantage (*difference/equality principle*).

Rawls tries to operationalize his conception of political justice in his later work *Political Liberalism* by elucidating the contours of the concept and shifting his emphasis from the ‘original position’ to the notions of ‘reasonability’ and the ‘overlapping consensus’.<sup>19</sup> Similar to the idea presented in the ‘original position’ he argues that personal interests, collective views must be excluded for the achievement of an ‘overlapping consensus’ (Rawls, 2005: 22-29) in a given society. An overlapping consensus, “consists of all the reasonable opposing religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines likely to

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<sup>19</sup> Numerous scholars have debated the shift from his early work, *The Theory of Justice* to the later corrections presented in *Political Liberalism*. I am not concerned with such arguments since although some differences can be detected, the general idea of a political justice based on the notion of a public reason remains intact. For a discussion see Alejandro, Roberto. 1996. “What Is Political about Rawls’ Political Liberalism?” *The Journal of Politics*, 58 (1):1-24.



persist over generations and to gain a sizable body of adherents in a more or less just constitutional regime, a regime in which the criterion of justice is that political conception itself” (Rawls, 2005: 15). An overlapping consensus signifies the acknowledgment of certain authorities, the compliance with certain institutional arrangements, founded on a convergence of self- or group-interests and the recognition and of sharing of the liberal principles and virtues (Rawls, 1987).

A political conception of justice, Rawls underlines, is limited with the basic structures (social, political and economic institutions) of a modern democratic society (Rawls, 1987: 3) meaning that it is not applicable to other domains such as personal relations. Secondly, he argues, a political conception of justice cannot be derived from general and comprehensive doctrines e.g. perfectionism and utilitarianism (Rawls, 1987: 4). Rather, it must be autonomous from such views but at the same time, “must allow for a diversity of general and comprehensive doctrines, and for the plurality of conflicting, and indeed incommensurable, conceptions of the meaning, value and purpose of human life... affirmed by the citizens of democratic societies” (Rawls, 1987: 4). The political conception of justice is not a comprehensive doctrine, since it does not present itself as “metaphysically or religiously true, but rather as a specification of the reasonable at the level of content” (Van de Putte, 1995: 110). Yet still, the political conception of justice is a moral conception in itself since it asserts ideals, principles and norms, values with political and moral implications.

In the previous section, I have sketched three points Habermasian view of communicative rationality brings forward with regards to the understanding

of subjectivity, politics and political legitimacy. A short review of Rawls' theory makes it explicit that it operates on similar presumptions. Akin to Habermas, the political subject of Rawls is a minimally social being. For him, "while the atomistic individual can engage in rational inference, the reasonable individual is an individual in a social context—for to be reasonable means desiring a working social world in which reciprocity is possible" (Frazer and Lacey, 1995: 239). Rawls's political subject is equipped with particular qualities such as a sense of justice, the tendency of being reasonable and with virtues of tolerance and civility, paving the way for a peaceful socio-political co-existence. "The virtues of tolerance and being ready to meet others halfway, and the virtue of reasonableness and the sense of fairness... constitute a very great public good, part of society's political capital" (Rawls, 1987: 17). Unlike Habermas, however, the Rawlsian subject is assumed to leave personal concerns, interests, ideological or doctrinal beliefs, values and prejudices behind before entering the political domain.<sup>20</sup> In the original position, the 'veil of ignorance' ensures such a stripping; in modern societies, the distinction he makes between 'public' and 'non-public' uses of reason serve for this purpose.

Since the ancient times many of the political philosophers have asserted that 'politics' is an activity with specific characteristics, the 'political' sphere differs from other domains (of human activities in terms of its foundational

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<sup>20</sup>On the difference between Rawls's and his approach Habermas writes, "if we wish to preserve the intuition underlying the Kantian universalization principle, we can respond to this fact of pluralism in different ways. Rawls imposes a common perspective on the parties in the original position through informational constraints and thereby neutralizes the multiplicity of particular interpretive perspectives from the outset. Discourse ethics, by contrast, views the moral point of view as embodied in an intersubjective practice of argumentation which enjoins those involved to an idealizing enlargement of their interpretive perspectives." For an exchange between Habermas and Rawls; See. Jürgen Habermas. 1995. "Reconciliation through the Public use of Reason: Remarks on John Rawls's Political Liberalism", *The Journal of Philosophy*, 92 (3): 109-131 and John Rawls, 1995. "Political Liberalism: Reply to Habermas". *The Journal of Philosophy*, 92 (3): 132-180.

grounds and operating mechanisms). Rawls is not an exception in this sense, but his formulation of the ‘political’ and ‘politics’ are strictly delimited (Mouffe, 1993: 41-59; Alexander 2010). As I have mentioned in the introductory section, such formulations and separation of domains are the critical features of liberal theories, which enable them to avoid troubled issues such as violence. In Rawls, the political is demarcated from economic, personal and social domains, contrasted with the familial, domestic, associational, and communal affairs and institutions (Frazer and Lacey, 1995: 239; Rawls, 2005: 137). Personal reflections, deliberations or debates within associations such as universities or churches are considered as non-public use of reason (Rawls, 2005: 213). Therefore, many platforms, critical for the formation of public opinion even for Habermas for example, are considered as social and non-public domains by Rawls (McCarthy, 1994).

The content of such debates is also limited in terms of its eligibility for being political. Rawls argues, for citizens and legislators the use of public reason do not apply to all political questions but only to those discussions on “constitutional essentials” and questions of basic justice within public political forums. (Rawls, 2002: 133; 2005: 214) Public reason is exemplified in “the discourse of judges in their decisions, and especially of the judges of a supreme court; the discourse of government officials, especially chief executives and legislators; and finally, the discourse of candidates for public office and their campaign managers, especially in their public oratory, party platforms, and political statements” (Rawls, 2002: 133; 2005: 220-223). When expressing their consent and/or objections to questions of basic justice or constitutional essentials, citizens are required to consider themselves as if they are

legislators.<sup>21</sup> The requirement of identification with the public also necessitates citizens “to appear in public as interpreting the same political conception” (Van de Putte, 1995: 114) even if they do not reach the same conclusion on every issue.

That being so the problem of legitimacy becomes a minor issue in Rawls’s political liberalism.<sup>22</sup> While Habermas pays a specific attention to this question in modern societies and aims to ensure legitimacy *via* continuous democratic-deliberative procedures, we can say Rawlsian politics is established on solid grounds; for that reason it does not look for recurrent processes of legitimation. The argument that the legitimacy of the state must demonstrate the existence of a general obligation to obey the law is verified in Rawls’s liberal perspective: people’s agreement to live in a just society and their affirmation of just laws would result in a duty of obligation. In such a formulation, the question of the state as an institution becomes negligible as well. Its authority seems to be directional rather than coercive, its function is limited with administrative tasks such as the collection of taxes, allocating resources and providing social services (Höffe, 1995).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Although the implication of such pretension is not clear, one can argue that with such requirement, Rawls wants to keep the Kantian categorical imperative.

<sup>22</sup>Rawls writes the “exercise of political power is *proper* and hence *justifiable*...when it is in accordance with a constitution that all citizens may reasonably be expected to endorse in light of principles and ideals acceptable to them as reasonable and rational” (Rawls, 2005: 217; emphasis mine) Some of the commentators interpret this as a definition of legitimacy in Rawls. In fact, for Rawls legitimacy is a “weaker idea than justice” (Rawls, 2005: 428). For him, laws of a given regime (be it a monarchy or democracy) may have a claim to legitimacy by being accepted or confirmed by a majority of people. Legitimate enactment, however, does not guarantee the justness of laws. It may be true at some point injustices produced by legal regulations of a given regime may erode the legitimacy of the system but as a general observation, “[l]egitimacy allows an undetermined range of injustice that justice might not permit” (Rawls, 2005: 428)

<sup>23</sup>The German scholar Otfried Höffe in his *Political Justice* problematizes Rawls’ simple assumption of the need for the existence of a state and negligence of the issue of legitimation of its coercive powers. For Höffe, any theory dealing with the issue of legitimacy has to provide a moral ground for state’s monopoly over the use force. This is particularly necessary in

I have already shown that the idea of public reason does not refer to unanimity, meaning that citizens might disagree with some of the jurisdictions at times. However, by accepting the fundamental principles of the political order they respect those laws and live with their consequences. Even in a well-ordered society, Rawls argues, there may be times and cases where injustices may arise. In the first case, “current arrangements may depart in varying degrees from publicly accepted standards that are more or less just” (Rawls, 1999: 309). The arrangements may also conform to the conception of justice of a particular group or of a dominant class but by being particular they may be unreasonable in the political sense and unjust as well (Rawls, 1999: 309). Even in such cases, Rawls argues, citizens should oblige with the legal procedures and this obligation should be fulfilled as long as the political structure is in conformity with the basic principles of political liberalism. The duty of civility requires one not to invoke defects of institutions, use those defects as excuses for non-compliance and not to derive benefit from loopholes by exploiting them (Rawls, 1999: 312).

Having impact on Habermas’s views on the issue, and having been influenced by Kant on the issue, Rawls too acknowledges acts of civil disobedience in very special circumstances and in the case of fulfillment of particular conditions. In his definition, civil disobedience is a “public, nonviolent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the

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modernity since rule and coercion have come to be questioned in this age in a way that ancient and medieval thinkers never had done. See Otfried, Höffe. 1995. *Political Justice: Foundations for a Critical Philosophy of Law and the State*, Jeffrey C. Cohen tr. Polity Press; B. Blackwell: Cambridge, UK; Cambridge, MA, USA. For a comparison of Rawls’ and Höffe’s account of political justice also see. Aslı Çırakman. 2003. *Bir Meşruiyet Sorunu Olarak Siyasal Adalet: Rawls ve Höffe (Political Justice as a Question of Legitimacy: Rawls and Höffe)* in *Liberalizm, Devlet, Hegemonya (Liberalism, State and Hegemony)* E. Fuat Keyman ed., Everest Yayınları: İstanbul.

aim of bringing about a change in the law or policies of government” (Rawls, 1999: 320). Disobedience is a political act on the condition that it has been guided and justified “by the principles of justice, which regulate the constitution and social institutions generally” (Rawls, 1999: 321). When a group of citizens decides to oppose a particular regulation, their resistance cannot be grounded on group interests or comprehensive views. Rather they must show that the injustice caused by that particular law is against the commonly shared conception of justice. A disobedient act must be public and must invoke public reason. By emphasizing this, Rawls’ aim seems to prevent disobeyers’ tacit withdrawal from the political system. For him, one should not break a law by not obeying it in private sphere. Rather one must address the injustice he assessed in law in public forums in order to make it a general and political concern. For this reason, civil disobedience cannot be violent, the disobedient can never invoke force, and he cannot engage with activities that have a potential of hurting the civil liberties of others (Rawls, 1999: 321). A second reason for the necessity of non-violence is that by being so dissenters show the majority their fidelity to law. They make it explicit that they do not represent a danger to the system as a whole. Rawls underlines, “civil disobedience is clearly distinct from militant action and obstruction; it is far removed from organized forcible resistance” (Rawls, 1999: 322). Although Rawls argues that at some cases the latter forms of resistance can be justified, he does not provide an elaborate account of the bases of such justifications.

For Alejandro (1996: 10) Rawls simply asks the “dissenting minorities not to overburden the state with pressing claims it cannot address simultaneously.” In the previous section, I have shown that this is the case for

Habermas as well. Although both Habermas and Rawls seem to defend the right to resist, they limit this right with too many requirements and hesitations. For this reason, one contends as one scholar points out, for these philosophers “civil disobedience should be a form of persuasion, an address or an appeal made by the disobedient to the authorities to change voluntarily their unjust ways” (Haksar, 1976: 66). Haksar writes, even “Gandhi, at least in his more radical moments would have thought this position too conservative” (Haksar, 1976: 66). This is because the Rawlsian approach strives to establish a society that “substitutes social unity for divisiveness and social harmony for instability” (Alejandro, 1996: 11) and for this reason excludes controversial issues from the political as much as possible.

### **Conclusion:**

We have seen the political is an order of reason for both Habermas and Rawls. Feelings such as passions or resentments or ‘unreasonable’ ideas such as religious doctrines and personal interests are not allowed to infiltrate into the political domain. None of them pays an emphasis on the issue, so one can only find minor remarks. In Rawls, violence is a problem of the unreasonable: those who are under the impact of comprehensive doctrines, those who lack virtues of civility such as criminals employ violent means. A similar treatment is also assessed in Habermas. Although he thinks that violence could also appear as a structural problem, the analysis of the phenomenon has been constricted within the framework of discourse: violence erupts when communication channels are distorted. While ignoring the fact that this eruption is also transmitting this

message (as an act), Habermas does not pay attention to the structural (socio-economic, historical, political) factors that contribute to the distortion of communication channels either. He does not answer the question, for example, how in class-ridden societies or in societies with increased marginalization of certain groups communication channels can be improved without having structural transformations.

One might also challenge the idea that language is a medium of peaceful coexistence with the argument that violence is inherent in the very symbolization of a thing. Apart from the discussions of ‘symbolic violence’ that call exclusions of or neglects of certain type of knowledge from the hegemonic epistemological domain as violence, one can argue, historically, at the origin of the determination of symbols, laws and other norms violent struggles are present. Most of the modern nation states are founded on the basis of civil or religious wars. The victors determined the official language, religion and decided what the name of that state would be, for instance. This is a point dealt by Walter Benjamin in his *Critique of Violence*, as we will see in the coming chapter.

Furthermore, as I have argued in the introductory section while liberalism cannot and does not do away with violence, it attempts to control it by locating it within the framework of the state. Rawls is criticized for depicting the state as an administrative body and reducing politics to a technical issue (Honig, 1993) but we see that he advocates a sufficiently strong and coercive state. State has the sole authority to use coercive force. Apart from its functioning for penal purposes, this force is used for the protection of the ‘basic structure’ and for the prevention of the intrusion of comprehensive doctrines



into the political domain. It functions as a guardian and keeps the unreasonable at bay. It applies sanctions against those who “may not accept the reasons widely said to justify the general structure of political authority... or... may not regard as justified many of the statutes enacted by the legislature to which they are subject....”(Rawls, 2005).<sup>24</sup>

For Bonnie Honig (1993: 2) this is a tendency present in diverse intellectual and political positions (republican, liberal and communitarian) in the form of a desire for the elimination of dissonance, conflict, struggle and resistance from politics. The theoretical approaches, which she calls “virtue theories” “confine politics (conceptually and territorially) to the juridical, administrative, or regulative tasks of stabilizing moral and political subjects. They also assume that the task of political theory is to resolve institutional questions, to get politics right, over and done with, to free modern subjects and their sets of arrangements of political conflict and instability” (Honig, 1993: 2).<sup>25</sup> One of the criticisms the feminist theory directs at the modern-liberal-democratic structures is their lack of address to issues like violence against women. They have ignored this phenomenon for a long time and considered it as a problem of private domain. Similarly, violence implied by state institutions or agents such as police forces (Benjamin, 1996), or violence experienced in gray zones such as prisons (Buchan, 2001: 42) have not been problematized. In

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<sup>24</sup>This view is also extended to international relations. In his *Law of Peoples*, Rawls argues that there are societies, which are non-liberal and not well-ordered. People of the liberal and decent states should respect those societies as long as they comply with minimal set of rights, defined and shared and accepted as genuinely universal by liberal states. In his view, outlaw states, which violate such minimal set of rights, may be subject to condemnation, sanctions and, in some circumstances, actual intervention (Rawls, 2002: 90).

<sup>25</sup> For Peter Berkowitz virtue is an important feature of liberal theory for the maintenance of the political regime. A number of virtues, mostly on self-discipline and the exercise of judgment have crucial role in the works of political theorists and in their conception of politics see: Peter, Berkowitz. 1999. *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ.

a similar fashion to Honig, Slavoj Žižek criticizes the Habermasian or Rawlsian ethics for attempting to “de-antagonize the politics by formulating clear rules to be obeyed so that the agonistic procedure of litigation does not explode into politics proper.” (Žižek, 2006: 87) Even Seyla Benhabib, who is among the defenders of the model of a deliberative democracy, argues for Rawls, “public reason is best viewed not as a process of reasoning among citizens but as a regulative principle imposing limits upon how individuals and agencies ought to reason about public matters” (1996: 75).

Thence, the approach that can be characterized as the non-problematization of the relationship between violence and politics has been criticized for constraining politics and political action by eliminating differences and conflicts; for being blind to structural or systemic violence and violent practices in so-called non-political domains and for establishing violence as the constitutive other of the political. Furthermore, although the coercive function of the state in its ideal condition assumed to be functioning legitimately and within the framework of law and justice in reality it includes some problems. This is particularly relevant for the emphasis on one particular type of reason and for the distinction between the ‘rational’ and ‘irrational’ or ‘reasonable’ or ‘unreasonable’. We have seen that this is the case in the issue of terrorism. Where Habermas contends that terrorists should be treated different than war enemies and be fought by police forces, in his *Law of People* Rawls divides the world into well-ordered and not well-ordered peoples. Well-ordered societies denote reasonable and liberal peoples while ‘outlaw states’ and their not well orders are equated with ‘burdened’ peoples. Such an approach attributes superiority to liberal systems in terms of their culture, institutions and moral

characters. It also acknowledges the right to deny non-well-ordered peoples and even implies intervention in order to make these systems (and their people) 'right' and 'well'. Rasch (2003:140) notes, from this perspective "non-liberal, non-decent societies do not have the right even "to protest their condemnation by the world society" because they violate liberal rights, decent peoples on the other hand, have the right if necessary to wage just wars against them.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **A CRITIQUE OF THE LIBERAL PARADIGM: VIOLENCE AS CONSTITUTIVE OF POLITICAL**

In the previous chapter, I have presented the contours of the theoretical approach, which does not problematize the relationship between violence and politics. I have shown that the two leading liberal political theorists, Habermas and Rawls, despite their differences exclude violence from politics. I have argued that I treat Habermas and Rawls within the same category because both of the thinkers share the same normative ground. Both attempt to rearticulate the Kantian notion of reason as a distinct, moral and political instrument in their formulation of a legitimate and just socio-political order. Within that formulation, politics is depicted as a non-violent and unruffled process. Violence as an issue of politics or even as a threat to this conception is hardly debated. This is because their conceptions of politics are idealistic: either to do with rational deliberation on a continual intersubjective basis (as it is the case in Habermas) or with the basic structures on which political life depends (exemplified in Rawls). Even in the case of an illegitimate regime where disobedience should be justified from a liberal perspective, among many other

limitations non-violence is required. A neat separation of domains in the form of private vs. public, domestic vs. international also enables them to ignore certain violent practices or to treat them as non-political issues. Nonetheless, by ignoring structural and systemic forms of violence, for instance, violence taking place within the political system, their political theories remain limited with idealistic depictions. Even though they are not contemporaries, Habermas's and Rawls's views on the relationship between politics and violence received criticisms from different political positions. In this chapter, I will present four examples of such critique in the works of three theorists, Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, Frantz Fanon and Slavoj Žižek by focusing on the conception of the politics and its relation to violence. Schmitt's opposition to the liberal-democratic paradigm, as we will see, directly targets its negligence of conflict and of the role of decisionism within politics. Benjamin, on the other hand, aims at exposing the inextricable connection between violence and law, i.e. a political order. He contends that the politics is stigmatized with a vicious circle of violence, which cannot be overcome within the framework of instrumental rationality (violence as a means for the destruction/foundation/preservation of a political order). He will try finding a way out but as we will see, it will be only possible with an absolute destruction. Frantz Fanon's attack to the western political tradition will rise from the periphery. It raises a voice from a geography that represents the neglected 'outside' or 'darkside' of the liberal-democratic regime; the lands over which violence in its brutal forms were inflicted for a long time with no hesitation.<sup>26</sup> Fanon's work aims at unveiling

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<sup>26</sup> Different scholars note the ethnocentrism within the European political tradition and the negligence of the colonial violence as well. For instance, according to Richard J. Bernstein, Hannah Arendt, one of the most prominent figures opposing political atrocities within Europe

the violent aspect of the Western political rule in these territories. While Schmitt wants to sustain the threat of violence and violent conflict for the sustenance of politics and Benjamin looks for the possibility of a non-violent, non-instrumental form of action that eliminates violence, Fanon cultivates a specific form of violence as an emancipatory force. Similarly, I will show Slavoj Žižek, in his analysis points out the intricate and structural relationship between violence and politics in contemporary world and offers destruction of the system for the elimination of such a link. This position, correct in its critique of the liberal-democratic paradigm for its neglect of the practice and structural aspects of violence, shares the same epistemology in the sense that the violence and politics link is presented as a postulate of reason, hence *a priori*. As the first paradigm does not take into account the possible entry of violence into politics, this position views violence necessarily linked to politics.

### **3.1. Schmitt and the Formal Constitution of *the* Political and Violence Under State of Exception**

One can say the most famous and controversial figure who treats violence as a central category of politics is the legal theorist Carl Schmitt who

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does not regard the massacres of the African tribes as horrific as the Nazi genocide. Bernstein even argued that she shows sympathy towards the imperial rulers. Shiraz Dossa too emphasizes the ethnocentric strain in Arendt's imperial history. Since these natives lack historical artifacts, and civilization (two concepts which for Arendt are crucially significant) and since they cannot be separated from the nature they have part in, violence which is applied to them Dozza (1980) argues, "is clearly *unjust* [but] it is somehow not *immoral*" for Arendt. See Shiraz, Dossa.1980. "Human Status and Politics: Hannah Arendt on the Holocaust," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 13 (2) 309-23. If one insists on such reading on can find possibly supportive arguments with regard to the comments Arendt made regarding the Back riots in *On Violence* and in *Reflections On Little Rock*, along with her conceptions of *animal laborans* in the *Human Condition*.

has received an unprecedented attention in the 1990s from various Anglo-American scholars and especially from figures of radical-democratic theory.<sup>27</sup> Schmitt went through the constitutional crisis and the stages of the collapse of the Weimar Republic (1919-1933)<sup>28</sup> and for this reason his political works are a direct critique of liberalism, particularly the liberal-constitutional theory of the state and the parliamentary conception of politics.

Against the pervasive and corrosive impacts of socio-political conflicts, some argue his primary concern was to affirm and reaffirm the capacity of the political, the primordial and constitutive force of the *Volk* and the sovereign state (Dyzenhaus, 1997).<sup>29</sup> On this, one can note the impact of George Sorel's theory of general strike on Schmitt's work. To the question of revolution, in *Reflections on Violence*, Sorel expressed his contempt for the acquisition of state power which is equated with state violence. Adopting an anarchist political attitude he fended for a general strike, which is different from a 'proletarian

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<sup>27</sup> Apart from Benjamin Schmitt had influence on some early twentieth-century theorists such as Leo Strauss, Friedrich Hayek. His impact also can be traced in the works of contemporary scholars like Chantal Mouffe, Giorgio Agamben, Jacques Derrida and Slavoj Žižek. A Schmitt renaissance is especially triggered by the military and political actions of the US under Bush presidency after the 9/11 attacks. The declared "war on terror" with practices such as preemptive strikes and Guantanamo Bay, political thinkers thought invite a Schmittian analysis in pointing out the limit of legalism and liberalism.

<sup>28</sup> The post-war period in Germany in 1920s was troubled with millions of casualties of war, economic crisis, and unemployment and with ongoing internal bloody confrontations. The defeat in the First World War ended the Second Reich in Germany and followed by the foundation of the liberal Weimar Republic (1919-1933) but the early years between 1918 and 1921 witnessed quite bloody confrontations and particularly the crush of the German revolutionary movement also known as the Spartacist uprising. The murder of Rosa Luxemburg and her friends is also one of the highlights of such crush. One scholar (Kellog, 2011: 4) noted the cover of The New York Times on November 11, 1918 summarizing the instability of Germany at that time: "Armistice Signed, End of the War! Berlin Seized by Revolutionists; New Chancellor Begs for Order; Ousted Kaiser Flees to Holland."

<sup>29</sup> In contrast to the view, which argues Schmitt's theory is an attempt of making the exception as the norm Dyzenhaus (1997: 46) writes, "while the vitality of the exception looms large as the theme of Political Theology, it is important to keep in mind that Schmitt was not arguing for the total negation of normality. Indeed, in other works of this period, he seemed to argue for the desirability of legally established normality. For he did not reject the idea of a society comprehensively governed by legal norms, on condition that the political decision that underpins that legal order is made explicit."

strike' offered by the left for the acquisition of state power. A proletarian 'general strike' is a type of mass revolt in which the revolution emerges as a "pure and simple" act, which would not only eliminate the defenders of social reforms, and professional revolutionaries, but also the state as such. As opposed to the liberals and reformists that cry for the overcoming of conflict via reason, and of violence, which is merely a "relic of barbarism" through appeals to the "magical force of the State" (74, 180) Sorel advocated the "myth" of proletarian strike, a symbol of the massive, intensive, destructive moment of action.

Schmitt praised Sorel for his concept of myth because it brings forward an "anti-rationalist, anti-materialist theory of direct action and 'unmediated concrete life'" (Müller, 2003: 463). The formal, bureaucratic and dull life the liberal-democratic approach imposes can be overcome with this dynamic and energetic view. He did not value the idea of class struggle, however. For him the class contradiction fell short of the existential aspect of difference he is looking for and it was further getting historically irrelevant. A scholar notes a Schmittian remark, "all that is moving today in the direction of national antagonisms, rather than class antagonisms" (Müller 2003: 463); hence his preference for national difference as the basis of collective identity.

Schmitt did not adopt the Sorelian violence that aimed at destroying the present political order either. He was an ardent supporter of the state (and, subsequently, the Reich) and used all of his means to promote the idea and the ideal of state sovereignty. The German legal jurist embraced the vitality introduced by Sorel's idea of revolution only for the rejuvenation of the political spirit he thought was lost in modern political order.



For some scholars (such as Wolin, 1992; McCormick, 1997; Rasch, 2003), therefore, Schmitt's critique is also a part of a broader response to the crisis the European civilization faced with the rise of technology, rationalization and increased individualism of modernity.<sup>30</sup> Albeit carrying elements of fascism and authoritarianism, Schmitt's attack on liberalism and his views on the autonomy of the political deserve attention, it has been argued, as a meticulous study of pathology (Deveci, 2002: 36) since it points out the actual contrary to the idealist and teleological views on politics. Schmitt draws attention to the violent aspect of the state and the conflictual nature of the political as opposed to the ideas on supremacy of law, pluralism and democracy (Deveci, 2002: 36).

The central idea in Schmitt's critique is that liberalism engages with a radical negation of the political and the state by ignoring their essential features. Liberalism treats the political as if it is one of other forms of social relations and it attempts "to tie the political to the ethical and to subjugate it to economics" (Schmitt, 2007: 61). The political, for Schmitt, is a distinct realm of human experience and is an independent domain with its own internal laws. All social realms are based on particular distinctions designating the specificity of those domains: "in the domain of morality, the final distinctions are between good and evil, in aesthetics between beautiful and ugly, in economics profitable and unprofitable" (Schmitt, 2007: 26).

In the first chapter I have argued that the 'political is a contested notion and there has been a confusion about the necessity of its distinction from politics and the state. On this, Schmitt has a clear answer. For him, the

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<sup>30</sup>Richard Wolin (1992) argues Schmitt's critique of Enlightenment rationalism is of Nietzschean provenance and carries the influence of *Lebensphilosophie*. John McCormick shares this view as well; for him, however, a Weberian concern for rationalization is also present in Schmitt's works.

‘political’ is different from ‘politics’ and the ‘state’ is a domain designated by the distinction between friend and enemy. One should understand the concepts of friend and enemy in their “concrete and existential sense, not as metaphors or symbols” he reminds (2007: 27). Nor should they be “mixed and weakened by economic, moral, and other conceptions, least of all in a private individualistic sense as a psychological expression of private emotions and tendencies” (Schmitt, 2007: 28). He underlines that the enemy is not someone one competes nor is he someone one envies or hates in private. *Inimicus* is the private enemy. The equivalent of the word in the archaic English is the ‘foe’. The Roman word *inimicus* and the English word foe denote various forms of moral, aesthetic or economic negative feelings one has towards someone else. The concept of enemy, however, does not have a connection with the private feelings such as hate or moral concerns with which one judges someone else. It is the ‘public enemy’; the Roman equivalent of it is *hostis*.<sup>31</sup> “The political enemy need not be a morally evil or aesthetically ugly...but he is, nevertheless the other, stranger,” Schmitt (2007: 27) asserts. Yet, the idea that the enemy is a stranger does not imply that he is necessarily an alien. Schmitt’s existential approach contends that the enemy might be domestic as well (Schmitt, 2007: 46). “An enemy exists only when, at least potentially one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity” (Schmitt, 2007: 28).

A simple antagonism between different groups is not a sufficient condition for the political; only ‘extreme’ antagonism between collectivities can constitute the ground. Accordingly, whenever a social domain is divided by a

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<sup>31</sup> Pointing out the shared etymology of the notions of *host*, *hostis* and *hospitality* the French philosopher Derrida, for instance, makes an intervention that could be considered as a challenge to both Schmitt’s notion of enemy and to the Kantian notion of hospitality. See: Jacques Derrida. 2000. “Hostipitality”. *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities*. 5 (3):3-18.

friend-enemy grouping, then that domain becomes political. If a competition between supporters of two different football-teams turned into a physical conflict, if the country divided over this conflict into two hostile groups as if a civil war would soon erupt, from a Schmittian perspective, we can assume that football became a political matter (Deveci, 2002: 45).<sup>32</sup> This is a view that differs from Hobbes who inspired Schmitt with his theory of the sovereign. Hobbes conjectures the emergence of politics on the threat of individualistic violence. Not a group of people that is hostile to another collectivity, which is different from the first, creates the conflict but the atomistic individual who is aggressive faces the person with the same motives and enters into confrontation. In Hobbes's universe, the formation of any collectivity is also banned when the state is erected. From a Schmittian point of view, on the other hand, a consciousness of collectivity, the formation of it in an antagonistic relation with the other, sustains the political.

Apart from having a collective connotation, the concept of enemy refers to a material and immediate possibility of combat in Schmitt. "Just as the term enemy, the word combat, too, is to be understood in its original existential sense... The friend, enemy, and combat concepts receive their real meaning precisely because they refer to the real possibility of *physical killing*" (Schmitt, 2007: 34; emphasis mine). In this sense, the possibility of war is the existential negation of the other, it is the most intense degree of the political; yet still the battle itself does not denote the political for him. As he (Schmitt, 2007: 37) claims

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<sup>32</sup> He writes, "every religious, moral, economic, ethical or other antithesis transforms into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings effectively according to friend and enemy" (Schmitt, 2007: 37).

The political does not reside in the battle itself, which possesses its own technical, psychological, and military laws, but in the mode of behavior, which is determined by the possibility, by clearly evaluating the concrete situation and thereby being able to distinguish correctly the real friend from the real enemy.

Schmitt's conception also suggests that a political collectivity is not a fixed entity; it may be formed against another group, dissolve in time and might be established by some other members opposing another group of enemy.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, unlike Weber who views (legitimate claim to the) use of violence as the defining characteristic of the state, Schmitt suggests it to be the defining feature of the political. While for Weber and as we have seen for the early liberals, the political emerges with the temporal and spatial transition from the threat of arbitrary and uncontrolled violence to the rationalized controlled and monopolized exercise of violence, for Schmitt the political only survives with the ever-present possibility and threat of (a particular type of) violence.

For this reason, the political as a realm of experience displays an autonomous nature. By subsuming it under binary oppositions (with the possibility of changing social relations into friend-enemy grouping), the political domain reveals a superior nature, which for Schmitt needs to be recognized and promoted. "The concept of the state presupposes the concept of the political," he (2007: 19) writes.

Within the liberal tradition, the state is treated like an ordinary institution. It is either subordinated to Law in constitutionalism debates or reduced to a mere executive body carrying the decisions of the representative

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<sup>33</sup>Chantal Mouffe argues that the fundamental weakness of Schmitt's thought is his 'essentialisation' of the friend-enemy distinction. See Mouffe, Chantal. 1997. 'Carl Schmitt and the Paradox of Liberal Democracy', *Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence* 10 (1): 50.

legislative assembly. According to the liberals, states emerge and they are legitimized for the realization and protection of universal norms, which are the result of their logical deduction. For Schmitt such a conception is mistaken since all norms are relativized particularly in this age (Dyzenhaus, 1994: 6); and there is no basic norm, an originary source from which justification for political authority can be derived. Within this context, Schmitt's famous theory of sovereignty fits here. Schmitt interested in the seventeenth-century as a source of inspiration for he thought the theological and political notions such as sovereignty and the state of exception would be helpful in the overcoming of the crisis of his times. Accordingly, until the beginning of the eighteenth century the idea of a God transcending the worldly realm were paralleled to the notion of sovereignty transcending the state; both of these thoughts were metaphysically self-evident. The personalist and decisionist elements inherent to the notion of sovereignty, however, were lost in the process of favouring of an organic conception of politics and of people and via the democratic assumptions of the equality and identity of rulers and subjects (Schmitt, 1985: 60). For Schmitt, no matter what legal theorists argue, sovereignty constitutes the essential aspect of politics, which is the power to decide on the invocation of a state of exception (*Ausnahmezustand*, which can be translated as state of emergency). The state of exception is an inevitable aspect of every normative order. Emergence of urgent and unforeseen events may require immediate actions that may not be addressed (and may be forbidden) by the legal framework. In this sense, the sovereign is the body that passes the judgment on the existence of an existential crisis and the decision on suspending law and implementing specific emergency measures. The temporary suspension of law

enables the state to take every measure including violence to the groups that are defined as threats or enemies in order to protect or restore the present order.<sup>34</sup> These situations, not only refute the liberal belief in generalizable rules and pre-established norms but also importance of the body/entity that decides and acts upon that decision. For Schmitt the crucial point is that “by its very nature the political entity is the decisive entity” (Schmitt, 2007: 43). It represents the power of going beyond the limits of laws including the coercive implements. The decision taken by the state might aim at preventing violence but more importantly, it might allow the exercise of violence, as said, beyond the limits of legal authorizations whenever it deems necessary. As a supreme body, the state provides some kind of formula for the decision of the (external or internal) enemy and declares it and it has the sole right to wage war. Only the state has “the right to demand from its own members the readiness to die and unhesitatingly to kill enemies” (Schmitt, 2007: 46). Therefore, it transcends all other associations and organizations such as unions, political parties or religious communities.

Liberalism misses this necessity of decisionism and the extralegal powers in politics. Its “way of being is negotiation, procrastinating half measures, in the hope that the final clash, the bloody battle of the decision,

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<sup>34</sup>John McCormick points out a distinction Schmitt made between the commissarial and sovereign dictatorship in his earlier work *Die Diktatur* (1921). Accordingly, the commissarial dictatorship is a type of power, which is temporary and emerges in times of crisis with the specific task of restoring the order. A legislative body specifies the task of the commissarial dictator and monitors it. A sovereign dictator, on the other hand, is “a historically modern phenomenon which is unlimited in terms of its powers and may proceed to establish a completely new order. This distinction is later removed and left its place to the notion of sovereign. See, John P. McCormick. 1998. “The Dilemmas of Dictatorship: Carl Schmitt and Constitutional Emergency Powers,” in *Law as Politics: Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism* David Dyzenhaus ed., Duke University Press: Durham NC.

could be metamorphosed into parliamentary debate, and would allow itself, to be suspended in an eternal discussion” (Schmitt in Dyzenhaus, 1994:13).

I have shown the concept of ‘public reason’ is a central element in political theories of Habermas and Rawls. It is *via* the formation of public reason, different interests, identities and opinions co-exist and flourish in a political order. For Schmitt, however, the principle that “the truth can be found through an unrestrained clash of opinion and that competition will produce harmony” exemplifies the tendency of liberalism to convert politics into ethics and economics (Schmitt, 1992: 35). Liberalism gives a central place to discussion, emphasizes openness and expression of public opinion freely so that private opinions, wills and interests can compete. Parliamentarism, in this sense, appears to be something essentially democratic in the modern world (Schmitt, 1992: 34). The reality, however, is that decisions are made behind closed doors by small exclusive committees or of parties or party coalitions in response to the more or less insistent demands of big capitalist interest groups (Schmitt, 1992: 50). The metaphysical or maybe pragmatic attachment of liberalism to the idea of public reason derives from its incompatibility with democracy. The latter, according to Schmitt requires equality, homogeneity, and the identity between the rulers and the ruled in order to function properly whereas liberalism with its emphasis on individuality and pluralism presents a conflicting approach to democratic politics.

It is almost impossible for Schmitt to conceive a peaceful world (Schmitt, 2007: 54) since for him the unification of the world under the rule of a global state or the elimination of all differences are unlikely. Such claims are also ideological: Humanity is not a political concept and the “term “human” is

not descriptive, but evaluative” (Rasch, 2003:140). Wars that are claimed to be declared in the name of humanity or slogans like “crimes against humanity” are politicizing non-political terms with moral utterances.<sup>35</sup> From Schmitt’s perspective, the friend-enemy distinction is a noble and fair political relation where each party is recognized as human and equal. He (2004: 77) writes,

The enemy is not something that for some reason we should do away with or destroy as if it had no value [...] The enemy places himself on my own level. On this ground, I must engage with the opposing enemy, in order to establish the very measure of myself, my own boundaries, my own *Gestalt*.

Therefore, the existence of the enemy is crucial for the self-determination of a collectivity. Without it, no identity is possible. The liberal approach, on the other hand, strips the enemy from its humanness and destroys it without respect. The *hostis* is transformed into *inimicus*. Losing its political connotation, the foe becomes the instrument of propaganda and is used in justifying crusades of economic reckonings with moral necessity.<sup>36</sup> “[A] new and essentially pacifist vocabulary has been created” by liberalism, Schmitt argues. “War is condemned but executions, sanctions, punitive expeditions, pacifications, protection of treaties, international police, and measures to assure peace. The adversary is thus no longer called an enemy but a disturber of peace and is thereby designated to be an outlaw of humanity (Schmitt, 2007: 79). The ‘incomplete’ humanity of the foe in liberal construct, as opposed to the enemy

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<sup>35</sup> For a conflicting view, which discusses the normative aspect of humanitarian interventions and Schmitt’s *Realpolitik* See: Jürgen Habermas. 2000. *Bestiality and Humanity: A War on the Border between Law and Morality*. Franz Solms-Laubach (trans.) available at: <http://www.theglobalsite.ac.uk/press/011habermas.htm> (The original: Jürgen Habermas.1999. *Bestialität und Humanität, Die Zeit*, 54, 18:1-8)

<sup>36</sup> This is an argument shared and elaborated by different scholars in their analysis of modernity and modern political orders. Hannah Arendt’s analysis of imperialism and totalitarianism, Agamben’s analysis of camps and concept of ‘*homo sacer*’ and Foucault’s arguments on disciplinary and normalizing form of modern power are some of the examples.



in Schmitt, as argued “renders it infinitely inferior to the ‘fully’ liberal rights-holders, which justifies the deployment of asymmetric subject–object relations in pedagogical practices of correction” (Prozorov, 2006: 95). This change of discourse reveals hypocrisy of liberalism: albeit being a primarily an apolitical and even antipolitical system of thought its reproduction of the logic of the political (Schmitt, 2007: 79). This attitude also enable liberal states to avoid the “political responsibility and visibility” (Schmitt, 2007: 77) of employing violence.

One can argue that Schmitt’s formulation is somehow dystopian in the sense that a recurrent friend-enemy grouping, an ongoing combat or the continuous threat of it seems to make an order almost impossible. In fact, for some scholars (for instance, Dyzenhaus, 1997) there is a central tension between an antagonistic conception of politics based on the confrontation between friend and enemy and the search for security and order in Schmitt’s works. On this, Leo Strauss (2007: 103) notes a discrepancy between Schmitt and Hobbes, whose conception of violent conflict as the structural fact of human life Schmitt finds inspiring. While Hobbes seeks to avoid or minimize violence by constraining it with the establishment of the body politic, Schmitt ultimately accepts and affirms this violence. In fact, Schmitt is not an offender of violence, nor he argues war is the continuation of politics by other means; for him “war is neither the aim nor the purpose nor even the very content of politics” (Schmitt, 2007: 34). He also states that war is an extreme case. All the same, the exceptional nature of this case confirms the relevance of his assessment: the conflictual nature of the political and the state’s decisive role. The political and the state is always backed up by the possibility of violence,

which he does not want to eliminate but affirms its continuity. He also argues a world without conflict, civil or international war is not possible. If all the conflicts and the friend-enemy distinctions cease and if the possibility of war is utterly eliminated, then there will be neither politics nor the state. In such a pacified world, only culture, civilization, economics and morality, law, art, entertainment etc. would remain (Schmitt, 2007: 53).<sup>37</sup>

In the previous chapter, we have seen that for Habermas and Rawls there is a distinction between a civil disobedient, (who they also equated with a rebel in ambiguous terms) and a terrorist in terms of their motives and relation with violence. The civil disobedient has no aim of overthrowing the system. Rather, as a protector of the system and of the constitution, her/his acts are corrective and non-violent in nature. As I have stated before, they do not even want to consider the option of a collective resistance or upheaval against the system. This is because in their ideally depicted system there is no need to abolish the order with an aim of establishing a new one. Such a view then cannot explain the existing violent practices and for this reason evaluates them as marginal or abnormal cases. A ‘terrorist’, in this sense, is conceptualized as different from a ‘rebel’ and also from an ‘enemy’. This is certain for Habermas. The terrorist is the ‘other’, the irrational, the abnormal that cannot be communicated who, therefore, should be treated and punished if necessary by the police forces.

When we come to Schmitt, we see that his categories differ from the ones the liberal-democrats suggest. In his theory, there is the ‘partisan’ and the ‘revolutionary combatant’ (Schmitt, 1963). The reflections on the notion of

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<sup>37</sup> We should remember that in Chapter 13, contrary to Schmitt, Hobbes writes no economy, culture and civilization would be possible in a world with continuous conflicts and antagonisms. In his formulation, the *raison d'être* of the state is the pacification of the social order. See, Thomas Hobbes.1968. *The Leviathan*, Penguin Books Classics.

partisan, Schmitt writes is based on the Spanish Guerilla War, where “pre-bourgeois, pre-industrial, and pre-conventional people” (Schmitt, 1963:3) fight against a modern regular army. The partisan is an irregular and flexible unit of struggle. He is expected to be a mobile in active combat. Agility, speed, and the sudden change of surprise attack and retreat are among his features. He specifies his target and acts for the elimination of the threat. The intensely political character is another important defining feature of the partisan. In this sense, he is distinguished from “common thief and criminal, whose motives aim at private enrichment” (Schmitt, 1963: 10). This is an argument in an absolute disagreement with the liberals: whereas for Rawls and Habermas the partisan would be a non-political agent, an embodiment of the negation of politics, he is a political agent *par excellence* in Schmitt. Clausewitz’s “formula for ‘war as the continuation of politics’ is the theory of the partisan in a nutshell” (Schmitt, 1963: 6) and this theory was extended to its logical limit by Lenin and Mao. Finally, Schmitt writes, the partisan is defined by his tellurian character. The scope of his actions is limited with the territory of the land. When this tellurian character is removed, when the partisan becomes radical ideologically and morally, and when the enemy is defined in absolute and abstract terms such as class, race or religion rather than contextual and real terms, then one speaks of a ‘revolutionary fighter’. Lenin’s ideology represents what Carl Schmitt defines as the revolutionary fighter. His absolutization of the party, and of the partisan who fights a continuous and so-called ‘just’ battle on an indefinite scale against an absolute enemy who is also criminal, exemplifies this new type of agent of action. For Lenin (Schmitt, 2004: 46-7, 77 in de Benoist, 2007: 74-5)

The goal remains the communist revolution in countries all over the world. Anything contributing to this end is good and correct... For Lenin, only revolutionary war is genuine war, because it is based on absolute enmity...With the absolutization of the party, the partisan also became something absolute, and he was raised to the level of a bearer of absolute enmity.

Thence, both the partisan and the revolutionary fighter are political agents and they employ violence whenever necessary. In that sense they significantly differ from a civil disobedient who at the end is a respectful citizen. The difference between a partisan and a revolutionary fighter is only in terms of the scope of the target of their enmity. For the partisan the hostility is temporally and spatially limited. For the revolutionary fighter, on the other hand, the enemy is absolute and eternal. From Schmitt's perspective, therefore, there is no normative difference between the two as Habermas suggests existing between a war enemy and a terrorist. In fact, the partisan might connote what one might call today a 'terrorist' or a 'guerilla' at national contexts. As Schmitt mentions, however, the scope of the term might be broadened. With the substitution of irregularity by illegality, and the military battle by resistance, one can also reach the profile of an illegal resistance fighter or an underground activist (Schmitt, 1963: 12).<sup>38</sup> As a result, it is not possible to condemn a particular type of act as 'violence' and of a particular political subject as a 'terrorist' for Schmitt. The liberal categories of legality and legitimacy cannot be relevant from the perspective where enmity is seen as a constructive force. As we have seen, in the definition of the political and the state, violence becomes constitutive for Schmitt. Earlier in the previous chapter, I have shown

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<sup>38</sup>Here Schmitt refers to Rolf Schroers and his definition of the partisan in *Der Partisan* (1961).

that this was so for the early liberal theorists too. The threat of the possibility of one form of violence (either as a conflict or as violation) poses (to individuals' life, liberty and property) justifies the necessity of a political order and political authority. The foundation of politics signifies the erection of temporal and spatial boundaries out of which violence can be colonized. Within the borders, it is constrained, docilized even utilized. The liberal-democratic approach accepts this construction as a fact and without problematizing it focuses on further regulations of the internal sphere. For Schmitt, on the other hand, pushing violence out of the borders does not change the fact that there is a threat. He does not give up the idea that a political collectivity fundamentally comes into being due to the threat raised by other collectivities. It is the presence of the others on the other side of the line, their threat of violence that makes us 'us' different from the 'others', so one cannot turn one's gaze from the outside to the inside. Hence, violence cannot be excluded.

As I have stated above, Schmitt's theory of the political inspired many political theorist such as Chantal Mouffe in the formulation of their critique of liberal democracy, which they assess to be in crisis, and in their attempt of offering new forms of politics. For Mouffe (1999), the liberal theory fails to appreciate the antagonistic nature of the political. The negation of antagonism only leads to impotence, the result of the strong belief that conflicts are outcomes of archaic passions not controlled by reason. Nonetheless, she criticizes Schmitt for presenting an essentialist account, which therefore presents a potential of violent conflict. Mouffe attempts at a reformulation of Schmitt's theory with her 'agonistic pluralism'. With a presupposition of the existence of a common symbolic framework, she aims at opening the space for

the expression of dissent and manifestations of conflict and preventing violence.<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek (2006) criticizes Schmitt for radicalization of binary oppositions.<sup>40</sup> By reformulating politics as a war between ‘us’ and ‘them’ Schmitt engages with a false radicalization since what he calls the Schmittian “ultra-politics”<sup>41</sup> leaves no ground for symbolic conflict between opponents. While noting the importance of the formation of a collectivity Žižek points out the difference between a ‘politicized’ and a ‘radicalized’ unity. He calls attention to a protest that took place in the East Germany in the last days of the GDR. The crowd protesting the communist regime first shouted, “We are the people! (“*Wir sind das Volk!*”), he says and thereby they performed

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<sup>39</sup> In fact, we have seen that for Schmitt the friend/enemy distinction is a dynamic construction and does not have any essentialist connotations. In this sense, Mouffe’s charge is unfounded, and it is possible to criticize her for constraining Schmitt within the liberal framework he wants to break.

<sup>40</sup> One can argue that although Žižek criticizes Schmitt for the radicalization of the collectivity in terms of its internal unity, he follows a Schmittian path in his emphasis on the need for the radicalization of camps and the imposition of a leftist will in order to destruct the liberal order.

<sup>41</sup> In this critique, Žižek is inspired by Jacques Rancière’s intervention that asserts a distinction between politics and policing that is the hierarchical regulation (policymaking, politicking, bargaining, ordering etc.) of a socio-economic domain. Against political theorists such as Habermas Rancière asserts that the political struggle is not a “rational debate between multiple interests, but the struggle for one’s voice to be heard and recognized as the voice of a legitimate partner” Žižek (2006). Politics is about contestation, “dissensus” (Rancière), the rising up of the excluded, and the insertion of the particular into the universal. Based on Rancière’s categorization Žižek argues the opening up of the space of politics for challenge and transformation is closed through several ways. There is the *arche-politics*, exemplified in the communitarian approach that defines “a traditional close, organically structured homogeneous social space that allows for no void in which the political moment-event can emerge”. Then, there is the *para-politics*, the type of political approach, I have debated and argued that it excludes violence from the political domain. *Para-politics* attempts to depoliticize politics by reformulating political conflict as a competition, “within the representational space, between acknowledged parties/agents, for the (temporary) occupation of the place of executive power” exemplified in the works of Habermas and Rawls. The third way of disavowal of politics is attempted by the Marxist (or Utopian Socialist) *meta-politics* (Žižek, 2006: 186-7). In this approach, Žižek (2006) writes “political conflict is fully asserted, but it is conceived as a shadow-theatre in which events whose proper place is on Another Scene (of economic processes) are played out”. The ultimate goal of ‘true’ politics then the cancellation of this form of politics with an order where a fully self-transparent rational order of collective Will is imposed. The category of “ultrapolitics” is added and elaborated by Žižek.

the gesture of politicization at its purest. They, the excluded counterrevolutionary “scum” of the official whole of the people, with no proper place in official space (or, more precisely, with only titles such as “counterrevolutionaries,” “hooligans,” or, at best, “victims of bourgeois propaganda,” reserved for their designation), claimed to stand for *the* people, for “all.” However, a couple of days later, the slogan changed into “We are *a/one* people!” (*Wir sind ein Volk!*”), clearly signaling the closure of the momentary authentic political opening, the reappropriation of the democratic impetus... (Žižek, 2006: 207)

For this reason, it is possible to argue that the problem of Schmitt’s friend-enemy distinction is the assumed identity or the unified character of the collectivity. This is a point underlined by Dodd (2009) as well. Although Schmitt does not essentialize the enemy, rather views its determination to be contextual, he attributes crucial importance to its presence for contributing to the formation of a collective identity. There is a continuous reference to the other and it makes one ask whether the identity is constructed purely in oppositional terms. The inter-group plurality is another question. This is so because Schmitt requires the confrontation of two collectivities in existential terms to qualify the criteria of being political. Such a confrontation suggests an absolute unity and homogeneity within a group. If this is the case, one then might take side with Chantal Mouffe (1999) on the point that the collective identity Schmitt suggests is essentialist since only in such case one collectivity can threaten the other with extinction. Yet still, we know that for Schmitt internal divisions are possible but they are required to be in the form of an existential threat in order to be political. This produces a dilemma for Schmitt. If a given collectivity is not a homogenous unity, then continuous internal conflicts and divisions must be inevitable. This being so, one cannot ensure the stability of that collectivity rather witness its division and merging in order to sustain the

dynamism Schmitt wants from the political. Alternatively, the collectivity should have a great number of enemies that could outweigh internal divisions and keep the community together. If the collectivity is homogenous, then the enemy must be the same, eternal, which is an argument Schmitt does not defend, or again a process of continuous enemy creation is required for the political to be alert all the time. In any case, if not the enemy, the conflict seems to be essentialized in this thinking. Schmitt attributes friend-enemy distinction an ontological aspect but differing from the absolutist theorist of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, he does not seem to be looking for the finalization of the threat of violence. His theory we can argue asserts the existence of a permanent state of nature where collectivities rather than individuals clash.

Another crucial point in Schmitt's theorization is his pointing out state as a political entity *par excellence* in terms of its capacity to operate fully outside of the scope of "politics", which is understood by the liberals as a competition of partial interests (Dodd, 2009: 38) or by theorists such as Habermas as the formation of a mutual agreement. "The state as the decisive political entity possesses an enormous power: the possibility of waging war and thereby politically disposing of the lives of men" (Schmitt, 1996: 46) without having to obey the legally defined limits of state coercion. Hence, the state's capacity to be violent constitutes an important aspect of Schmittian politics. Hence, the two elements, the extreme case of the possibility of violent confrontation, and its decision constitutes the definition of the political in Schmitt.

This definition of the political is formal and is constituted by the distinction of friend and enemy in a way that violence remains an ultimate



possibility. It is formal in the sense that it locates violence in one situation. For him enmity is what is necessary properly to understand the political. It is formal, in that it is a statement of necessity, not actuality. The state's capacity of being violent at times where decision-making is required further makes violence again an important aspect of his definition of the political. He is not interested in what actually happens but what really the case is. He is not advocating a politics as such in his theory of the political but his depiction points out the aspects that liberals miss or ignore.

As a result, while the Schmittian perspective offers a more realistic account in terms of appreciating the role violence plays in history and politics, as shown it has the tendency of attributing violence or hostility an essential character. This tendency can be criticized, from a different normative-theoretical ground such as the Habermasian politics, for neglecting other aspects of human existence but I think it is possible to criticize Schmitt within Schmittian ontology by arguing that his analysis disregards the range of exchanges and interactions that can take place between friend and enemy as well. As we will see in the next chapters, Arendt reminds how the friend/enemy distinction was treated as a possibility of founding a future alliance in Roman times. In one of the rare instances, she writes on law Arendt reminds the Roman times: laws were established not for the re-establishment of peace but they (as treaties and in the case of wars in Roman history. Arendt argues that at the end of wars, in the case of wars in Roman history. Arendt argues that at the end of wars, in the case of wars in Roman history. Arendt argues that at the end of wars, (as treaties and agreements) they were means of constituting new alliances and unities between entities, which were separate in the first instance,

became enemies by war and entered into a partnership with the finalization of a war (Arendt, 1963: 188). Therefore, neither war nor violence has to be the limit where political emerges or intensifies as it approaches to that limit. Politics, for thinkers like Arendt, may also begin with the termination of violence among parties.

### **3.2 Benjamin: The Violence of Law and the Overcoming of Politics through Divine Violence**

Witnessing the turmoil of the Weimar Republic like Schmitt, Walter Benjamin opposed the liberal-democratic paradigm's hypothetical distinction of violence from force, its appraisal of law as a rational, supreme principle of political order. The questions of the establishment and protection of an 'order' and 'revolution' (that is the destruction of an old and founding of a new order) and their relation to violence loom the background of the theorist's work while reflecting on the crisis Germany was undergoing.

Despite their different and even opposing political stands, some affinities between Benjamin and Schmitt have been noted (Weber, 1992; for a view that underlines their differences Müller, 2003),<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> A letter penned by Benjamin (1930) addressing Carl Schmitt is suggested to be the proof of such affinity and admiration on Benjamin's side (Weber, 1992; Müller, 2003; de Wilde, 2011). Benjamin expresses his indebtedness to Schmitt for the impact of his theory of sovereignty on his work, *The Origin of the German Mourning Play*. "We also know that after Benjamin's tragic death, when Theodor Adorno was preparing a selection of Benjamin's letters to publish, he did not include the mentioned letter and eliminated references to Schmitt from Benjamin's *Origins of German Tragedy* in order to remove the traces of a suggested affinity between two theorists. According to Samuel Weber (1992) Benjamin's interest in the work of Schmitt is for at least two related but very distinct reasons. "First of all, the 'play of mourning' at work in the *Trauerspiel* and above all the character of its "origin" both imply a certain relationship to history and to politics." More specifically, however, he writes, "Benjamin encounters the question of sovereignty not simply as a theme of German baroque theater, but as a methodological and theoretical problem: as we shall see, according to Benjamin every attempt

The first one pertains to their intellectual sources of inspirations and their methodological approach. Like Schmitt, Benjamin had a particular interest in the seventeenth-century but he majorly pondered on the theatrical and aesthetic aspects of the historical era. Weber (1992: 7) defined their commonalty as “methodological extremism” which is a kind of engagement with “a singularity that exceeds or eludes” the general. In *Political Theology*, Schmitt (1985: 15) writes

Precisely a philosophy of concrete life must not withdraw from the exception and the extreme case, but must be interested in it to the highest degree. The exception can be more important to it than the rule, not because of a romantic irony for the paradox, but because the seriousness of an insight goes deeper than the clear generalizations inferred from what ordinarily repeats itself. The exception is more interesting than the rule. The rule proves nothing; the exception proves everything: it confirms not only the rule but also its existence, which derives only from the exception.

Similarly, Benjamin explains his involvement in the ‘extreme’ “in order to indicate just how the “idea” distinguishes itself from the subsumptive generality of the concept” (Weber, 1992: 7) where he writes on the premises and implications of his reading of the German baroque theater:

The idea is best explained as the representation of the context in which the unique and extreme [*Einmalig*-Extreme] stands alongside its counterpart. It is therefore erroneous to understand the most general references which language makes as concepts, instead of recognizing them as ideas. It is absurd to attempt to explain the general as the average. The general is the idea. The empirical, on the other hand, can be all the more profoundly understood the more clearly it is seen as an extreme (Benjamin, 1998: 35).

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to interpret the German baroque risks succumbing to a certain lack of sovereignty. However, Schmitt was not the sole name who had impacts on Benjamin’s political thought, which was only a newly emerging interest for him. Ernst Bloch, Hugo Ball and as noted George Sorel’s work *Reflections on Violence* (1908) were influential on his thinking as well.

Another noted affinity is the impact of the Marxist thinker Georges Sorel (Hanssen, 2000: 16), whose views I have briefly reviewed in the previous section. Both Schmitt and Benjamin took Sorel's theory of general strike seriously, adopted his problematization of the state and revolutionary power/violence, and responded differently in their works. While Schmitt embraced the vitality of the notion of conflict as a source for politics, Benjamin was drawn to his notion of 'general strike' in his formulation of the idea of a 'non-violent revolution' that could overcome the violence inherent to the modern political system. Before coming to the details of that endeavor, I will firstly review the critique he directed at the liberal-democratic paradigm with regards to their separation of violence from politics

The *Critique of Violence*<sup>43</sup> is a complex and ambiguous text, open to differing interpretations from Derrida to Žižek (Derrida, 1992; Agamben, 1998; Butler, 2006; Žižek, 2008). It constitutes an exception in Benjaminian *oeuvre* since the thinker does not have many political writings rather is first and foremost a literary critic; in fact, as proclaimed to the friends, *Critique* was planned to be part of a greater work Benjamin was working on. It was written during the turbulent years of Weimar Republic, hence shares the historical background with Carl Schmitt. It reveals Benjamin's reflections on the issue of violence in its revolutionary or statist forms.

"The task of the critique of violence can be summarized as that of expounding its relation to law and justice," Benjamin writes at the beginning of the essay. This is so because for him the question of violence belongs to the

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<sup>43</sup> The work would be consisting of two parts, *The True Politician* and *True Politics* but the manuscripts are not currently available; they are guessed to be lost or considered as remained unfinished before Benjamin's suicide at the French- Spain border in 1940.

moral domain, which is ruled by the concepts of law and justice. Two approaches, namely the natural law tradition and the positive law tradition offer responses on this topic that, conflicting with each other at the end. Within the framework of natural law, use of violence is deemed possible with reference to just ends. This is the argument used for the justification and legitimation of the terror during the French Revolution, Benjamin asserts. Transcending the worldly and political notions of legality or legitimacy, violence proves itself a just means if it serves for the reaching of just ends. A mother's killing of a man attacking her child cannot be violent; or children's breaking a window and stealing some bread because of hunger is not counted as unjust violence. The positive law, on the other hand, refutes the addressing to natural or divine rights, and therefore rejects the argument that violence can be justified with reference to just ends. By abolishing the concern for the *telos*, it focuses on means and declares that only just means will produce just ends. The problem with both approaches, however, is that they cannot reconcile law with the issue of justice. Law or legality, as historical constructions, will always fall short of justice: they will fail their claim to justice. Müller (2003: 469) notes an argument from Benjamin's 1920 fragment 'The Right to Use Force' where he "placed law in opposition to justice and morality, but grouped it with guilt, fate, and myth." This is so because Benjamin (1996: 232) argues that "the law's concern with justice is only apparent... in truth the law is concerned with self-preservation. In particular, with defending its existence against its own guilt."

Law's defending its existence against its guilt refers to the impossibility of its legitimation in an absolute sense. Law would be always partial, relative, historical and political. Thus, for him law destructs its own foundation in every

moment of foundation, it betrays itself and then re-emerges. For this reason, the only absolute thing about law is that in its origin there is violence. Regardless of its use for just or unjust ends, violence is intrinsic to any law. Rather than securing justice, as natural law theories and certain positivist doctrines held law is in dire need of reaffirming itself through the acts of violence. According to Benjamin, there is always going to be a ‘law-making violence’ and ‘law-preserving violence’. Law-making violence denotes the violence at the moment of foundation. The law-preserving violence, on the other hand, denotes the reign of law that is the capacity of deciding what constitutes ‘violence’ (meaning what counts as a threat to the law) or whether the law is going to use coercion against the threat or not. For this reason, Benjamin (1996: 242) writes,

“law-preserving violence is a threatening violence...[I]ts threat is not intended as the deterrent that uninformed liberal theorists interpret it to be. A deterrent in the exact sense would require a certainty that contradicts the nature of a threat and is not attained by any law, since there is always hope of eluding its arm. This makes it all the more threatening, like fate, which determines whether the criminal is apprehended. The deepest purpose of the uncertainty of the legal threat will emerge from the later consideration of the sphere of fate in which it originates.”

This logic, then suggests that the state’s denouncing of violence does not derive from a moral-rational standpoint. The state does not oppose violence because it is immoral, inhumane or unjust. It is mainly because violence in the hands of individuals is seen as a danger that undermines the legal system. The idea of state’s monopoly on violence aims to constrain violence that may pose a threat to the law, order and the state: “violence, when not in the hands of the law, threatens it not by the ends that it may pursue but by its mere existence outside the law” (Benjamin, 1996: 239). The figure of the great criminal is suggestive here. We should remember Habermas’s accusation of Rudi Dutschke

(the leader of the *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*) with “leftist fascism” for his defense of the use of violent means against the state. If we had a chance to ask Benjamin what his opinion is on this he would probably tell us it is Dutschke’s historical ability to confront the violence of law with the threat of declaring a new law that makes him intolerable to the state and to the defenders of it. It is also, his falling outside of the law; hence, reminding of the originary violence, which lies at the source of law that makes him both charismatic and horrifying in the eyes of the public.

The phenomenon of capital punishment reveals the violent and fragile nature of law. In the case of the capital punishment, Benjamin argues, the “purpose is not to punish the infringement of law but to establish new law. For in the exercise of violence over life and death, more than in any other legal act, the law reaffirms itself” (Benjamin, 1996: 239). Since “violence, violence crowned by fate” referring to a myriad of random events, “is the origin of law, then it may be readily supposed that where the highest violence, that over life and death, occurs in the legal system, the origins of law jut manifestly and fearsomely into existence” (Benjamin, 1996: 242).

A very special mixture of the law preserving and law making violence within modern state structure is the police, Benjamin suggests. While the police force seeming to be law preserving for it enforce existing laws, it also operates as law making, because its violence often functions beyond the realm of the law. The police often intervene “for security reasons” in an arbitrary fashion, with reference to special decrees that fall outside the parameters of the law (Benjamin, 1996: 43).

It is against this background Benjamin raises his critique of parliamentary democracy. For him, that type of regime contains an irresolvable contradiction. He (1996: 244) says, parliamentary democracies “offer the familiar, woeful spectacle because they have not remained conscious of the revolutionary forces to which they owe their existence; they lack the sense of the violence of their own origins, unsettled by the pure positing force of their own inauguration.” Like Schmitt, he criticizes the ignorance or the forgetfulness of the liberal-democrats on the role violence plays in the establishment of the political regime. “No wonder that they cannot achieve decrees worthy of this violence, but cultivate in compromise a supposedly nonviolent manner of dealing with political affairs” (Benjamin, 1996: 244). He further notes the degrading impact of such unfaithfulness and writes (1996: 244) “when the consciousness of the latent presence of violence in a legal institution disappears, the institution falls into decay.”

All in all, the interdependence of law and violence what he calls as mythical violence’ is an inescapable politico-historical reality for Benjamin<sup>44</sup> as it is for Schmitt.

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<sup>44</sup> In fact as Habermas (1979: 38) notes, for Benjamin, “the continuum of history consists in the permanence of the unbearable; progress is the eternal return of the catastrophe”. His famous interpretation of the Klee painting named *Angelus Novus* exemplifies his approach on the issue. In the ninth thesis of his essay *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Benjamin (1968) writes:

A Klee painting named *Angelus Novus* shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

See, Benjamin Walter. 1968. *Illuminations*, Hannah Arendt. ed. With an introduction. Harry Zohn trans. Schocken.



A true political question and a genuine ethical critique concerning violence, then, pertain to the task of formulating a type of political action that could eliminate its recurrence in law. Benjamin's solution is a notion of "pure *praxis*", a non-instrumental type of action with no origin or an end. He differs from Schmitt, who wants to revive the dangerous liaison between politics and violence to keep the political spirit alive. While for Schmitt, the state of emergency represents the political moment *par excellence* Benjamin calls for a real emergency or an exceptional event that represents a real break within the history. That event is the moment of true justice, the arrival of the Messiah, the emergence of the final and redemptive force, the moment of 'divine violence'. In a sense, it has been argued Benjamin's divine violence resembles Schmitt's sovereign decisionism. "Where Schmitt's ruler made a momentous decision to restore order, reinstate law and a world split into discrete, homogeneous political units, Benjamin's pure, striking violence left nothing to be imagined beyond the apocalyptic moment" (Müller (2003: 470). It is the abolition of the notion of legality and the negation of the instrumental logic of the mythical violence. He (1986: 297) writes

If mythical violence is lawmaking, divine violence is law-destroying; if the former sets boundaries, the latter boundlessly destroys them; if mythical violence brings at once guilt and retribution, divine power only expiates; if the former threatens, the latter strikes; if the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood.

Hence, divine violence is a 'non-violent' violence. Despite its paradoxical and Messianic connotations, for Benjamin the Sorel-inspired 'proletarian general strike' is an example of divine violence. The distinction

Sorel made between a “proletarian general strike” and a “partial strike,” becomes important for Benjamin as well since he argues a partial strike operates within the existing legal framework because of its use of violence (e.g. the stopping of line of production in a factory). It is a means to an end in the sense that it has particular demands such as the shortening of working hours, better working conditions etc. A partial strike fundamentally is not an attempt of changing the relationship between the laborers and the capital holders. The proletarian general strike, on the other hand, does not put forward specific demands that can be accommodated by the legal order. Rather, it seeks a complete transformation of relations of production and the socio-political order, which is constructed on the basis of economic relations. The violence of the general strike, therefore, is a pure means; it calls for the abolition of the existing order.

### **3.3. Fanon: Colonial Violence and the Revolutionary Constitution of *a* Politics**

After presenting the critique directed at the liberal-democratic paradigm by Schmitt’s and Benjamin’s work, which assert that violence plays a constitutive and sustaining role in the political with occasional appearance, and that violence and law are interconnected, I would like to move to Frantz Fanon the psychiatrist, existentialist and the revolutionary theorist of Algeria. Fanon directed a harsh critique at western civility and humanism with the argument that violence primarily is a western-originated and enslaving phenomenon.

This is a direct challenge to the liberal position that associates peace and reason with the foundation of a political order and the state and equates violence with irrationality, with the prepolitical or the natural domain. Fanon, like Schmitt and Benjamin views violence as a determinant in the political; unlike the ontological approach of the German jurist, he offers a historical and contextual analysis. For Fanon, violence is an inherent feature of the ordering and control mechanism of the colonial world. Although capitalism as a system includes coercion for its operation, in the colonial context its exploitation needs no concealment. It is brutally and blatantly there. In western countries, a “multitude of moral teachers, counselors and “bewilderers” separate the exploited from those in power” (Fanon, 1963), he writes. For this reason, the liberal system enables the smooth and non-violent functioning of capitalism. In colonial countries, the rule is lent to police officers and the soldiers, which for Benjamin are the special agents of modern state, embodying both the law-preserving and law-making violence of any rule. While in western contexts both police and armed forces are kept in reserve and they become visible only during the times of crises, upheavals or emergencies, they are immediately present in the colonial contexts and generally involve with direct relations with the natives “by means of rifle butts and napalm.” According to Fanon (1963:)

The agents of government speak the language of pure force. The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native.

While Schmitt criticizes liberalism for reducing politics into a process of bargaining over small issues and neglecting the real dynamics of the political

and even for docilizing them, Fanon shows that such pacification is not an issue in the colonial regions. Employment of violent means might have been limited in the western societies; alas, it was transferred to colonies and used against colonial people with no concern or hesitation about limitations on its use. The colonial region was treated as if it is a Hobbesian state of nature but the thing is it was the western men who acted in accordance with Hobbesian principles. The establishment of a 'state' in the colonial state did not constrain violence rather centralized and intensified its level and scope.<sup>45</sup>

For Fanon, the brutality of the colonial violence is not limited with the bodies of colonized people. He notes the psychological injury caused by violence by saying that colonial violence taunts the 'souls' of the colonized people. While in the European context an increasing emphasis has been put on the awakening and use of rational minds, envy, lust and bitterness that is feelings that are considered as irrational and irrelevant for politics, are injected into the minds of the oppressed people in colonies. The colonial world, for Fanon, is a Manichean world (Roberts, 2004; for an opposing view Gibson, 2003). It is divided into binary compartmental zones such as black vs. white, settler vs. native, master vs. servant with boundaries and hierarchical relations between the natives and the settlers. Everything about the settlers display narcissistic features: their domains denote civility, culture and humanity, their physical or personal features are always considered as superior, moral and

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<sup>45</sup> The argument Fanon develops here, that was also noted by Schmitt early on with the notion of 'state of exception' and by Benjamin has been invoked by later theorists as well. Giorgio Agamben, one of the most famous of them, implies that whenever such will to unlimited use of violence emerges, a 'mental', 'spatial' or 'temporal' 'state of nature' (read as state of exception) is created. The working principles of concentration camps in 1940s or the Guantanamo camps in 2000s are analyzed within this framework. This being so, the liberal approach does not problematize the discrepancy between its ideals and the violent practices extensively to fulfill its claim of universality and of substantiality.

aesthetic. In contrast to this, “the native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values... [it is]...declared insensible to ethics; ...[the native] represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is... the enemy of values . . . the absolute evil” (Fanon, 1963). In this world, the natives’ consciousness is filled with inferiority complexes. Hate, envy, resentment and jealousy are combined with the will to possess things they were taught to be lacking. Fanon argues that the oppressed native desires to seize the settler’s domains, settler’s features and her form of relations. Nonetheless, the native also fears from this desire. The border that was drawn between him and the master has a paralyzing impact. It makes the colonized subject nervous and anxious. These paradoxical feelings e.g. inferiority, anger, desire and envy the natives experience troubles them and led to the transfer the resentment that was built inside against themselves and their own society. Various forms of fights, religious rites, libidinal acts, violent engagements etc. are seen as the result of the colonial rule and the master slave relationship.<sup>46</sup>

As seen, the master and slave dialectic has certainly nothing to do with the friend/enemy distinction Schmitt made to make his point on the essentiality of the existential-political antagonism between different yet equal collectivities for the sustenance of the political. There is some sort of reciprocity in Schmitt. In that sense, Fanon’s argument rather resembles Schmitt’s critique of liberal paradigm with the argument that as non-political ideology liberalism has a

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<sup>46</sup> One can also make a comparison between Hegel and Fanon’s formulation of the master-slave dialectic in order to dwell on the implications of the domination of the white master over the black slave. For such comparisons See Parris, T. LaRose. 2011. Frantz Fanon, Existentialist, Dialectician and Revolutionary. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4 (7) 4-23; Rollins, Judith. 2007. ‘And the Last Shall Be First’: The Master-Slave Dialectic in Hegel, Nietzsche and Fanon, *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*. 5( 3) 163-178; Vallega, Alejandro A. Unbounded Histories: Hegel, Fanon, and Gabriel García Márquez. *Idealistic Studies*, 38 (1-2): 41-54.

tendency of transforming the *hostis* into *inimicus*, the political enemy into a private one. In Fanon's critique, we see the lack or the rejection of the recognition of the humanity of the other.<sup>47</sup> It clearly does not denote an equal form of relationship and operates as a process of physical oppression, material exploitation and psychological infliction for the native people. The colonial context and the post-colonial period also suggest that there is a possibility that the Hegelian master/slave dialectic may not be transcended. It may metamorphose in another form. It can be mimicked and reproduced in the form of ethno-national chauvinism, for instance, and may be directed against 'newly discovered' internal minorities. Again, it is possible to see that the western oppression might turn into a form of manipulation and control of the post-colonial states *via* newly emerging dictators, national bourgeoisie and intellectuals.

For this reason, like Schmitt and Benjamin before him, Fanon criticizes ordinary politics and its elements. Political parties are alienated from the people and they never lay stress upon a collective violent upheaval for the good reason that their objective is not the overthrowing of the existing system. For this reason, he contends, the only way to do away with colonialism, exploitation and oppression is to reverse it by a revolutionary violence (Fanon, 1963: 48). Yet

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<sup>47</sup> This is a point elaborated by the French philosopher Jacques Rancière in his *Disagreement*. Going back to Aristotle's definition of slave as the one that lacks the capacity for speech, and to Arendt and Habermas who emphasize speech to be an essential aspect of human capability, he argues what counts as human, as the relevant speech or the official language is a political question from the outset. It is the exclusion and the will to be included or to be heard that defines politics. It is not the slave who does not have the capability to speak but the master who is neither able to speak nor to hear the language the slave is speaking. The French director Michael Haneke's psychological thriller *Caché* (2005) can be also linked to this discussion. In his film, Haneke addresses the historically established and currently ongoing race relations in the Western world, the psychological distress a former colonized subject experienced in a modernized master-slave relationship, the 'violence' of non-recognition and the tragedy of asking for recognition in a beautiful and sad way.

since bourgeoisie demand more power for their class interests and because colonial elites remain ambiguous regarding the role of violence in the process of liberation and decolonization they might be violent in their words but remain reformist in their attitudes (Fanon, 1963: 46-51). One cannot fight against the systematic violence inflicted upon the indigenous people and the social and psychological corruptions colonialism brought by relying on ordinary politics of the parties, elites and bourgeois. Sharing the similarity with Benjamin who suggests for the necessity of a 'divine violence' for the elimination of a 'mythic violence', Fanon argues the only way is the employment of a direct revolutionary violence, undertaken only by the peasants who have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Having outlined the violent nature of the colonial rule and its devastating impacts on the psyches of native people as well, Fanon reasons that counter-violence should be inserted for cleansing, liberating and emancipating purposes.

#### *Emancipatory Violence: Agere Aude?*

As a revolutionary force, violence serves several purposes within Fanon's politics. Firstly, it unifies the tribal structures such as chieftaincies and old Marabout confraternities, which were separated from each other with colonial rule (Fanon, 1963: 93). It contributes to the liquidation of regionalism and tribalism, fosters nationalism and the unification of the people. Such unification in violent action frees territories from colonizers. The second contribution of violence is its liberating impact on the individuals. In the previous paragraphs, I have shown how the colonial oppression has destructive impacts on the psyche of the natives. The colonized subject, for Fanon, suffers

from inferiority complex, despair, envy and anger, which cannot be obviated within the master and slave relation, therefore is directed towards his own community. When engaged in a direct violent action with the true source and the subject of their negative feelings, the native would restore his self-respect in Fanon's opinion. He would overcome the complexes and liberate from the sickening and immobilizing master/slave relationship (Fanon, 1963: 93).<sup>48</sup> Thus, the Algerian revolutionary writes "the native discovers that his life, his breath, his beating heart are the same as those of the settler. He finds out that "the settler's skin is not of any more value than a native's skin; and it must be said that this discovery shakes the world in a very necessary manner" (Fanon, 1963: 45).

Besides having the cleansing and liberating impact, violence plays a transformative role on individuals in Fanon's theory for it enables political agency: "when the people have taken violent part in the national liberation, they will not allow anyone to set themselves up as 'liberators'... they mean to understand everything and make all decisions" by themselves (Fanon, 1963: 94).

Some consider Fanon's writings on colonial modernity to be a "part of a tradition of critique that has sustained in some ways our engagement with the project of the Enlightenment...Revolutionary violence, in this context, is recuperated through that critique" (Seshadri-Crooks, 2002: 86). In the second

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<sup>48</sup> By quoting Césaire's novel, Fanon underlines the cleansing impact of violence:

The master's room was wide open. The master's room was brilliantly lighted, and the master was there, very calm... and our people stopped dead...it was the master...I went in. "It's you," he said, very calm. It was I, even I, and I told him so, the good slave, the faithful slave, the slave of slaves, and suddenly his eyes were like two cockroaches, frightened in the rainy season...I struck, and the blood spurted; that is the only baptism that I remember today. Aimé Césaire, *Les Armes Miraculeuses* (Et les chiens se taisaient) 133-37



chapter, I have shown how the liberal-democratic approach reformulated the Kantian conception of public reason for the development of a non-violent conception of politics.

In this sense, it is also deemed possible to treat Fanon's theory of violence as analytically at the same level with Kant and normatively in contrast with the categorical imperative (Roberts, 2004). The categorical imperative exemplifies a moral theory premised upon intrinsic values. While Kantian theory focuses on the use of reason in the formulation of a moral theory, Fanon calls attention to aggressiveness and to the existence of intrinsic values in relation to violence. Like Kant, the Algerian theorist aims at a theory of freedom.

Unlike Kant, who focuses on the mind or reason, his concern pertains to the souls of the colonized subject (Roberts, 2004:146). In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon asserts, "colonialism is not a thinking machine nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties." The emphasis on the emancipation process of the natives, opposes the individualistic approach advocated by the liberal approach (Seshadri-Crooks, 2002).

In Fanon's view, attributing exceptionalism or leadership to individuals during the process of decolonization and in the organization of political action should be avoided. He contends, "we [the colonial people] ought not to cultivate the exceptional or to seek for a hero, who is another form of leader". The revolutionary action must be taken by the masses *in toto*. He writes, "we ought to uplift the people; we must develop their brains, fill them with ideas, change them and make them into human beings" (Fanon, 1963: 196).

### 3.4. Žižek: Divine Violence Revisited

Another figure who praises violence as the ultimate means to destroy the current order is the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek. In his rather recent work *Violence: Six Sideway Reflections* Žižek (2008) asserts a twofold distinction between types of violence to make a clarification for the understanding of 9/11 and post-9/11 instances of violence such as bombings, mass killings, or acts of martyrdom. The incidences of violence we have been increasingly exposed to in the last decade all around the globe, for him, are examples of ‘subjective violence’, the type of violence, which is visible, and has a distinguishable and accountable agent. The subjective violence has been receiving increasing attention in the contemporary world, and arousing fear and anger on the side of sufferers and observers. Nonetheless, they obscure the functioning of ‘objective violence’ that is the unseen violence inherent to the system. According to Žižek “to chastise violence outright, to condemn it as “bad,” is an ideological operation *par excellence*” is “a mystification which collaborates in rendering invisible the fundamental forms of social violence” (Žižek, 2008). The objective violence, reproduced by increasingly complex capitalist relations of production and capital, takes the form of either the ‘symbolic violence’, unfolding its impact in language and other forms of representations and the ‘systemic violence’, the catastrophic consequences of the functioning of the capitalist system such as exploitation, environmental damages and the widening of the gap between classes and regions.

Žižek’s analysis does not suggest a simple causal relationship between subjective and objective violence, such as increasing gap of inequality between

rich and poor gives rise to terrorist activities rather he points out the complexity of the dynamics that are operating in the background. It is for this reason, local and incremental acts or practices that operate within the means and ends rationality cannot abolish the system and its violence. To undo the complexities that unfold in objective and subjective forms of violence, Žižek, like Schmitt calls for radicalization of polarizations and like Fanon requires a spontaneous, bold, violent mass revolutionary act that can bring the system to halt. Benjamin's notion of 'divine violence' comes in handy here, albeit in a paradoxical manner. For Žižek, one of the most obvious candidates for divine violence<sup>49</sup> "is the violent explosion of resentment which finds expression in a spectrum that ranges from mob lynchings to organized revolutionary terror" (2008: 87). Another example is the Jacobin violence of France in the 1790. Again, he writes (2008: 202)

Divine violence should thus be conceived as divine in the precise sense if the old Latin motto *vox populi, vox dei*: not in the perverse sense of "we are doing it as mere instruments of the People's Will," but as the heroic assumption of the solitude of sovereign decision. It is a decision (to kill, to risk or lose one's own life) made in absolute solitude, with no cover in the big Other. If it is extra-moral, it is not "immoral", it does not give the agent license just to kill with some kind of angelic innocence. When those outside the structured social field strike "blindly", demanding and enacting immediate justice/vengeance, this is divine violence. Recall, a decade or so ago, the panic in Rio de Janeiro when crowds descended from the favelas into the rich part of the city and started looting and burning supermarkets. This was indeed divine violence.

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<sup>49</sup> Upon presenting the problems in the understanding and the experience of violence in contemporary societies and pointing out the violence inherent to the system, Žižek puts forward the idea of divine violence as a radical act. In doing this, he also feels the need for clarifications regarding the term's usage by popular media and some other commentators. He opposes interpretations that ask whether 9/11 would represent 'divine violence' or the concentration camps of Hitler regime or Agamben's 'state of exception' corresponds to what Benjamin meant with the term.

Yet still, the Slovenian philosopher makes an interesting twist and argues that in today's world "it is difficult to be really violent, to perform an act that violently disturbs the basic parameters of social life" (2008: 202). It is almost impossible to commit a violent act with an impact on the system. That violent act either is subsumed by the system or subsumes the actor of the act. Hence, violence cannot acquire its destructive character Žižek desires. The movie, *The Taxi Driver* is a good example in proving his point. The system makes an individual who has motives for violence directed towards others destruct himself since his actions cannot be more than reactions (Žižek, 2008: 208). The mass killings of the Jews during the Second World War, is also read from this perspective. According to Žižek, all Hitler's actions were fundamentally reactions too and they were also misdirected:

he acted so that nothing would really change; he acted to prevent the communist threat of a real change. His targeting of the Jews was ultimately an act of displacement in which he avoided the real enemy-the core of capitalist social relations themselves. Hitler staged a spectacle of revolution so that the capitalist order could survive (Žižek, 2008: 209-10).

Reactions are certainly different from authentic political gestures, for Žižek. For him, they are outbursts of impotent violence. Authentic political gestures are, on the other hand, active; they impose and enforce a vision (Žižek, 2008: 212-3). The meaning of being active and enforcing a vision is equated with the total destruction of the system by the Slovenian philosopher.

For this reason, at one point, somehow oddly, he suggests that, a mass withdrawal from the system rather than violent acts might be an effective strategy as well. In a system where the relation between subjective and systemic violence is intricate and even the judgment on what constitutes violence or not

is not certain: “The same act can count as violent or non-violent, depending on its context; sometimes a polite smile can be more violent than a brutal outburst” (Žižek, 2008: 213).

In the second chapter, I have presented Habermas’s reading of the rise of terror and other forms of violent acts in the last decades interprets them as a result of the problem of the distortions of the communication channels. In order to overcome the problem of non-communication, hence violence, provision of the active participation of excluded groups and the establishment of dialogue between parties are suggested. For Habermas, despite its deficiencies, the liberal-democratic order proves itself to be superior than other forms of regimes and for this reason its protection is necessary. In the following chapters, I will show that like Žižek, the French philosopher Michel Foucault argues that within the complex socio-political and economic relations actions with revolutionary impacts are quite difficult if not totally impossible. For this reason, it will be shown that Foucault encourages local resistances, small interventions and transformative activities to be undertaken by subjects wherever they are possible.<sup>50</sup> As opposed to these views, Žižek raises an interesting argument and suggest a total withdrawal from the system as a relevant political action. Unlike Habermas, he asserts that the problem of the contemporary world is not passivity but pseudo activity. The problem, today, he argues, “is the urge to “be active”, to “participate”, to mask the nothingness of what goes on. People intervene all the time, “do something”, sign petitions, and engage with petty

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<sup>50</sup> Foucault even receives criticisms from the Habermasian sect (for instance Kelly, 1994) for offering oppositions with no aims or visions (Habermas, 1987; 1994).

activities and protests. Academics, similarly, participate in meaningless debates, and do nothing else.

A debate between Simon Critchley and Žižek, fuelled upon the latter's critique of Critchley's *Infinitely Demanding* illustrates this point. Critchley (2007) too evaluates the events of contemporary violence as nihilistic responses to the motivational deficits afflicting modern democracies. In order to overcome that problem, he calls for the construction of an anarchistic motivating ethics based on which individuals could resist the system, engage with a continuous demand from it. Žižek criticizes this 'non-violent anarchistic politics' with the argument that such resistance cannot realize the promise of an infinite ethical demand for justice rather engenders the state's ensuring of the reproduction of its pragmatic and strategic goals. For him, this is a position that defends a revolt, which poses no effective threat to the system. Hence, all forms of resistance are futile unless they seize hold of the state.<sup>51</sup>

Since a total seizure is not possible for Žižek the truly difficult yet necessary thing to do is to step back, to withdraw (Žižek, 2008: 217). "Those in power often prefer even a "critical" participation, a dialogue, to silence just to engage us in "dialogue", to make sure our ominous passivity is broken" (Žižek, 2008: 217). Upon seeing the difficulty of finding pure acts, of breaking free

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<sup>51</sup> Critchley responds to these criticisms and provides a critical and even satirical analysis of Žižek's position. For the whole script of the debate see: Simon Critchley. 2007. *Infinitely Demanding*. Verso Books: London; Slavoj Žižek. 2007. "Resistance is Surrender," *London Review of Books* 29(22); Simon Critchley. 2008. "A Dream of Divine Violence", *Independent*; Responses to Žižek by T. J. Clark. 2008. "Resistance is Surrender" *London Review of Books* 29(4) and David Graeber. 2008. "Resistance is Surrender" *London Review of Books* 30(1); Response by Slavoj Žižek. 2008. "Resistance is Surrender". *London Review of Books* 30(2); Simon Critchley. 2008. "Resistance is Futile"; available online: <http://slackbastard.anarchobase.com/?p=1147> and Simon Critchley. 2008. "Critchley's Violent Thoughts about Slavoj Žižek", *Naked Punch* 11: 3-7; available online: [http://issuu.com/naked\\_punch\\_review/docs/supplement?mode=embed&documentId=090212185419-5bc1ed88f6c94b06b755ea4cd951f0b0&layout=grey%3E](http://issuu.com/naked_punch_review/docs/supplement?mode=embed&documentId=090212185419-5bc1ed88f6c94b06b755ea4cd951f0b0&layout=grey%3E)

from the system, its complex rationality and violence no matter what does, he argues

the voters' abstention is thus a true political act: it forcefully confronts us with the vacuity of today's democracies. If one means by violence a radical upheaval of the basic social relations, then, crazy and tasteless as it may sound, the problem with historical monsters who slaughtered millions was that they were not violent enough. Sometimes doing nothing is the most violent thing to do (Žižek, 2008: 217).

### **Conclusion:**

In this chapter, I have presented the approach that views the relationship between violence and politics as necessarily interlinked. Fanon, Žižek Schmitt and Benjamin attribute violence a central role in politics. Yet, as shown, there are differences between Fanon's existential-historical approach, Benjamin's critique of law and history, Schmitt's ontological approach and Žižek's complex analysis of contemporary politics and violence. For Schmitt, violence is an ever-present possibility that engenders the political. For Benjamin it is inherent to any political order; for Fanon, violence constitutes the rationale of colonialism. Finally, for Žižek violence is inherent to the liberal capitalism. Benjamin, Fanon and Žižek think that violence inherent to the existing system cannot be changed by available political mechanisms e.g. parliamentary regime, reformist attitudes, negotiations or partial strikes. It should be eliminated once and for all. The revolutionary violence, called as 'divine' in Benjamin and Žižek's case and 'anti-colonial' in Fanonian world, is liberating, therefore. I have already pointed out the difference between Schmitt's friend enemy distinction and Fanon's master slave dialectic so that we know in the former's formulation

violence denotes a relation of recognition of difference albeit in a hostile mood. His notion of state of exception, again, refers to a moment of violence (a ‘law-making’ violence in Benjamin’s words) that would set or restore the order. Schmitt does not want to eliminate violence, which he sees as a constitutive and equilibrium providing force. Both Benjamin and Fanon argue, however, the ‘state of exception’ is the rule and a true or real exception could be realized only by a total abolition. Hence, all theorists attack the liberal-democratic approach for its neglect of the relationship between violence and politics. The idea that occurrences of violence are marginal, irrational, apolitical and subjective phenomena is defied with arguments that mainly assert violence is something that backs up and sustains the political order. By being so, it becomes crucial and even necessary for the elimination of the problematic order.

Within this context, as seen, violence acquires too much meaning and value in itself. In Schmitt’s theory, for instance, conflict in extreme form, — physical force or a threat against the existence of one’s own or against the opponent— become essential features of politics. As opposed to the idea of deliberation, willful decision, which puts an end to dull discussions are emphasized and bold action against dissidents are advocated. It is through the threat of violence i.e. physical confrontation, political subjectivity and consciousness take shape. This perspective conceives politics as a form of continuous struggle and even a symbolic warfare defining the relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

In the works of some revolutionary thinkers like Sorel and Fanon again, violence presupposes a certain type of consciousness but at the same time, it engenders the development of a political consciousness and the formation of



political subjectivity. Georges Sorel's (1999) *Reflections on Violence* offers an analysis in line with this presumption. Sorel directly challenges the liberal premises and its notion of violence as an irrational phenomenon and even reverses its conception of violence by attributing it a normative value. For him (Sorel, 1999: 165-166; emphasis mine)

Sometimes the terms '*force*' and '*violence*' are used in speaking of acts of authority, sometimes in speaking of acts of revolt. It is obvious that the two cases give rise to very different consequences. I think that it would be better to adopt a terminology which would give rise to no ambiguity, and that the term '*violence*' should be employed only for the second sense; we should say, therefore, that the object of *force* is to impose a certain social order in which the minority governs, while *violence* ends to the destruction of that order. The bourgeoisie have used *force* since the beginning of modern times, while the proletariat now reacts against the middle class and against the State by *violence*.

For having dramatic and radical impacts, including emotional aspects violence becomes an appealing act regardless of its results, therefore the justification of its use is considered to lose its sincerity. According to Hanssen (2000) although "Fanon's endorsement of violence never assumed force as an end in itself, but as the situated, historical response to colonial violence... it was infused by a theory of Sorelian spontaneous and a highly problematic creative vitalism.

"Benjamin's *Critique of Violence* opposed founding the political in belligerent violence", writes Beatrice Hanssen (2000: 22) "for to do so would risk installing violence as an absolute end in itself." All the same, she asks whether the essay reintroduces "a theological foundationalism, that is, a decisive, authoritative ground, which was to sustain secular forms of violence." Benjamin's endeavor of "politics of pure means" by remaining within the

framework of Judeo-Marxist Messianism “fell short of providing an incisive differentiation between just and unjust uses of violence, and therefore, in the final analysis, of offering a credible critique of violence” (Hanssen, 2000: 22). For Habermas, similarly, Benjamin’s politics of pure means amounts to an “anarchistic praxis” in its rejection of instrumentality, purposive and goal oriented action, and therefore, allies with Schmitt in a radical denouncing of normativity (Habermas, 1987 in Hanssen, 2000: 17). Similarly, Frazer and Hutchings (2008) note this when they analyze the political discourses of theorists such as Fanon and Schmitt. One can assess a discourse of aesthetics with elements of ‘sublime’ or ‘tragedy’ in these theories, which presents a striking contrast with the rational liberal democrat approach. They argue that the employment of the discourse of aesthetics, however, is due to the will to persuade the reader to accept the necessity and inevitability of violence. This is so because affirming violence as an effective means for achieving political ends cannot be rationally justified.

As a result, as we have seen the critique of the liberal-democratic approach evaluates the relationship between violence and politics as structurally and even essentially interlinked. This emphasis on the structural link between violence and politics is an important aspect of this approach. In its different variants its assertion of violence as a necessarily disruptive and constructive force in politics is one other feature. This approach then assumes historically and even ontologically, politics involves violence. For this reason, we can even argue that the position of the illiberal radicals can be characterized by a non-problematization as well. Here, the relationship between violence and politics is positively and absolutely affirmed. For this reason, I think, despite their

opposing positions both the liberal-democratic approach and the illiberal critique present “necessary propositions” with regards to the relationship between violence and politics. Their argument on relationship between violence and politics is a postulate of reason, hence *a priori*.

## CHAPTER IV

### AN ALTERNATIVE POSITION: THEORISTS OF AMBIVALENCE WITH RESPECT TO THE RELATION BETWEEN VIOLENCE AND POLITICS

Up until now, I have presented the liberal-democratic paradigm, and the critique of that approach that views the relation between violence and politics interlinked. I have argued that for the contemporary liberal thinkers violence has not become a political issue. Led by an enlightened reason, freed from prejudices and beliefs, equipped with capabilities of communication, exemplified in Habermas's thought, and agreement, as Rawls suggested, citizens are expected to live in a harmonious and non-violent order. The liberal-democratic approach, I have argued, does not problematize the relation between violence and politics by mainly treating the issue of violence as an irrational, marginal and abnormal phenomenon.

In contrast to this, I have introduced Schmitt, Benjamin who in their works treat violence as an essential aspect of political order, an irreducible and even constitutive element of sovereign power and law. I have also included Fanon and Žižek in the discussion to present their challenge to the liberal

assumption of civility, rationality and docility of the western capitalist order. In each figure of the critique of the first paradigm, violence is deemed as an essential aspect of politics: it constructs politics, sustains it in the form of a rule or domination and even abolishes it for the establishment of a new form of politics.

Based on my review I argue that both the liberal-democratic approach and the critical illiberal position assert “necessary propositions” with *a priori* knowledge on the relationship between violence and politics. One denies any relationship between violence and politics, the other almost essentializes it; hence, neither suggests problematization that is a critical evaluation of the relationship between violence and politics in historical contexts.

In this chapter, I would like to probe third position, a position of ambivalence with respect to the relation between violence and politics. I would argue that theorists that can be included within this category differ from the liberal-democratic paradigm in their treatment of violence as a historical and at times political phenomenon. This position is also characterized by its argument that violence might operate within a rational framework. Without necessarily defending it, the theorists of ambivalence attempt at looking into reasons, motives of the use and justifications provided for the employment of violence. According to Michel Foucault (1996: 299), for instance,

All human behavior is scheduled and programmed through rationality. There is a logic of institutions and in behavior and in political relations. In even the most violent ones, there is a rationality. What is most dangerous in violence is its rationality. Of course violence itself is terrible. But the deepest root of violence and its permanence come out of the form of the rationality we use. The idea had been that if we live in the world of reason, we can get rid of violence. This is quite wrong. Between violence and rationality there is no incompatibility.

In this sense, the relation between violence and politics is considered as instrumental: violence is evaluated within the category of means and ends and considered to be employed in order to reach particular objectives. Many also suggest that at times it is an efficient means in reaching those goals. Such a conception also suggests that violence may have an expressive character in a way that it puts forward the demands, worries and angers of those who employed violent means. Apart from the outlined features that can be called as ‘diagnostic’ aspects of the analysis of violence at a normative or prognostic level the theorists of ambivalence reveal positions that vary from disapproval to excuse or to legitimation of violence.

Hence, a wide range of analyses can be located within the category of the position of ambivalence. For Sheldon Wolin (1963: 24-5), for instance, Machiavelli is an important figure, one whose impact can be compared to Galileo’s importance to modern physics. This is so because Machiavelli fathered the shift in political theorists’ understanding of violence from being an expression of passion to the “measured application of force”, which he calls the “economy of violence” (Wolin, 2006).<sup>52</sup> Accordingly, despite being a crucial means for the foundation and preservation of political order, violence is something the dose of which requires a delicate and decent arrangement so that the ruler can avoid excessive use of violence. In his *Prince* Machiavelli

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<sup>52</sup> While Wolin suggests Machiavelli’s conception of politics to have an instrumentalist approach on the use of violence, for Frazer and Hutchings (2008: 90), the Italian political theorist views violence and politics as inextricably intertwined. One possible explanation of this difference in interpretation is because Machiavelli like Hobbes, “look[s] at politics, more or less, from the point of view of the political dominator, the state organization” (Frazer & Hutchings, 2008: 91). His analysis of the use of violence is analytically at a different level than of Sorel or Fanon. One can look at the handling of violence from the point of view of the ruler, such as the prince, the state or the sovereign. Alternatively, one can read it from the perspective of the dominated, the oppressed such as women, workers or colonized people, as we have seen was the case in Fanon’s analysis of colonial rule and theory of liberation.

underlines the adaptability of the means for strategic rule and writes that a prince ought to adapt the manners of a fox or a lion whenever necessary and in the face of differing threats to his rule: “for the lion cannot defend himself from the traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. One must therefore, be a fox to recognize the traps and a lion to frighten the wolves. Those that wish to be only lions do not understand this” (Machiavelli, 1950: 64).

The Marxist revolutionary tradition is another example of the third position that elaborates on the issue of violence in historical and instrumental terms. From a Marxist perspective, oppression is inherent to capitalism<sup>53</sup> and it will or should be ended with a proletarian revolution. The issue of violence becomes crucial with regards to the question of revolution and this constitutes a major source of ambivalence within Marxism since as it has been pointed out Marx, as the theorist of revolution has no theory of violence nor does he provide or a systematic account of violence (Schaff, 1973; Basso, 2009).

Appreciating the reserved place violence as an instrument has in both Marx’s and Engels’ account of revolution and in the following Marxist revolutionary thinkers, one scholar (Finlay, 2006) notes that the attitude ranges from a position of justification to excuse and to legitimation. Accordingly, (Finlay, 2006: 376) Marx in *The Civil War in France* depicts the revolutionary violence witnessed in the Paris Commune of 1871 as a defensive attitude

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<sup>53</sup>As known, according to Marx, every society can be analyzed in terms of two basic and inseparably related structures: the structure (economy) and the superstructure (social cultural structures). The structure (or the base) is determined by the relations of production, which are characterized by the presence of an oppressor-oppressed relationship. The oppressors, relatively a smaller group who holds capital in their hands, exploit the labor of the remaining masses for the accumulation of more capital and a continuous growth of production. The superstructure, on the other hand, denotes the matrix of norms and institutions such as laws, religion, culture and the state, which functions to protect and propagate the interests of the capital holders. The superstructure, that is the bourgeoisie socio-political and cultural order aims at protecting the functioning of the system by the coercive function of the state, during times of crisis becoming manifest and blatant.

against the reactionary forces, which are willing to perpetrate all manner of brutality. At a second step, the Marxist theory asserts a judgment that predicts a historical progress towards revolution and communism. Therefore, it presents a doctrine on the necessity of violence enabling an excuse of the violent acts of revolutionaries. Thirdly, for Finlay (2006: 378) albeit being minor, a legitimating view can be also found in Marx's writings during the time of a closest engagement with Hegelian philosophy in the early 1840s. This view, one should note was not fully articulated in the writings of Marx and Engels but is more radicalized by the following theorists like Fanon, Sorel and recently by the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek. Accordingly, the normative framework within which the sociopolitical order operates is based on bourgeois values and, for this reason, it can be undermined. In fact, the creation of a new moral universe in a new proletarian political order requires the eventual abolition of the existing system.<sup>54</sup> In the previous chapter, I have presented how Frantz Fanon or Slavoj Žižek attribute a normative value to this destructive violence and argued that they therefore, shift from an instrumentalist perspective to a

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<sup>54</sup> To the question of the significance of this view in terms of the conceptualization of revolutionary violence, Finlay, for instance, proposes a twofold answer. For him, one can conclude that from a Marxist perspective "whatever the bourgeoisie with its individualist and rights-based conception of political ethics and legality has to say the morality of violence is likely to be invalid since it reflects the particular class interests and therefore the perverted humanism of its proponents" (Finlay, 2006:379). In fact, this line of reasoning does not necessarily give way to the justification or legitimization of violence rather questions or rejects the bourgeoisie denouncing of violence. In this sense, the second answer becomes suggestive and it asserts:

whatever the proletariat and its political leaders have to say about violence – its justifications, its scope and its limitations – will be valid to the extent that it truly reflects the perspective of the last social class at its final, revolutionary stage of oppression and contributing to its dissemination and radicalization (Finlay, 2006:379).

Thus, the rejection of the bourgeois' notion of violence and its replacement with the violence of the revolutionary subject has come to be one of the important aspects of some of the twentieth century Marxist revolutionary thinkers.



more absolutist, essentialist position with regards to the relationship between violence and politics.

Žižek's defense of total destruction and negation of the system is criticized by Simon Critchley (2008a; 2008b), who can be considered as a one of the figures of the position of ambivalence. According to Critchley Žižek's emancipatory revolutionary violence framed within Benjaminan notion of 'divine violence' neglects all other forms of political action, including the non-political language-based human interaction suggested by Benjamin himself. A genuine dialectical opposition seems to be only possible when violence sets itself against the system in a total manner. While this is the case, Critchley also attacks Žižek for proposing to do nothing in the end and accuses him for engaging with an "endless postponement and over-production" of rhetoric while ridiculing "others' attempts of thinking about commitment, resistance and action." Accordingly, Žižek's "work is a dream of divine violence, cruelty and force and "behind its shimmering inversions" he leaves readers in a "fearful and fateful deadlock: the only thing to do is to do nothing. We should just sit and wait" (Critchley, 2008a; 2008b: 4).

In fact, Critchley's theory of a neo-anarchism in the modern world developed in *Infinitely Demanding* (2007) fends for non-violence. According to the philosopher, modern politics suffers from active and passive nihilisms. The passive nihilist is characterized by a "mystical stillness" and "calm contemplation" since the world as it is proves that any political action is useless. "Rather than acting in the world and trying to transform it, the passive nihilist simply focuses on himself and his particular pleasures and projects for perfecting himself" with activities like taking up yoga classes, bird watching or

learning botany (Critchley, 2007: 4). “Active nihilism”, on the other hand, tries “to destroy this world,” which is found meaningless, in order to “bring another into being” (Critchley, 2007: 5). In order to overcome the nihilist attitudes of contemporary societies, Critchley suggest formulating a new political subjectivity, which is peaceful, and non-violent but anarchic at the same time.

In this task he relies on Levinas’s ethics, which is defined within the dissymmetrical relation of the self to the wholly Other. The relationship with the Other is established in the disclosure of the face. This face-to-face relationship does not call for violence but responsibility. “This presentation is pre-eminently non-violence, for instead of offending my freedom it calls it to responsibility and found it. As non-violence, it nonetheless maintains the plurality of the same and the other” (Levinas, 1969: 203).

It is against this background Critchley asserts that he does not reject violence against properties on moral grounds but he has uneasiness with violence against persons. Repeating a statement made by one of the characters in Godard’s movie *Notre Musique* he avows “To kill a human being in order to defend an idea is not to defend an idea, it is to kill a human being.” In fact, this position was criticized and degraded by Žižek with the argument that a call for resistance to the system while refraining from violence is futile and cannot seize the state power. According to Žižek, we cannot “expect a radical change in the state of human beings in the world if we exclude violence as a matter of principle.” In response to this critique, then Critchley asserts his recognition of the complex nature of political events and argues that it does not make “sense to assert and hold to some principled and a priori conception of non–violence” (Critchley, 2008a; 2008b: 5). He further adds,

To this extent, the abstract question of violence versus non-violence risks reducing anarchism to what Jacob Blumenfeld has called the politics of the spectator position where non-violence becomes an *abstract value, principle* or *categorical imperative*. In specific political sequences, and it is always and only a case of such specifics - an evental site, as Badiou might say - the move to violence is often entirely understandable. The turn to violence by protestors, critics and opponents of a regime is most often simply a response to the provocations of the police and legal violence. (emphasis mine)

Hence, although Critchley aims to present an ethical commitment to non-violence in politics, he seems open to the recognition of the relationship between violence and politics in historical contexts. This understanding, being open to the possibility of violence in politics does not have to be necessarily affirmative. It is possible to pass a judgment on violence for being unnecessary, harmful and unjustified at times. The important point here is that differing from the first two approaches; an ambivalent position engenders analyzing the relationship between violence and politics in concrete and historical contexts.

Oksala (2011) has raised a similar argument when she suggested a Foucauldian critique of violence in her essay. She has argued out that the political debates revolving around questions of violence usually operate at analytic level of diagnosis and deal with the questions of “what counts as violence and whether or not it is unavoidable” (Oksala, 2011: 155). I have already pointed out this point when I stated the liberal-democratic approach and its critique assert ‘necessary propositions’ on the relationship between violence and politics. Both of the propositions, “there is no relationship between violence and politics” and “violence and politics are interlinked” are based on reason postulated definitions (*a priori*) on politics and violence with universal implications. A liberal-democratic approach, by labeling certain acts of violence

as terror fails addressing possible reasons of such violence, messages these violent acts aim to transmit or to get attention to, and of course ways of eliminating violent politics after developing.

The counter position, one of the examples of which is found in Frantz Fanon's theory of colonial violence, on the other hand, would reject any critical evaluation of the colonial violence with the argument that there can be no such thing as the "violence of the oppressed" (since violence is the act of the western colonizers). The counter-violence' in this case is seen as necessary and unavoidable for emancipation. Hence, problematization or a critique of violence at certain contexts becomes impossible. It is my contention that an alternative approach which provides a way of countering the 'necessary propositions' for the exclusion of violence from the political and for the inseparability of violence from the political should be sought. This should be done for the understanding of the relationship between violence and politics in its concrete, historical forms and in terms of its physical and symbolic meaning.

In other words, as one scholar noted such a critique "must establish as a preliminary move that political violence is ontologically contingent" (Oksala, 2011: 155). In her essay, Oksala proposes invoking a Foucauldian critique of violence. In the coming chapters, I will present how the French philosopher defines his own work (within a Kantian tradition) as 'ontology of the present', a critical engagement with the present in historical terms. For Oksala (2011: 116)

A Foucaultian approach to violence would thus question the ontological necessity of it—for example, all such views that violence is either an anthropological constant or an essential feature of human nature, human sociality, or the political. In his framework, violence cannot be thought in such terms, but must always be analyzed as contingent, historically specific, practices.

Secondly, as I have already pointed out, such an approach by recognizing its intelligible nature aims to uncover the implicit, or sometimes explicit, rationality of violence and its relation with politics. As we will see, at particular historical periods, the relationship between violence and politics is seen in positive terms, and the manifestation of violence can be considered as the affirmation of political power. Public executions or tortures served for the sustenance and verification of political power in middle ages, in colonial contexts or in modern times during so called ‘extraordinary’ times.

It is against this background, in the coming chapters I would like to survey the works of Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault, who I consider to be sharing the position of contingency on the relationship between violence and politics.

#### **4.1. Probing Ambivalence: An Introduction to Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault**

Foucault and Arendt are two names that cannot be located under a category of tradition in the western political thought and display divergences in their works in terms of their intellectual engagements—the concepts they chose to focus for reflection and the ways they develop and discuss notions of politics. In fact, they differ from each other in significant terms: their epistemological levels are not the same; their theoretical and even political engagements reveal conflicting and opposing persuasions (Allen, 2002). For this reason, they are

rarely read together.<sup>55</sup> Yet still, it is possible to find some common themes and similar concerns in their works. In the coming, I will briefly point out these convergences and divergences without necessarily implying a comparative analysis. My attempt can be summarized as juxtaposition of Arendt and Foucault's ideas on the question of the relationship between violence and politics to elaborate more on the contours and the premises of the third position, which I suggest is characterized with contingent propositions on the relationship between violence and politics. This is so because both raise a critique of the premises of the liberal-democratic approach and the position that views violence and politics as essentially interlinked. Having separated themselves from the tradition of political thought, the two theorists offer their own formulations of politics, political terms and relations. By reviewing their thoughts, I would like to see whether a new ways of understanding the relationship between violence and politics is possible.

At a general level, one can firstly notice that both Arendt and Foucault raise a critique of modern society, its normalization process and the transformation of individuals into docile bodies who are unwilling to act and to think. The critique of modern society particularly revolves around a certain type of political thinking that conceives people, politics and even history in organic (or for some biological, Blencowe, 2010) terms. They further oppose the

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<sup>55</sup> There are a limited number of works, which compare and contrast Foucault and Arendt. I had a previous attempt of reading Arendt and Foucault together with a particular focus on their engagement with Kant, late in their careers, in terms of the meaning and ends of a critical theoretical enterprise. I argued that both value a Socratic impulse, which is an activity of creating disturbance, puzzlement and questions on commonly accepted values and opinions, in Kantian critique and both aim to invoke that Socratic impulse in their own works in their own ways. Gülbanu Altunok. 2005. "Arendt and Foucault on Thinking and Ends of Theory: Philosophy of Limits, Politics of Possibilities". Critical Sense, Graduate Student Conference, University of California: Berkeley.

emphasis on 'reason' and aim to uncover the dangers of the processes of rationalization and modernity.

One of the tracks they follow in this critique points out the impacts of the articulation of rationalities within specific domains such as economics, science or technology and their diffusion into and regulation of other realms of life. For Michel Foucault economic rationality is one that has infiltrated into cultural, political spheres and transformed the relations in these spheres based on efficiency, profit and effectiveness. For Arendt, similarly, economic mentality is something that has destroyed the public sphere and public spirit and promoted a consumerist and conformist society in the contemporary world.

Although they exhibit a skeptic attitude with respect to the promises of modernity and rationalization, Arendt and Foucault differ in their assessments of the relationship between the formation of subjectivity and society (or between the particular and the general or norm) within modernity. In Arendt's opinion, the normalizing force of modern society is opposed to all individuality and spontaneous political subjectivity. In Foucault's view, individuation is engendered by modern socialization and normalization, so he does not argue for an authentic subjectivity that was destroyed or limited by the general society (Blencowe, 2010). Although presented in different terms, for both Arendt and Foucault, subjectivity is constructed via power. Individuals come together and act in concert so that they can perform power in Arendtian political universe; they are settled within power relations that can be challenged or reproduced by political agents in the Foucauldian cosmos.

An appeal to an aesthetic model in the formulation of ethical or political and action is again a common ground the two theorists share. For Foucault, the

formation of subjectivity or the self is a continuous work of art; it requires the endeavor of understanding of the historical context one is situated, examining of the relations of knowledge and power, and of working on the self in terms of probing of the potentials and limitations of the self and the general context.

For Arendt the display of subjectivity is a performative act. It is prepared in the backstage as part of a process of reflection on world and within the framework of political principles. The act is performed in the political domain with the others and at the presence of the spectators and therefore is at the mercy of the others' judgments. While for Foucault others' gaze is disciplinary (for it monitors the acts and deeds and judges them in terms of their compliance to the norm), for Arendt it is appraising. In a true public sphere, the viewers pass their judgment on excellence of one's performance.

In their theoretical enterprise both Arendt and Foucault, reject metaphysical accounts of truth and foundationalist epistemologies (Allen, 2002: 132). One crucial feature they share and that lets me consider them as theorists of ambivalence is that they adopt historicism as a method of philosophical reflection (Allen, 2002; Edwards, 1999) and refrain from grand, absolute and essentialist theories.

I have already asserted my will for a juxtaposition of Arendt and Foucault on the question of violence and politics. I will pursue this endeavor by focusing on two theorists' conceptions of power and revolution in resonance with their views on violence. It is possible to argue that the critique of the conventional understanding of power constitutes the most important aspect of the theorists' contribution to the political thought. Their opposition to the formulation of politics in juridical-legal terms and of power as a repressive



instrument in the hands of a ruling class or a group constitutes an important commonality they share. I will present that each views power in relational terms, that is for both Arendt and Foucault, power emerges out of interactions among agents and that it exists only in its exercise. In relation with this, either explicitly or implicitly both criticize the treatment of violence as related with power. Quite contrary to the classical understanding, for Arendt and Foucault power at its best operates by being non-violent. Despite their shared emphasis on historicity, relationality and positivity of power, Arendt attributes power an affirmative role in politics. Foucault, on the other hand, seems to be neutral or even suspicious of its effects. For him, power is not always bad, but it is always dangerous. Where violence defines what is opposite of power for Arendt, it seems to be a defining characteristic of pre-modern power in Foucault.

Violence is a critical theme for Arendt. It is the assessment that both political action and tradition are in crisis in modernity, and even the argument that they came to an end, which urged Arendt to think politically and to think action and critique together. The symptoms of the crisis became manifest, for her, with the catastrophic events of the twentieth century—a century of wars, revolutions, mass destructions, totalitarianism, racism—“hence a century of that violence which is currently believed to be their common denominator.”<sup>56</sup> (Arendt, 1972: 105) Violence, subsequently, becomes a crucial matter for Arendt and it is possible to argue that, she writes ‘on’ violence (not only in her 1969 essay) but more importantly ‘against’ violence throughout her career

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<sup>56</sup> Margaret Canovan even argues that “virtually the entire agenda of Arendt’s political thought was set by her reflections on the political catastrophes of the mid-century” See Margaret Canovan. 1995. *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.

(Altunok, 2008). The operative distinction I raise between writing ‘on’ violence and writing ‘against’ it, aims to emphasize the differing levels of analysis of violence in Arendt’s work.

By writing on violence, I think she wants to historically deal with the phenomenon: how it was appropriated, justified and glorified by political ideologies, actors and by thinkers; what role violence played in political events throughout history and how this role has changed from ancient times until twentieth century. At the same time, she writes against violence, hence, asserts a ‘critical judgment’ that rejects any role violence plays in politics.

In this attitude, the experience of totalitarianism plays a major role (McGowan, 1997; Canovan, 2002). Nazi camps represent a dystopia or “Hell on earth” in her own words because not only they were the instruments of mass scale killing but also they represent the destruction of politics and human capacities for political action. The totalitarian experience, for her, is not an event of the past: “totalitarian solutions may well survive the fall of totalitarian regimes in the form of strong temptations which will come up whenever it seems impossible to alleviate political, social, or economic misery in a manner worthy of man.” As Richard Bernstein (2002:) has noted “anyone who has lived through the uses of terror and torture, the massacres, genocides and ‘ethnic cleansings’ that have occurred all over the world during the past few decades is painfully aware of how strong and ever present these temptations are.” Thus, writing against violence aims at cautioning against such temptations and at dislocating the elements, she assessed in the way to totalitarianism as dangerous, from the understanding of politics.

Writing against violence, however, does not mean condemning it as an illegal, irrational, immoral or inhumane act. It means firstly, to show the shortage of such evaluations: It is not possible to argue that the violent practices of Nazism and Stalinism were illegal. On the contrary, the legal framework enabled the violent acts, and even freed the committers from the responsibility of their crimes. Max Weber assessed the peculiarity of modern state in its successful claim over the monopoly of legal enactments and the legitimate use of force. The conception of violence in political science mostly refers to this definition and evaluates violence as the employment of force, which falls outside the legal framework established and protected by the modern state. While in Weber the 'use of force' by the state was presented as legitimate with reference to rationality (along with legality), Arendt argues to consider violence (as opposed to the 'use of force') as irrational is to make it an ahistorical and marginal phenomenon hence impossible to understand and reflect upon. (Arendt, 1972) She asserts that violence is rational and by doing so, problematizes the claim of rationality and its close relationship with modernity. She also rejects any form of moralism in politics: the search for a natural inclination in human beings in the form of good or evil is a futile effort for her; nor it is possible to defend a universal human ethic, which could provide shelter in times of crisis. Further, making the issue more complex, she recognizes violence as part of human life. There are instances of violence in certain human activities; according to her conceptual triad of human condition, labor and work impose violence. She asserts that the rejection of violence must be done with political arguments, which denotes a phenomenological approach adopted and presented in her works. The problems one assesses in 'politics' today, for her, is

due to the distortions that happened in the meaning of human existence, political life and political notions such as freedom or equality. Hence, the complaint about the persistence of violence within politics should lead us to question the meaning of politics and violence. In the coming chapters, I will present her twofold endeavor, historical and phenomenological analysis of the relationship between violence and politics.

When we move to Foucault, we see that violence does not constitute a central topic in his works but it looms in the background that points out the historicity of modern institutions, existencies and relations. Unlike Arendt, he does not engage with the activity of passing a judgment on violence's role in politics, rather traces the historical transformation of the relationship between the two. For him, violence, historically, may be a political phenomenon but (again) historically, it has been ruled out in modernity. Modern forms of political power operate non-violently and in accordance with logics, which significantly differ from the functioning of violent mechanisms. His corrective points out a historical transformation in the functioning of power in western societies since the sixteenth century and the position of violence (that is its relation with power) weakened and even cut the relationship between violence and politics. Overlooking the aspect of political relations within modern societies leads us to be blind to the functioning of controlling, constructive forms of non-violent power relations.

Arendt will affirm the radicality of violence with reference to its historical registry; yet she ends up with a judgment that derives from her phenomenology and that separates her from Foucault significantly. Arendt does not want to credit a radical change for the sake of change. Changes, or rather

beginnings in her words, should be constructive and politically enabling. Hence, although both theorists recognize that violence may alter things radically their stand, we will see differ from each other.

**PART II**  
**CHAPTER V**

**ARENDT ON POWER AND VIOLENCE**

This chapter will look into Hannah Arendt in order to understand and discuss her views on the relationship between violence and power. I will firstly discuss Arendt's critique of the classical understanding of power, the rise of the discourse of violence in politics, and her analysis of the relevance of violence as an instrument in reaching political goals in politics. I will move to her discussion of power as the essence of politics. The distinction she draws between force, strength, authority and power will also reveal her conception of violence as an instrumental and non-political notion. Then I will move to Foucault and I will firstly present his analysis of the sovereign power, the working of power mechanisms in modern societies and its exclusion or taming of violence in order to show his argument on the problematic nature of understanding politics within the model of the sovereign. In western contexts, modern forms of power operate in an economic, productive and normalizing ways that render violence unnecessary, inefficient and ineffective. Presenting

the contours of his notions of ‘disciplinary power’ and ‘bio-politics’, I will also present his rejection of the liberal-judicial and Marxist theorization of power. In the last section, his search for an alternative conception of politics will be explored.

### **5.1. Arendt’s Historical Analysis of the Relationship between Violence and Politics**

At the beginning of her book *On Violence*, Arendt writes that her reflections on the topic were provoked by the violent events and debates of the twentieth century, which can be called “as Lenin predicted, a century of wars and revolutions, hence a century of that violence which is currently believed to be then- common denominator” (1969: 105). In the twentieth century, violence has reached to a dangerous level and to a scope in terms of its destructiveness, wider application and glorification. Engels’s or Clausewitz’s understanding of violence/war as a continuation of politics, she argues, was reversed after the Second World War. The War was not followed by a peace. Rather it gave way to the rise of ‘Cold War’, which in reality is a continuation of war with other means. Furthermore, she notes “a strange interrelationship” and argues that a relation of reciprocation and mutual dependence between war and revolution has developed in modern times. A war might end up with a revolution and a revolution can give way to a civil or even a regional war. Increasingly, she argues, the emphasis has shifted more and more from war to revolution<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> In fact, this argument has been proved wrong with the fall of the USSR and of the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe in 1989. These developments not only corresponded to “the end of history” as some (for instance Fukuyama, 1989; 1992) claimed but also denoted the “end of the

(Arendt, 1963: 7) and it unfold its impact on politics by making all governments live on a borrowed time.<sup>58</sup>

Apart from the increasing role of the threat of violence in international politics, Arendt assesses a rising discourse, the one I have discussed in chapter four on the critique of liberal-democratic paradigm with the argument of violence as part of politics, in the works of Schmitt, Benjamin and Fanon. Particularly, she problematizes the glorification of violence by the new left, black movement, and by theorists like Fanon and Sartre, anticolonial rebels and by other oppositions, which she called as apologists for violence. She attacks them for exalting a non-political phenomenon<sup>59</sup> and even argues despite the claim the glorification of violence is contradictory to the Marxist rhetoric.

Although violence has played enormous role in politics, Arendt notes, it has been singled out so seldom for special consideration (Arendt, 1969: 110). This ignorance reveals that violence has been considered as an arbitrary and marginal phenomenon and its arbitrariness is taken for granted. Whenever it receives attention as an object of study, however, it is examined within the framework of aggressiveness and in terms of its correspondence in natural life (with reference to the instincts to fight for territories in ants for instance). Alternatively, violent behavior is studied as a natural reaction with a natural

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revolutions” implicitly. Furthermore, we witnessed an increased number of civil wars, religious and ethnic conflicts in Europe and in other parts of the world, and many other confrontations that have escalated since the early 1990s. Arendt’s hypothesis on the persistence of (the possibility of) revolutions is based on the historical reality of the Cold War, during which the discourse of being for or against communism dominated politics, and a division between Marxists and liberal thinkers characterized the field of political philosophy.

<sup>58</sup> For another scholar, Arendt’s argument on the persistence of revolutions derives from her belief that revolution “has a primordial basis in the political cause of freedom and the struggle against tyranny”. See John Grumley, 2008. *Revolting Liberties: Revolution and Freedom in Arendt and Foucault*, *The European Legacy*, Volume 3, No 1: 50-71.

<sup>59</sup> For Dodd (2009), therefore, *On Violence* is more polemical than philosophical and has some limitations.



function. Such a perspective, for example, suggests that the suppression of aggressive tendencies and the desire to control them cause violence (Arendt, 1972: 159).

As opposed to these presumptions Arendt asserts that violence is “neither beastly nor irrational” (Arendt, 1969: 160) as a phenomenon. She recognizes its role in history and that it may be rational, at least comprehensible in terms of its motives, function and its objectives. In her opinion, the orthodox judgment on violence is closely related with the understanding of power. If power is understood as an instrument of rule and rule is suggested to exist because of an instinct to domination, then violence becomes nothing than a derivative of power.

#### **5.1.1. The reasons of the persistence of violence in politics:**

##### *Sovereignty/Will versus Freedom/Action:*

In the first chapter when I was discussing the difficulty of providing a definition for the political I referred to scholars like Agnes Heller (1991) who have argued that the abolition of the monarchy led a crisis in the conception and definition of politics. By the absence of a supreme figure embodying political power, a ruling class associated with the state and its strict distinction from the ruled we have lost the criterion, which enables us to define what makes political distinctive as a domain, as an activity or as a type of relationship.

Within this context, both Arendt and Foucault’s critique point out the problematic nature of the persistence of the use of the traditional grammar of politics. Sovereignty is emblematic of such persistence since a closer look at

politics and the use of political notions such as law or right or power would reveal that their conceptions remain within the framework of absolute power that accompanied the rise of the sovereign European state. From an Arendtian perspective, a politics of sovereignty formulates politics as a relationship of domination, the effectiveness of which then is substantiated by violence.

Arendt criticizes the French Revolutionaries (and the Enlightenment thinkers) for replicating the political structure of ancient monarchy. The notion of sovereignty is an act of mimicking the absolute power of the king. In the background of the notion of sovereignty, on the other hand, there lies the idea of God and the unconscious will for mimesis. For Arendt this turn to the religious realm for inspiration or establishment of the laws by the image of God, was not those men's conscious choice: they were enlightened and deist, not traditional or religious. Yet, the "enormous risks inherent in the secular realm of human affairs caused them to turn to the only element of traditional religion whose political usefulness as an instrument of rule was beyond any doubt" (Arendt, 1963: 192). Even Machivalli, who in Arendt's view is the spiritual father of the Revolution<sup>60</sup> with his passionate yearning to revive the spirit and the institution of the Roman antiquity, which was adopted later by the eighteenth century revolutionaries as well, was puzzled with the task of foundation and had to recourse to God. His appeal to 'high heaven', Arendt argues, was certainly not

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<sup>60</sup>Arendt's views of Machiavelli seem to differ in *On Revolution* and in *What is Authority?* and they somehow contradict. In *On Revolution*, she argues that Machiavelli is the father of revolution not by his insistence on violence nor for his conception of revolution as a history breaking event, which makes him different from the men of revolutions but due to his understanding of foundation—as a renovation (*rinovazione*) as the only beneficial alteration (*alterazione a salute*) (Arendt, 1963: 29) and for being the first to "think about the possibility of founding a permanent, lasting, enduring body politic" (Arendt, 1963: 29) . In *What is Authority?*, however, she asserts that the "double respect, because of his rediscovery of the foundation experience and his reinterpretation of it in terms of the justification of (violent) means for a supreme end Machiavelli may be regarded as the ancestor of modern revolution" (Arendt, 1968:140).

inspired by any religious feelings but exclusively dictated by the wish to escape the difficulty of finding an irrefutable authority and establishing a stable political order.

Unlike the American Revolution (in Arendt's opinion is a successful example of revolution), which was a successor of a 'limited monarchy'<sup>61</sup> the French Revolution was founded on the ruins of an absolutism, which explains the obsession with an 'absolute'. She (1963:154) writes

“nothing, indeed, seems more natural than that a revolution should be predetermined by the type of government it overthrows; nothing, therefore, appears more plausible than to explain the new absolute, the absolute revolution, by the absolute monarchy which preceded it, and to conclude that the more absolute the ruler, the more absolute the revolution will be which replaces him”

Paradoxically, then for Arendt, the secular rulership construed by the French Revolution assumed the same framework and political grammar of the Plato's idea of the rule of the philosopher-king that had nested at the thrones of the Christian kingships with references to divine sources for a very long time. The new Republic was founded on the model of a King-God, both omnipotent and the legislator of the universe.

Philosophically, on the other hand, Arendt contends that the modern notion of sovereignty stems from the idea of a free will<sup>62</sup>, which denotes “being

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<sup>61</sup> The Founding Fathers' falling back on the charters and agreements of the colonial structure in America is also explained by the historical heritage. With this argument, she makes an interesting twist and locates the act of foundation in the process of colonization rather than the revolution. The revolutionaries in America, in that sense, were saved from the trouble of “initiating a new order of things” (Arendt, 1968a: 140).

<sup>62</sup> Andreas Kalyvas (2004) criticizes Arendt for repudiating any association with will and freedom. In fact, he even argues that Arendt's views on the notion of will are ambivalent. In *The Life of the Mind*, in her latest work, she seems to associate the capability of will with her own conception of political freedom, that is, with the spontaneous power of starting something new and with the faculty of new beginning. In *On Revolution*, however, she reads it through the notion of sovereignty as arbitrary, commanding and violent and explicitly repudiates its association with freedom or politics. Here, however, I rely on her earlier conception of will in

independent from others and eventually prevailing against them” (Arendt, 1954: 163). The model here is the divine will, which was unknown in classical antiquity and fully elaborated in Christianity (Arendt, 1960; 1968). With the historical retreat of subjects from polis life under the shadow of the Roman Empire, thinkers like Epictetus introduced the notion of a free inner world as a subject of reflection. This inner world was thought to be shielded from outside interference; possible inner disturbances were cleared as well. The ancients’ will to liberation from necessity and mastering of worldly desires, needs and other concerns was articulated in the reflections on one’s relation with himself. The ‘nilling’ voice has always been considered to be in a struggle with the ‘willing’ voice. While Christianity orders the overcoming the voice of the will<sup>63</sup> later centuries witnessed the emergence of philosophies (like Nietzsche) which promotes the will-to-power as the driving force of life and politics.

According to Arendt, the notion of ‘will’ “which essentially excludes all processes of exchange of opinions and an eventual agreement between them” (Arendt, 1963: 71) was introduced into modern politics with the French revolution. She particularly expresses her antipathy to the concept ‘general will’ for its assumed representation of the interests of the nation as a whole and her dislike towards Rousseau for developing that concept and being a source of

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terms of her critique of its relation with sovereignty and its difference from freedom. For Kalyvas’s arguments See Andreas Kalyvas. 2004. “From the Act to the Decision: Hannah Arendt and the Question of Decisionism,” *Political Theory* 32(3): 320-346.

<sup>63</sup> She (1960: 39; 1968: 162) writes,

Christian will-power was discovered as an organ of self-liberation and immediately found wanting. It is as though the will immediately paralyzed the I-can as though the moment men willed freedom, they lost their capacity to be free. In the deadly conflict with worldly desires and intentions from which will-power was supposed to liberate the self, the most willing seemed able to achieve was oppression. Because of the will’s impotence, its incapacity to generate genuine power, its constant defeat in the struggle with the self in which the power of the I-can exhausted itself, the will-to-power turned at once into a will-to-oppression.

inspiration for the French revolutionaries. The notion of general will, accordingly, is a replacement of the *raison d'état*, which in reality denotes the will of a monarch, seemingly abolished by the revolution (Arendt, 1963: 71-72). The appeal of Rousseau's theory lies in his successful placement of the "multitude into the place of a single person; for the general will was nothing more or less than what bound the many into one" (Arendt, 1963: 71-72). Another dangerous aspect of this organicist conception of body politic implied with the notion of general will is its look for unity, homogeneity and equality in all matters. Such a conception views any form of dissent, criticism or presence of difference or plurality as threats to the collective unity. The assumption and the will for perfect unity, unfolds itself in witch-hunts, processes of looking for 'enemies' that constitute a threat to the unity of the body politic.<sup>64</sup> This was well exemplified in the French Revolution and represents one of the reasons why there was great scale of violence and terror.

Within this framework, Arendt assesses two emergences that present an interesting tension. . On the one hand, the subject is constructed to be 'free' within her private domain in the absence of external interferences, obstacles or influences. Such thinking on freedom (as being free from outer impacts) is exemplified in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century thinkers, who equated freedom with security: "The highest purpose of politics" and "the end of government" became to guarantee of security of individuals whose freedom lies in the engagement of activities other than politics (Arendt, 1968: 149).

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<sup>64</sup> In *Origins of Totalitarianism* she writes "Whenever equality becomes a mundane fact in itself, without any gauge by which it may be measured or explained, then there is *one* chance in a hundred that it will be recognized simply as a working principle of a political organization in which otherwise unequal people have equal rights; there are *ninety-nine* chances that it will be mistaken for an innate quality of every individual, who is 'normal' if he is like everybody else and 'abnormal' if he happens to be different." (Arendt, 1973: 54, *emphasis mine*)

On the other hand, politics has come to be understood with reference to the volition to impose one's will upon others. Quoting Nietzsche, Arendt (1981: 161) writes "what is called 'freedom of the will' is essentially a passionate superiority toward a someone who must obey, I am free; 'he' must obey"—the consciousness of this is the very willing." With the emergence of this philosophy of will, freedom understood as being liberated from others. has turned into a philosophical problem in the first order; power equated with command, rule and domination then has become a political problem (Arendt, 1968: 163).

For Arendt Schmitt is the modern theorist who "recognizes clearly that the root of sovereignty is the will: sovereign is who wills and commands" (Arendt, 1960: 40). In *On Revolution*, she also argues that Rousseau is a consistent representative of the political theory of sovereignty. His substitution of will for consent in the form of general will and unity for plurality and difference (Arendt, 1968: 163; Arendt 1963) is an example of such conception. The notion of 'general will' is a replacement of the *raison d'état*, in other words, the will of the monarch, which is only seemingly abolished by the revolution (Arendt, 1963: 71-72). The representative government that is supposed to replace the absolute power of the monarch with the will of the people proved itself to be "oligarchic government" too. This is so because "the ageold distinction between ruler and ruled...has asserted itself again; once more, the people are not admitted to the public realm, once more the business of government has become the privilege of the few" (Arendt 1965, 273, 240). Hence, the doctrine of free will, which seems to be a model of tyranny or

authoritarianism, remained present within a Republican tradition with its troubling impacts.

According to Arendt associating free will with freedom is problematic because the will is a politically irrelevant and even an antipolitical notion (Arendt, 1960). Equating freedom with sovereignty is more troubling because sovereignty always violates the freedom of others. It leads to the understanding of politics within the framework of conflict and warfare (exemplified in the theory of the political in Schmitt). Such a mentality also “leads either to a denial of freedom ...or to the insight that the freedom of one man, or a group, or a body politic can be purchased only at the price of the freedom, i.e. the sovereignty of all others” (Arendt, 1968: 165). Furthermore, this illusory idea of sovereignty can be “maintained only by instruments of violence that is with essentially non-political means” (Arendt, 1968: 164). She writes

[T he] basic error seems to lie in that identification of sovereignty with freedom which has always been taken for granted by political as well as philosophic thought. If it were true that sovereignty and freedom are the same, then indeed no man could be free, because sovereignty, the ideal of uncompromising self-sufficiency and mastery, is contradictory to the very condition of plurality. No man can be sovereign because not one man, but men inhabit the earth. (Arendt, 1998: 234)

According to Arendt, human plurality is the basic condition of politics (Arendt, 1998: 175). It includes the twofold aspects of equality and distinction. Equality denotes the equal access to political domain where one can speak to others and act with others. Distinction, a more important aspect of political subjectivity and the meaning of the political, is not the same as otherness. “Otherness in its most abstract form is found only in the sheer multiplication of inorganic objects, whereas all organic life already shows variations and

distinctions, even between specimens of the same species” (Arendt, 1998: 176) . For human beings, on the other hand, distinction becomes a defining characteristic and it refers to the uniqueness of a person revealed in speech and action. Men and women disclose themselves through speech and action. The disclosure of the self via speech<sup>65</sup> and action, the answer to the question asked “who are you?” (Arendt, 1998: 178) differentiates human existence from other forms of life.<sup>66</sup>

In ancient times, freedom was not a concern of philosophy, Arendt argues, since it was a phenomena of the political realm such as justice or equality; hence, irrelevant as an issue of reflection. Freedom only seldom—in times of crisis or revolution—seem to be the direct aim of political action but in fact it is the reason that men live together in political organization at all (Arendt, 1968: 146). As opposed to the free will, freedom requires plurality; it needs the company of others. It means being in public, meeting and acting with others and acting in concert. Therefore, a politically guaranteed political realm that is a worldly space open to everyone should let freedom to make its appearance.

Appearance is an important term in Arendt’s political thought since, as I have indicated earlier, acting with others and acting in public is like a performance for her. She makes an association with Machiavelli’s concept of

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<sup>65</sup> Arendt’s emphasis on the revelatory nature of speech gave Jürgen Habermas the inspiration to develop his theory of communicative action and the idea of deliberation as a form of democratic politics. I have to note however, Arendt does not focus solely on speech nor does she offer speech to be a medium of consent formation or require it to be rational. The reaching of a consensus may only be a moment in politics but for her consensus formation is not the ends of politics.

<sup>66</sup> Adriana Cavarero, in her *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood* elaborates on the issue of subjectivity, the formation of identity and its revelation via storytelling. See Adriana Cavarero. 2000. *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, Routledge. Judith Butler, on the other hand, engages with Cavarero’s Arendt inspired “politics of ‘the who’” and asks for the possibilities of the development of the notion of an ethics on the basis of a reciprocal exposure and vulnerability. See Judith Butler. 2005. *Giving an Account of Oneself*. Fordham University Press.



*virtú*, “the excellence with which man answers the opportunities the world opens up before him in the guise of fortune” (Arendt, 1968: 153) and points out the necessity of virtuosity in action.<sup>67</sup> In making the emphasis on *virtú* Arendt further argues that for an action to be free, motives, intentions that cause one to act in a particular way and any intended goals must be stripped from it (Arendt, 1968: 151). “This is not to say that motives and aims are not important factors in every single act, but they are its determining factors”, in a way that they constitute the framework or the background of a particular case. The important thing is that “action is free to the extent that it is able to transcend” such concerns (Arendt, 1968: 151). In this sense, freedom becomes inherent in action, which seems to require some sort of a ‘semi-transcendental’ mood. The accomplishment of the action lies in the performance rather than the end-product.

Having liberated the notion of action from particularistic concerns and from dictates and commands, which are the features of will, Arendt asserts that in fact action may be guided and such guidance can be provided by principles such as justice, glory, honor, love, equality or charity. A principle, let’s say the idea of justice may ‘inspire’ an action without dictating any specific behavior as it is the case with absolute truth claims. Unlike an interest or will, a principle does not lose its strength or validity through execution either. “In distinction from its goal, the principle of an action can be repeated time and again, it is

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<sup>67</sup> Arendt’s emphasis on *virtú* and excellence has received criticism from some scholars like George Kateb and Dana Villa. For Kateb, excellence or greatness cannot offer us moral criteria in judging a particular action, for Villa “the moral vacuity of ‘greatness’ leaves Arendt’s conception of political action all too vulnerable to charges of subjectivism or arbitrariness”. See George Kateb. 1984. *Hannah Arendt. Politics, Conscience, Evil*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.: Totowa, NJ.; Robertson, Martin & Dana Villa. 1996. *Arendt and Heidegger. The Fate of the Political*. Princeton University Press: Princeton.

inexhaustible, and in distinction from its motive, the validity of a principle is universal, it is not bound to any particular person or to any particular group” (Arendt, 1968: 152).

In order to substantiate her point on the importance of acting, Arendt refers to two interrelated but separate words in Greek, *archein* and *prattein*. Accordingly, *archein* means beginning or leading and *prattein* means seeing action through or achieving. Although these two words denote the two aspects of acting, she argues *prattein* (emphasizing the achievement) has become the accepted word for action. Hence, political actors are expected to enter politics or to act in order to achieve certain objectives. Yet, in her conception, an actor, (like an artist) does not care about the results of his own actions. She leaves the mundane concerns of life behind (more specifically the necessities in Arendtian terminology—as it will be elaborated more in the coming chapter) and enters the public realm to act on matters beyond her own concerns. In acting, she reveals her uniqueness, which is somehow beyond herself, since action is supposed to be spontaneous and ambiguous in terms of its motives, expression and in terms of its effects.

#### *Equation of Power with Domination and Violence:*

While Arendt considers political subjectivity within the framework of arts, more like an *ad-lib* performance and argues that there has been a shift in its meaning from ‘beginning’ (*archein*) to ‘accomplishment’ (*prattein*), she directs another challenge to the conception of the power, rule and the ruler in politics.

In *On Violence*, she notes that there is an implicit agreement among political theorists from Left to Right which views violence as the most flagrant

manifestation of power. Quoting C. Wright Mills, “All politics is a struggle for power; the ultimate kind of power is violence,” and Weber who defines the state as the “rule of men over men, based on the means of legitimate, i.e. allegedly legitimate, violence” (Arendt, 1969:134) Arendt argues that the agreement is very strange since almost all theorists equate political power with “the organization of violence” which confirms “Marx’s estimate of the state as an instrument of suppression in the hands of the ruling class” (Arendt, 1969: 134). These definitions, she points out, are derived from a misconception that goes back to the Ancient Greeks, particularly to the Platonic philosophy that defines government as the rule of man over man. The “force of this ancient vocabulary” for Arendt has been strengthened by modern scientific and philosophical convictions that declare so-called laws with regards to the nature of man. “An inborn instinct of domination and an innate aggressiveness in the human animal” explicated in philosophical or political texts as a will-to-power (e.g. Thomas Hobbes, Friedrich Nietzsche) consolidated the equation of power with rule and implicitly with violence.

Arendt goes back to the Ancient Greece and notes that *archein* that designates the beginning of action has gained dominance in political language particularly since Plato (Arendt, 1998: 189). It is with this specialization of word “the role of the beginner and leader, who was a *primus inter pares* (in the case of Homer, a king among kings)” turned into a ruler who gives commands and expects obedience. Since Plato a hierarchical relationship is constructed between the ruler and the ruled where the isolation of one from the other is idealized, the strength of each is seen as a threat to the other and a tension for control over each other’s domain is present. In the *Statesman*, Arendt argues,

Plato firstly opens a gap between *praxis* (or action) and *theoria* (or knowledge) and through the devaluation of *vita activa*, an active political life, as an untrustworthy and irrelevant form of existence he presents *vita contemplativa*, life of contemplation as a superior way of life. With this, opinion, a personal and, for her, a political form of knowledge is renounced and truth as an absolute knowledge is elevated to the highest place in the realm of ideas. In Plato's theory, politics is identified with the dominion of the philosopher who acquires the true knowledge of ruling of himself, his household and the polis (Arendt, 1981; 1990; 1998). This introduction of truth into political domain, Arendt argues, was for Plato "searching a way to compel men without using external means of violence" (Arendt, 1968: 107). The only possible form of action in return is suggested to be obedience. In a second twist, he makes a distinction between *archein* and *prattein* (beginning and achieving) and associates *archein* with the rule of the master. As I will discuss in the coming chapter in more details, Plato's understanding of action reveals another transformation too. Her views action or *praxis* in Greek in the image of 'work' *poiesis*, an activity of fabrication, producing results with designed and fully implemented plans.<sup>68</sup> Here, action gains an instrumental character that stands in stark opposition to the one defined by Arendt as an 'artistic' performance as well. Apart from introducing instrumentality into political realm, Arendt, argues that Plato's idea of mastery can be evaluated also as the application of a type of relationship, which characterizes the private realm on the public domain (Arendt, 1998: 221-223). The specificity of the private domain is that it is organized around the

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<sup>68</sup> In her analysis of the three activities that characterize human existence, 'labor', 'work' and 'action' in *The Human Condition*, Arendt argues that labor is an activity bound up with necessity, work is an activity realized with instrumental rationality for the fabrication of durable objects and action is the true form of political activity.

activities of labor, aiming to attend the cyclical necessities of life such as eating, sleeping or reproducing. This domain is kept under the control of the head of the household, to whom the inhabitants of the house—wife, children, slaves and others must obey. The division between ruling and being ruled was first experienced in private domain on the basis of being subject to necessity. The public-political life, Arendt argues rested on the division between the ruled and the ruler as a pre-political condition, but the concept of rule originally had no role in politics (Arendt, 2007: 944).

As a result, with the separation of *archein* (beginning) and *prattein* (achievement), the association of latter with acting in general and *archein* with the activity of ruling on the basis of a true knowledge, a conception of rulership inspired by household mastery applicable to all domains has contributed to the rise of the idea of sovereignty. The idea of sovereign, a God-like ruler overarching everyone and everything, as said above is an attack to plurality (Arendt, 1998: 202). It prevents citizens from being active, equal and free members in their own political existence. The totalitarian rule, the radical example of the will to total domination were tried in the extermination camps with the belief that “everything is possible” from the point of the ruler. There were no limit in the will of doing things to the camp inmates who are reduced to “living corpses” (Arendt, 1973), zombies in other words. Totalitarianism attempts the destruction of man as a political and moral agent and as an individual for Arendt. According to her, this process has been realized in three stages. At the first stage is the killing of the juridical person is realized by stripping of persons of their legal rights via denaturalization. At the second stage, is the killing of the moral person by making the person taking decisions

of conscience, which are questionable and equivocal. The moral dilemma of the Greek mother, who was allowed by the Nazis to choose which of her children should be killed, is the most famous example of this murder of the moral person. Finally, at the third stage lies the most radical attempt to destroy human individuality, unpredictability, plurality, and spontaneity by making them act alike without thinking at all. Human beings, behaving like dogs in Pavlov's experiments were the objective of the functioning of totalitarian camps.

*Conceptualizing Violence as an Originative Force:*

The glorification of violence by the "New Left" (Arendt, 1969) is another problem Arendt assesses that has roots in tradition but somehow has gained a new character in modern era. The most obvious and perhaps the most potent factor that contributes to the investment of all hopes with regards to political action in the form a violent eruption and destruction is the technological progress. It is the proliferation of techniques and machines that has the capacity to threaten "the very existence of whole nations and, conceivably, of all mankind" (Arendt 1969: 119) that could make violence an attractive means for political ends.

When I was discussing Fanon I have noted that a tendency of attributing a moral character or a constitutive role to violence in the formation of political subjectivity. Sartre's statement "violence like Achilles' lance, can heal the wounds that it has inflicted" (Arendt 1969: 122) is an example of such a view and it is severely criticized by Arendt. The most interesting aspect of her critique is that she argues this rhetoric to be contradictory to the Marx's theory.

By arguing so, she diverges from her earlier views on Marx<sup>69</sup> and writes that “Marx regarded the state as an instrument of violence at the command of the ruling class” but he never argued that the actual powers of the ruling class consist of or rely on violence (Arendt, 1969: 113). Furthermore, she adds, in Marx the use of violence during revolution is controversial too. “The dictatorship of the proletariat—openly repressive in Marx’s writings—came after the revolution and was meant, like the Roman dictatorship, as a strictly limited period” (Arendt, 1969: 113).

The attribution of a moral aspect to violence, treating it as if through which man creates himself might be Hegelian or Marxist as part of a leftist humanist rhetoric. Yet, for Hegel man realizes himself via thought, for Marx via labor. Although one could possibly argue that the thought of self-creation implies a violent process, self-creation through both thinking and laboring significantly differ from creation through destruction, in other words implementing violence. “To shoot down a European is to kill two birds with one stone, to destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses at the same time: there remain a dead man and a free man” (Sartre, in Arendt, 1972: 115) is a statement Marx would never have penned, she writes. “If one turns the ‘idealistic’ concept of *thought* upside down, one might arrive at the ‘materialistic’ concept of labor;

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<sup>69</sup> As we will see in the next chapter, in *On Revolution* she accuses Marx for introducing necessity as a driving force into the political domain and therefore for opening the way for the violence of necessity (Arendt, 1963: 57). Yet still, in *On Violence* she asserts that even though Marx recognizes violence to play a role in history and during revolution, in his theory violence is secondary. This change of heart is not limited with Marx for some; McGowan (1998: 293) thinks *On Violence* represents a departure for Arendt from her earlier, “idealized, and utopian” view of politics that excludes violence as a nonpolitical phenomenon. Although the argument that Arendt pays a greater attention to the issue of politics and recognizing its relevance as an instrument in reaching political goals more, I think, previously too she had some moments where her argument that violence might be morally justified can be found.

one will never arrive at the notion of violence” (Arendt, 1969: 115; emphasis original).

Another conceptual misapprehension of violence as a destructive yet emancipatory or originative force pertains to the understanding of history, “as a continuous chronological process whose progress, moreover, is inevitable” (Arendt, 1969: 132).<sup>70</sup> Arendt (1969: 132) argues

if we look upon history as a continuous chronological process, violence in the shape of war and revolution may appear to constitute the only possible interruptions of such processes. If this were true, if only the practice of violence would make it possible to interrupt automatic processes in the realm of human affairs, the preachers of violent actions would have won an important point, although, so far as I know, they never made it. However, it is the function of all action, as distinguished from mere behavior, to interrupt what otherwise would have proceeded automatically and therefore predictably. And the distinction between violent and nonviolent action is that the former is exclusively bent upon the destruction of the old and the latter chiefly concerned with the establishment of something new.

It is true, she admits, like action, violence interrupts regularities. It attacks, shatters and even destroys the established system, albeit unjust, authoritarian or unequal. Yet, action has the superiority of creating something new which is absent in violence in Arendt’s views.

The praise of violence, Arendt argues, is due to its employment by a discourse of brotherhood, which suggests that engagement with collective violence, fighting the enemy and facing death together is what makes a

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<sup>70</sup> The notion of movement has a particular importance in Arendt’s thought. In the nineteenth century, she argues, this “idea of progress left its place to the notion of movement” (Arendt, 1969:132). Elaborated in *Origins of Totalitarianism* and in other essays, she points out motion became almost the motto of a destructive ideology. In the interpretation of totalitarianism, for instance, all laws have become laws of movement, which is transcending human life, transforms or destroys them in accordance with an ever changing, natural and unrestrained, hence arbitrary law (Arendt, 1973; 1953).



collectivity, reminding us of Schmitt's thesis on the political. For Arendt, "it is undeniably true that the strong fraternal sentiments, engendered by collective violence, have misled many good people into the hope that a new community together with a 'new man' will arise out of it" (Arendt, 1969:165). Equating revolutionary action/organization with military, in both of these structures individualism is replaced by group coherence.<sup>71</sup> This coherence, for her is more intense and is stronger than other types of bonds such as friendship. Yet, she argues that no body politic was ever founded on the equality before death (Arendt, 1969: 165) and on the basis of organism of violence. This discourse stands in a direct contrast to her conception of human togetherness, the experience of human life and politics.

Death, whether it is real experience of dying or the consciousness as suggested by Heidegger of one's own mortality, for her is "perhaps the most antipolitical experience there is" (Arendt, 1969:164). It is usually faced in complete loneliness and impotence. The most important aspect of death is that by dying, one leaves the company of his fellow men, the experience of "being-together and acting in concert which make life worthwhile" (Arendt, 1969:164-165). Politics, she argues, is "precisely a means by which to escape from the equality before death into a distinction assuring some measure of deathlessness" made possible.

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<sup>71</sup> Arendt's argument made with regards revolutionary action and military can be challenged with Yael Tamir's work which interrogates the paradoxical relation between nationalism and liberalism. Tamir shows how liberal states, despite their claim to be the protector of individual liberties, life and property demand their citizens to go to the battlefields, fight and die for them. Hence, collective identity on the basis of violence is not a problem of revolutionary collective action but the nation-state. See Yael Tamir. 1997. Pro Patria Mori! Death and the State in McKim and McMahan (eds.), *The Morality of Nationalism*: 227-4.

Additionally, acting as it will be presented is characterized by its capability of introducing something new; creating opportunities, opening the way for novelties and possibilities. Violence, on the other hand, seldom creates rather destructs; it ends and limits. Despite being so, theorists like Fanon in their praising of the experience of violence and death contends that life is an unending contest and the struggle, aggressiveness, rage and violence are elements of life. Similarly, Sorel inspired by Bergson's *elan vital*, praised violence as a manifestation of the life force, and specifically of its creativity (Arendt, 1969: 167). Labeling this as an “organic thought in political matters”, Arendt declares (1969: 172) that nothing is more dangerous than interpreting power and violence in biological terms. Whenever these phenomena are understood with reference to “life and life’s alleged creativity”, “the precedence of violence is justified” (Arendt, 1969: 172).

Taking up the matter in non-political, biological ways, will make it possible to defend violence as it is the case in nature or in the household according to Arendt with the argument that “destruction and creation are but two sides of the natural process, so that collective violent action, quite apart from its inherent attraction, may appear as natural a prerequisite for the collective life of mankind as the struggle for survival and violent death for the continuing life in the animal kingdom” (Arendt, 1969: 172). The racist discourse, which has its roots in the colonial experience as she dwells in *Origins of Totalitarianism* and finds its way in Europe with the rise of Nazism, used and disseminated this organic thought of politics and exemplified the tragic results of it.

### 5.1.2. Arendt's Recognition of the reality and rationality of violence:

In the previous précis, I have presented Arendt's historical analysis of the emergence and persistence of violence within politics and her criticisms of the discourses that praise violence for different reasons. In this section, I would like to point out her recognition of a line of reasoning that runs through the threads of the defense of violence in the works of Fanon and Sartre. Here I will substantiate the arguments Arendt made when she does reject violence as an inhumane or irrational phenomenon. I will present how she considers it mostly as a rational response and at times an effective means in bringing some changes in politics or voicing injustices, demanding and acquiring rights.

Despite her emphasis on action and speech as political actions *par excellence* according to Arendt, sometimes violence may work as a 'therapeutic' process and this is particularly relevant when it springs from rage. Rage is a reaction, some sort of a reflexive response, which by no means is given in response to misery or a suffering to a problem that lies beyond the control of oneself. She (1969: 160) writes,

no one reacts with rage to a disease beyond the powers of medicine or to an earthquake, or, for that matter, to social conditions which seem to be unchangeable. Only where there is reason to suspect that conditions could be changed and are not, does rage arise. Only when our sense of justice is offended do we react with rage.

It is possible for rage to be irrational and at times pathological, but so can be every other human affect, she writes. She quotes William O'Brien who asserts "violence is sometimes needed for the voice of moderation to be heard" (Arendt, 1969: 176). With this argument, she minds the gap the liberal-

democratic approach ignored with its assumption of a perfectly inclusive political order. A liberal-democratic position cannot understand why a group of people who cannot access the political order or cannot speak the language or the discourse of the political system would resort to violence; thence cannot establish communicative channels with the excluded. Furthermore, Arendt argues, “to resort to violence in view of outrageous events or conditions is enormously tempting because of the immediacy and swiftness inherent in it” (Arendt, 1969: 160). The reflexivity of violence is emphasized here with reference to its source of origin that is ‘feeling of injustice’, its emergence and direction. It should be immediate and has a specific target or objective. For Arendt, “there are situations in which the very swiftness of a violent act may be the only appropriate remedy” (Arendt, 1969: 160) both in private and public life.

The point is not that this will permit us to let off steam—, which indeed can be equally well done by pounding the table or by finding another substitute. The point is that under certain circumstances violence, which is to act without argument or speech and without reckoning with consequences, is the only possibility of setting the scales of justice right again. In this sense, rage and the violence that sometimes, not always, goes with it belong among the “natural” human emotions, and to cure man of them would mean nothing less than to dehumanize or emasculate him (Arendt, 1969:161).

As the passage illustrates, Arendt does not seem to fear from violence as an eruption of rage as much as she fears from dehumanization. She avows that it is possible to create conditions such as concentration camps or use instruments such as torture, threat, imprisonment through which human beings turn into not animal-like but dehumanized creatures, epitomized by the conspicuous absence of rage and violence (Arendt, 1969: 160). In other words, sometimes it is the

use of reason, which makes human beings to engage with dangerously irrational undertakings such as the building of concentration camps or the invention and use of the atomic bombs.

Apart from the will to break free from the shackles of the unjust conditions, Arendt assesses hatred, some sort of contempt for the bourgeois society in the works of thinkers like Sorel, Pareto and Fanon. By equating bourgeoisie with hypocrisy, they suggest violence to be a medium of unmasking the 'true' nature of the system and this will "to provoke action even at the risk of annihilation so that the truth may come out" (Arendt, 1969: 163). In the discussion of hypocrisy Arendt, again underlines the rationality of such violence and raises a very peculiar challenge that can be directed to the liberal disavowal of violence with the charge of irrationality:

And this violence again is not irrational. Since men live in a world of appearances, hence depend upon manifestation, hypocrisy's conceits - as distinguished from temporary ruses, followed by disclosure in due time—cannot be met with what is recognized as reasonable behavior. Words can be relied upon only so long as one is sure that their function is to reveal and not to conceal. It is the semblance of rationality, rather than the interests behind it that provokes rage. To respond with reason when reason is used as a trap is not "rational"; just as to use a gun in self-defense is not "irrational" (Arendt, 1969:163).

Yet still, she cautions against a possibility of when rage and violence turn irrational and this takes place "only when [they] are directed against substitutes" (Arendt, 1969: 161). Arendt does not elaborate much on the meaning of this statement and indeed makes a quite strange and controversial argument. She contends that "for example... it has become rather fashionable among white liberals to react against "black rage" with the cry, we are all guilty, and black militants have proved only too happy to accept this

“confession” and to base on it some of their more fantastic demands” (Arendt, 1969: 161-162).<sup>72</sup> She then moves to a discussion on collective guilt and innocence and does not provide a clear explanation of her previous argument. One possible explanation might be that the motive of the violence (in terms of rage) lies in a past action, from which current actors cannot be held responsible. For this reason, justifying violence with reference to the past, for her, cannot be possible or is it relevant.<sup>73</sup>

Upon presenting her sympathetic criticism of violence with a focus on rage, Arendt moves to a politico-critical analysis of the phenomenon by noting its strategic usage within politics. Accordingly, violence might be an instrument which is used in challenging or damaging the system and it might even reach its objectives by forcing the existing regime (or the authority it is directed against) to respond to its cries. “violence does not promote causes, neither history nor revolution, neither progress nor reaction... but it can serve to dramatize grievances and bring them to public attention” (Arendt, 1969:176). She raises an interesting point by arguing, “to ask the impossible in order to obtain the

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<sup>72</sup> In fact, Arendt’s many remarks on Africans and on black movement in the U.S. are controversial to the extent that they are called as ethnocentric (Dossa, 1980) or antiprimitivist (Klausen, 2010) by some scholars. The most controversial text in this sense is the Reflections on Little Rock (1959); her arguments presented in On Violence that views the Black Power movement’s struggle as apolitical are also strange. Dossa, furthermore, in her reading of Origins of Totalitarianism names Arendt’s engagement as “ethnocentric” See Shiraz Dossa. 1980. “Human Status and Politics: Hannah Arendt on the Holocaust,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 13.2: 309-23; Jimmy Casas Klausen labels this as antiprimitivism. See Jimmy Casas Klausen. 2010. “Hannah Arendt’s Antiprimitivism,” *Political Theory* 38(3): 394-423. For further readings and debates on the issue see Anne Norton. 1995. “Heart of Darkness: Africa and African Americans in the Writings of Hannah Arendt”. In Bonnie Honig ed. *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park; Gündoğdu, Ayten. 2011. “Arendt on Culture and Imperialism: Response to Klausen,” *Political Theory* 39(5): 661-667 and Jimmy Casas Klausen. 2011. “Reply to Gündoğdu,” *Political Theory* 39 (5): 668-73.

<sup>73</sup> But we can challenge Arendt by arguing that if the source of an axis of structural inequality was seeded in the past, (let’s say at a constitutive moment of the foundation of the United States) and if its impact is still felt presently, meaning that they suffer from inequality or exclusion, then how do we judge the validity of their rage/violence?

possible is not always counterproductive. And indeed, violence, contrary to what its prophets try to tell us, is a much more effective weapon of reformers than of revolutionists” (Arendt, 1969: 176). It is due to the violence of student movements in Europe and the U.S., she thinks, some reforms in educational system were realized. “No doubt ‘violence pays’” she says and adds, “but the trouble is that it pays indiscriminately” (Arendt, 1969: 176-177). This means that it is not possible to be certain about the outcome of violence: students might end up with ‘real’ reforms, (the content) but also with ‘soul courses’ or instruction in Swahili (Arendt, 1969: 177). Violence is rational to the extent that it is effective in reaching the end that must justify it. Justification makes a certain act understandable and even excusable with references to the motives of an act and in terms of the established causality. One can explain one’s intentions in acting a certain way and make damage comprehensible, by saying for instance “I did not mean to hurt that particular person, it was an accident”. Alternatively, we can understand why someone hits another one when we see that s/he has been kicked or insulted in the first place. Here, violence denotes an ‘immediate reaction’; it is reflexive. It operates as a force of self-defense, and therefore it is justified. For Arendt “no one questions the use of violence in self-defense, because the danger is not only clear but also present, and the end justifying the means is immediate” (Arendt, 1969: 151). The justification of violence is only possible when the duration of the process of reaching of the end is short, even prompt. Violence loses its ground of justification when its intended end is postponed or argued to be reached at a farther time. In that sense, she makes a distinction between justification and legitimacy. Accordingly, legitimacy is derived from a compact, an agreement or a promise

with which participants or concerned agents might have some sort of an understanding of a coming action. Within the framework of legitimacy, citizens or participants of politics would act within a domain where some dynamics of this closed universe are somehow stabilized or trusted. Justification, however, when the duration of the act extends and when it continues to have references to the future for the fulfillment of an end it promises (such as the ‘end of terror’ or ‘bringing democracy’, ‘freedom’) gives way to uncertainty, ambiguity and manipulation; thence loses its persuasive force.

I will present Arendt’s discussion of the difference between power and violence much more in detail in the following section, but here we should note that for her, distinct from power, force, or strength violence always needs implements. “The very substance of violent action is ruled by the question of means and ends” (Arendt, 1969: 106) and for this reason when applied to human affairs, the end is always exposed to the danger of “being overwhelmed by the means, which it both justifies and needs” (Arendt, 1969: 106). There is always the danger where violence becomes a constitutive element of a vicious circle. The implementation of violent means, Arendt argues, would probably lead to more violence (Arendt, 1969: 80). Whenever the end disappears altogether and whenever violence becomes an end in itself, violence turns into terror, the aimless and dysfunctional destruction and fright. Arendt notes that “terror is not the same as violence; it is rather the form of government that comes into being when violence, having destroyed all power, does not abdicate but, on the contrary, remains in full control” (Arendt: 1969: 154). Thence, violence that has lost its objective and that has become an end in itself turns out to be terror. She presents an extended debate on the issue of terror and how it



played a constitutive role in totalitarian regimes in *Origins of Totalitarianism* but her main argument with regards to totalitarian terror, as different from terror of tyranny and other forms of dictatorships is that after certain point it targets not only its 'enemies' but also its friends and supporter by being afraid of all power, even the power of its friends. "The climax of terror is reached when the police state begins to devour its own children, when yesterday's executioner becomes today's victim" (Arendt, 1969: 154)

Secondly, since violence is a phenomenon of the human realm, and because it is within the terrain of action phenomenologically, (and although it is desired to be that way by thinkers like Plato) in contrast with the products of fabrication, the outcomes of it can "never be reliably predicted, the means used to achieve political goals are more often than not of greater relevance to the future world than the intended goals" (Arendt, 1969: 106). Therefore, violence suffers from unpredictability also arbitrariness. We have seen this unpredictability is a feature of action as well but the problem with violence is that while Arendt attributes action an inherent value, violence can be justified only by its attainment of 'just' ends, by its effectiveness and immediate results. Hence, unpredictability stands as an important limit on its justifiability (Finlay, 2009: 29).

## **5.2. Arendt's phenomenological distinction between violence and power**

In presenting Arendt's views on the reasons of the persistence of violence, we have seen her pointing out the problematic nature of the notion of sovereignty. Such a conception has its roots in the notion of free will and

understands power as the will and capability to dominate or to rule over others. Freedom, on the other hand, is equated with liberty, being free from external constraints. Violence, within this equation becomes an effective instrument of either applying power or acquiring it. In a stark contrast, she places freedom as a capability (i) to act and speak in public, (ii) with others (iii) to display one's uniqueness for the sake of (iv) plurality. Action as the performance and experience of freedom, as presented has some drawbacks; the most important of them is its uncontrollability in term of the results it might produce. The philosophers' will to master the world and human relations, for Arendt is due to the desire to prevent the handicaps of action. Despite its calamities, however, Arendt defends action for its capacity of introducing something new into human life. The interruption of the regular life, introduction of a new perspective, a new word or a question that raises confusions or conflicts and opening up a space of possibilities are what she praises as valuable and political aspects of the action. In *Human Condition* she writes (1998: 177) "to act means to take an initiative, to begin (as the Greek word *archein*, "to begin," "to lead," and eventually "to rule," indicates), to set something into motion (which is the original meaning of the Latin *agere*)". In providing this definition, she suggests a distinction between two notions with reference to St. Augustine: *principium* and *initium* (Arendt, 1968: 167). A *principium*, she writes, designates a new beginning as an *archè*, starting a chain of causes and effects. However, the *initium*, in Augustine's somewhat enigmatic definition, is related to "the character of human existence in the world." Such a beginning mainly refers to God's creation of the world and time ("both of which existed before man"), hence designates a creation *ex nihilo*. *Initium*, on the other hand, connotes the

beginning of souls or human beings. It differs from *principium* in being not absolute, not the beginning of something rather of somebody, who is a beginner himself (Arendt, 1998: 177). *Initium* means “the freedom to call something into being which did not exist before, which was not given, not even as an object of cognition or imagination, and which therefore, strictly speaking, could not be known” (Arendt, 1998: 177). It denotes the unexpected nature of action, the emergence of something new, and the breaking of the chain of regular functioning of things. This is something humans can do. For her “with the creation of man, the principle of beginning came into the world itself, which, of course, is only another way of saying that the principle of freedom was created when man was created but not before” (Arendt, 1998: 177). As a result, because they are *initium*, meaning that they are “newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth” human beings are initiators; they take initiative and are existentially prompted into action (Arendt, 1998: 177). Through action, individuals can make a difference in the world.

As stated in the introduction for Arendt an approach to violence is closely related with the understanding of power. Traditionally, power is understood as an instrument of rule where rule is assumed to exist due to an instinct to dominate, violence, despite the attempt of overcoming it, is presumed to be a derivative of power. In contrast to this, Arendt presents an alternative conception of power and attempts to reject violence, in her view, with political reasons.

Power can be defined simply as gathering and more importantly “acting in concert” (Arendt, 1969: 142). It is “what keeps the public realm, the potential space of appearance, between acting and speaking men in existence” (1998:

200). The public realm, the space of appearance emerges wherever men come together in the manner of speech and action, and “therefore predates and precedes all formal constitution of the public realm” (Arendt, 1998: 199). Like Schmitt’s attribution of the political a specific character, Arendt defines power as the essence of all government and argues that a government is an organized and institutionalized power (Arendt, 1998: 199; 1968)<sup>74</sup>. One of the defining features of power in Arendt is its potentiality; potentiality of being and acting together. She (Arendt, 1998: 200) writes

The word [power] itself, its Greek equivalent dynamis, like the Latin potential with its various modern derivatives or the German Macht (which derives from mögen and möglich, not from machen), indicates its “potential” character. Power is always, as we would say a power potential and not an unchangeable, measurable, and reliable entity like force or strength. While strength is the natural quality of an individual seen in isolation, power springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse.”

Temporality is the second feature of Arendtian power. By arguing this she refutes the traditional understanding that views power as something to be possessed or to be applied. Power is the potentiality that depends on the “unreliable and only temporary agreement of many wills and intentions” (Arendt, 1998: 201). It cannot be stored up or kept in reserve for emergencies, which for her differentiates it from the instruments of violence, and more importantly, it exists only in its actualization that is in the formation of a collectivity with the will to act upon something. In the case of a failure of an actualization, for instance whenever a disagreement prevents the realization of a collective action power passes away. The third feature of power is its

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<sup>74</sup> In *On Revolution* she writes, “all political institutions are manifestations and materializations of power; they petrify and decay as soon as the living power of the people ceases to uphold them. This is what Madison meant when he said ‘all governments rest on opinion’, a statement that is no less true for the various forms of monarchies than it is for democracies.

dependence on multiplicity and plurality. In order to be realized power needs great numbers. It is not possible for one person to exercise power; “When we say that someone is ‘in power’ we actually mean that that person has been empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name” (Arendt, 1968: 145). Within this context, her defense for the divisibility of power might be helpful. For Arendt, power can be divided without decreasing it (Arendt, 1998: 200). It can be delegated, federalized or localized without losing its character; the interplay of powers, furthermore, “with their checks and balances is even liable to generate more power, so long, at least, as the interplay is alive and has not resulted in a stalemate” (Arendt, 1998: 201).

A legally unrestricted majority rule, that is, a democracy without a constitution, can be very formidable indeed in the suppression of the rights of minorities and very effective in the suffocation of dissent without any use of violence. Undivided and unchecked power can bring about a “consensus” that is hardly less coercive than suppression by means of violence. But that does not mean that violence and power are the same (Arendt ??).

There are some other prerequisites for the actualization of power as well.

In a somehow romantic style, Arendt (1998: 200) writes

Power is actualized only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities”

Although it is difficult to disclose the meaning of this paragraph fully, one can say it comes very close to Habermas’s discourse ethics and his theory of communicative action. Arendt seems to require the members of a political community to be consistent, to eschew discursive arts such as rhetoric, to use a language that has the purpose of communication and revelation. The used

language is required to be non-violent at the symbolic level as well. It should not be exclusionary rather must use a democratic and inclusive tone. She writes “words used for the purpose of fighting lose their quality of speech; they become clichés” (Arendt, 1994b: 38). Yet still, she has significant differences from Habermas in terms of her emphasis on action, the absence of an object of reaching consent in politics, which derives from her argument about the uncontrollability of action. Like action, power is boundless it cannot be controlled.

In order to delineate the contours of the phenomenon of power and its difference from violence Arendt introduced a fivefold distinction between power, strength, force, authority and violence. Accordingly, strength denotes the “natural quality of an individual in isolation” (Arendt, 1998: 200; 1969: 143). It mainly implies endurance, “the possibility of standing alone, something that is not simply a question of being in the command of a given quantity of force” (Dodd, 2009: 50). For Dodd (2009: 50) Arendt’s claim becomes cogent if one recognizes the “connection between silence and strength, and the problem silence poses for the space of appearance. Standing alone, one becomes an unknown quantity for the common narrative, falling outside of the logic that belongs to a common space of action.”<sup>75</sup> In this sense, strength and power stand as opposites in terms of their relation with collectivity; equating power with strength furthermore is problematic. This is particularly so since the latter implies omnipotence and “conversely, aspiration toward omnipotence always

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<sup>75</sup> For Dodd (2009) with this intervention Arendt gets rid of the opposition between the vital force of the strong and the resentment of the weak, exemplified in the work of Nietzsche for instance.

implies—apart from its Utopian hubris—the destruction of plurality” (Arendt, 1998: 201-202).

Force, another notion used interchangeably with power, is defined as an “energy released by physical or social movement” (Arendt, 1998: 144). Its meaning is revealed in uses where one speaks of “forces of nature” or “force of circumstance” (Arendt, 1998: 144); hence force refers to uncontrollable (not in terms of the uncontrollability of an ‘action’ but more like the irresistibility of a ‘movement’) events of nature such as a tornado or an earthquake or to dramatic eruptions like lynching. For Arendt, the alternative to power is not strength (independent and strong vs. in company and powerful) but force for it has the capacity of defying political action. It is not possible to stand against a group of vigilantes who are agitated (looking for revenge or punishment) but not motivated for ‘genuine’ political action.

Authority, on the other hand, designates an unquestioning recognition vested in an office or position. The unquestioning nature of the recognition of authority, for Arendt, does not mean that it requires a blind obedience. She presumes the existence of a prior respect to the position or status; a type of recognition that does not need further persuasion or coercion. The authority of a father over a child exemplifies this: whenever he beats his child or treats him as if he is an equal the father would lose the ground of his authority. The relationship between two is based on authority for her (Arendt, 1969: 144).

Finally, violence is defined and distinguished from power by its instrumental character. Phenomenologically it is closer to strength and relies on implements for the purpose of further multiplication of strength (Arendt, 1969: 145). One other resemblance to strength lies in its ‘muteness’. Although earlier

she had suggested violence to be possibly an articulation of some anger or rage, hence to be delivering a message, in her phenomenological analysis Arendt emphasizes the muteness and more importantly the muting characteristic of violence. A fist ends a discussion. Arms and bombs shock and silence people; a group of thousand people united in their acts and deeds can do nothing in the face of guns. For that matter, violence brings in isolation and it is characterized by isolation (Peeters, 2008: 183). Its extreme form is witnessed in ‘one against All,’ as it is in tyranny. This is, on the one hand, writes Peeters (2008: 183) “understandable insofar as violence has its origin in work, and on the other, in terms of its speechlessness: without speech there can no longer be any uncovering (or revealing) of the *who*” (emphasis original). Therefore while “violence can destroy power” by dispersing the collectivity and eliminating the power potentiality” of persons, it cannot destroy strength easily (Arendt, 1998: 202). The two becomes somehow equivalent in terms of their logic of isolation. Strength, the capability of enduring, can cope with violence more successfully than it does with power. People might stoically accept the suffering, isolate themselves from the outer world and focus on self-sufficiency. Or they may heroically consent to fight violence and die in the arms of it; in either case, Arendt writes “the integrity of the individual and his strength remain intact” (Arendt, 1998: 202).

Although Arendt contends that in certain contexts and in history violence may have an expressive character, phenomenologically, it is silent (Arendt, 1969; 1998) and is a silencing force (Arendt, 1969; 1998) for her. It damages the corporeal and emotional integrity of a person and cuts one’s ties with the world by destroying one’s trust to the world and by isolating one from



the others within the borders of the private and of the self.<sup>76</sup> Pain confines one to the body that suffers from pain and distress (Arendt, 1998). For Hannah Arendt (1998), pain is such an experience that cannot be shared with others—it creates solitude and a radical subjectivity.<sup>77</sup> The “unsharability” of physical pain is engendered “through its resistance to language” and even through an active destruction of language by “bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned” (Scarry, 1985: 4).

So, Arendt argues that the relationship between power and violence is an antagonistic one: “it is not enough to say that power and violence are not the same. Power and violence are opposites”. This is despite the fact that power and violence are generally found in combination. Even a totalitarian rule needs a power basis, she writes; it relies on secret police and a network of informants. Yet she points out the antagonism between violence and power with the argument that the absolute rule of one denotes the absence of the other; the two in their absolute forms cannot co-exist. In totalitarian camps, for instance one cannot observe the formation of power. In a context where power is established in its ideal form, violence becomes redundant. “This implies that it is not correct

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<sup>76</sup> A philosopher and a rape survivor Susan Brison writes about her tearing off from the world she knows, about her detachment from herself and her past by the experience of violence and about her recovery in her book. See, Susan Brison. 2002. *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

<sup>77</sup> In *Human Condition*, she writes:

Indeed, the most intense feeling we know of, intense to the point of blotting out all other experiences, namely, the experience of great bodily pain, is at the same time the most private and least communicable of all. Not only is it perhaps the only experience which we are unable to transform into a shape fit for public appearance, it actually deprives us of our feeling for reality to such an extent that we can forget it more quickly and easily than anything else. There seems to be no bridge from the most radical subjectivity, in which I am no longer “recognizable,” to the outer world of life. Pain, in other words, truly a borderline experience between life as “being among men” (*inter homines esse*) and death, is so subjective and removed from the world of things and men that it cannot assume an appearance at all (Arendt, 1998: 50–1).

to say that the opposite of violence is nonviolence: to speak of nonviolent power is actually redundant.” Violence emerges when power is in jeopardy, however. A government losing its authority, the recognition vested in its status, may employ violent means that in turn contributes to the loss of its power base. One crucial point about violence, for Arendt is that it can destroy power; it can eliminate power but it “is utterly incapable of creating it.”

I have already argued that considering its unpredictability, its potential of breaking the chain of events and the dramatic results it causes, in Arendt’s theory, violence comes very close to action. Yet, we have seen with regards to the type of interruption it causes, its principle of operation and the effects it produces violence fails to meet the criteria of being so; an uncontrollable, spontaneous and creative act that initiates further events. Violence is strategic, planned and its end results are aimed to be produced with the implementation of instruments. Therefore, it comes close to ‘work’ as a type of human activity. By being instrumental, standing in need of guidance and an objective, violence always needs justification. It is argued to be finite; wars are assumed to end at one point. They are claimed to be fought for the reaching of peace one day. The goal-orientated nature of the use of violent instrument, therefore, seeks validation by referring to the end that lies in the future. Yet, we know that in an age where wars are not fought on a field rather carried out in every possible domain they may last for decades and continuously defer their ends. The justification, therefore, is in jeopardy due the unpredictability and arbitrariness of violence. A bomb might explode in a wrong place; a rocket might hit civilians and cause unwanted casualties. For this reason, violence cannot be

political: “What needs justification through something else cannot be the essence of anything.”

Legitimacy, on the other hand, is something that utterly belongs to power and it is derived “from the initial getting together rather than from any action that then may follow”. When a challenge is raised to the legitimacy of power, an appeal to the past is made. Power is, for Arendt, the essence of all government. Whenever it disintegrates one can assess the emergence of a crisis which might lead to revolutions possibly but not necessarily but also to the substitution of power with violence. No government can be solely based upon the means of violence. For this reason, eventually, even a totalitarian ruler needs a power basis, even though it is composed of the secret police and it’s net of informers (Arendt, 1969).

### **Conclusion:**

In this chapter, I have presented Arendt’s understanding of the phenomenon of violence based on her assessment of the increased employment of techniques and the rise of a discourse of violence and in politics. We have seen she has particular criticisms directed at the traditional understanding of politics as a relationship of rule and domination. Freedom is understood as liberty, and in that sense it denotes the condition of being free from any type of rule and politics. Power, on the other hand, is equated with the effective capability of domination and of control of the other. Within this conceptual framework, Arendt argues, violence cannot be judged for its emergence in politics because it becomes nothing but other than an extreme form of power.

Equation of power with violence is a severe confusion she wants to correct. In this critique, we have seen Arendt attacks the notion of sovereignty as well since it represents the embodiment of all misconceptions within political realm: a political subjectivity, free from all constraints and successfully ruling over others.

She has pointed out possible causes for the emergence of violence in human relations or in history. Perception of injustice is one of the reasons of such emergencies. Circumstances that offend people's notions of justice or conditions that prevents argumentation or speech may lead to violent outbursts and these outbursts may have a therapeutic and restorative function. The strategic usage of violence within politics is again an understandable phenomenon for Arendt because in many instances violence can be an effective means in reaching the ends. It is swift, dramatic and effective. In terms of its impacts, violence has some resemblances with action as well: It operates as an unpredictable, at times expressive and disruptive force in human realm. Yet still, violence needs implements, functions within the framework instrumental rationality, destructive and is generally a silencing force. The circle of violence is a difficult to break and as long as the use of violence prolonged its justification becomes impossible. Arendt's distinction between justification and legitimacy becomes an important criterion. Accordingly, justification implies understanding of the causal dynamics and the emergence of a certain event. Legitimacy, however, is a binding and bonding phenomenon and is related to power, people's will of getting and acting together.

In the last section of this chapter, Arendt's discussion of violence in contrast to power in phenomenological terms was presented. The analysis

revealed that albeit accepting the role violence played in history Arendt wants to commit herself to a position of non-violence. According to one scholar, her theory can be understood primarily as an advocacy “of pragmatic nonviolence (of a non-absolute kind)” (Jakopovich, 2009: 2) for the obvious reasons that she recognizes violence, even supported it as it was the case in the death penalty for Eichmann and her politics lacks “the ‘Gandhian’ quality of compassion Arendt”(Jakopovich, 2009: 2).

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **FOUCAULT ON POWER AND VIOLENCE**

In the previous chapter, I have reviewed Arendt's critique of political tradition with a focus on the relationship between violence and politics. The critique targeted the increasing dominance of the practice and discourse of violence and aimed at the correction of political notions. I have presented her attempt of understanding the role violence plays in politics as well and finally, outlined the contours of her rejection of violence as a politically at a phenomenological level.

When we come to Foucault, we see that he does not share Arendt's concern for the persistence or rise of violence in politics. Firstly, he does not make an assessment on the prevalence of violence. Secondly, he does not have a notion of an ideal form for politics, freedom, power or action. Nor does he present a critique that passes a normative judgment on a certain practice, discourse or form of relationship. Upon reading his historical works on prisons, madness, and sexuality, many other issues and domains we did not consider to be related with political rationality, we cannot tell whether it is good to live in a

modern society or that life would be better in a premodern context. On these accounts Foucault receives many criticisms, one of the most famous is directed by Jürgen Habermas in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*.<sup>78</sup> Habermas (1987) charges Foucault with presentism, relativism, and with cryptonormativity and argues that his genealogical historiography jeopardizes its critical value.

Yet still, like Arendt he pays a special emphasis on the notion of sovereignty and points out the interlinked nature of sovereign power, law and violence. He furthermore, agrees with Arendt's argument that there is discrepancy between the understanding and the practice of politics. In Arendt's opinion, the tools that are used in the understanding of politics fall short of their ideal forms; from a Foucauldian perspective, the mismatch is a problem because it prevents the understanding of historical realities. He assesses two dominating frameworks used in the understanding of power relations, the 'liberal-juridical' and the 'Marxist model'.

The juridical or liberal conception having its roots in the philosophies of the eighteenth century formulates political power on the basis of the market, the "process of exchange, the economic circulation of commodities" (Foucault, 1980a: 89). The second one, on the left, is the Marxist approach and it raises a radical critique to the liberal-juridical conception of politics with the argument that "the historical *raison d'être* of political power and the principle of its concrete forms and actual functioning" to be located in the economy (Foucault, 1980a: 89).

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<sup>78</sup> For the Foucault Habermas debate See (1994), *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*

The liberal approach deals with the question of power only in juridical terms; that is in terms of constitution, sovereignty, rights and laws. Within this framework, power is considered to be a right, “which can be possessed like a commodity” and can be held by every individual. “It can be transferred partially or totally to another party via contract”, the establishment of political power or sovereignty is therefore possible “with the transfer or sharing the power individuals possess again by a contract” (Foucault, 1980a: 88). For Foucault, oppression (read as violence) is the limit or the transgression of this limit of this form of power.

The Marxist approach, on the other hand, addresses power mainly in terms of the State apparatus. Power is analyzed by focusing on its role in the maintenance of the relations of production and of class domination (Foucault, 1980a: 88). Therefore, while the liberal approach evaluates power as a commodity, the Marxist approach focuses on its functionality and despite their difference both approaches share a common point: they are both deduced from economy and present ‘economism’, the approach that views power as a product of economic relations and as secondary to economy, in the theory of power (Foucault, 1980a: 88).

Foucault rejects this economism and asks for the possibility of a non-economic analysis of power. Reminding us Arendt’s ideas on the conception of action and power he argues that on the one hand there is the assertion that “power is not something that is given, exchanged, or taken back, that it is something that is exercised and that it exists only in action” (Foucault, 1980a: 89). On the other hand, he argues there is the assertion that argues power “is primarily, in itself, a relationship of force” (Foucault, 1980a: 90). The assertion



that power is something exercised or considered to be a relation of force, he argues, would receive an immediate interrogation of the nature of such exercise and response that suggest it to be repressive. Starting from Hegel running through Freud and later Reich, power is also defined as a repressive force (Foucault, 1980a: 90; 1980c: 118-119).

Reading politics with reference to sovereignty and power within the parameters of economism causes one to overlook modern forms of ‘domination’ different from earlier ones in terms of their operations and end results. As articulated in *Discipline and Punish* and the *History of Sexuality* Foucault argues that the functioning of mechanisms of political power has been transformed and has a different nature and these developments have an impact on the relationship between violence and power and politics as well.

My presentation will start with the discussion of the sovereign power and its intimate connection with violence. Then I will move to the review of the Foucauldian analytical concepts, ‘disciplinary power’ and ‘bio-politics’ that denote the changing nature of power relations in modern societies and that operate in different terms than the sovereign power. Like Arendt, Foucault looks for an alternate understanding of power, which might be used in making sense of the present dynamics and formulate strategies to transform them. Albeit being fragmentary in nature I will present these alternative sketches of power. As we will see Foucault’s notion of modern power excludes violence as well. This does not mean that he rejects violence normatively; rather that in his view modern forms of power do not operate within the framework of prohibition, exclusion and violence

## **6.1. From Sovereignty to Modern Forms of Power**

### **6.1.1. The Sovereign Political Power and its Relation with Violence**

Like Arendt before him, Foucault problematizes the central place sovereignty has in politics and presents a historical analysis with a proto-normative critique. In his analysis he specially points out the dominance of juridical discourse as system of representation, of formulation, and of analysis of power in the western societies (2003) and argues that this as an outdated approach. Within the discourse and techniques of right sovereignty has been used as a reference point. The juridical discourse developed on the basis of the monarchical model engaged with the demands of the royal personage, and for the benefit of royal power firstly in Middle Ages (Foucault, 2003: 25-26; 34) then in later centuries with the issue of domination that is the problem of legitimate rights of sovereignty, and the legal obligation to obey it (Foucault, 2003: 26; Foucault, 1980a: 95).

The theory of sovereignty played four major roles in its emergence. First of all, it denoted a material power mechanism of feudal monarchy. Secondly, the juridical-political discourse was used in the establishment and justification of a large-scale monarchical administration. Thirdly, from the sixteenth century and particularly after the seventeenth century onward (at the time of wars of religion he writes) the discourse of sovereignty was used both to limit and to strengthen royal power and this utilization was not limited with the ruling class. Catholic monarchists or Protestant antimonarchists utilized it to defend their cases. Fourthly and finally, in the eighteenth century with a return to the

doctrine of Roman law the notion and theory of sovereignty was invoked by thinkers like Rousseau in the formulation of an alternative model as opposed to the authoritarian and absolutist monarchies (Foucault, 2003: 34-35; 1980: 103). According to Foucault, the theory or the discourse of sovereignty (whether it was used in the justification of the establishment of administrative units or in the attempt of the replacement of a monarch) “coextensive” (Foucault, 2003: 35) with the existing mechanisms of power; that is the distribution, interaction and the reproduction of power relations within a feudal society. Starting from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, a new mechanism of power with its specific procedures and techniques emerged in western societies. The operation of this new mechanism of power is significantly different from functioning of the sovereign form of power; and as I will present more in detail in the coming sections, it is incompatible with relations of sovereignty (Foucault, 2003: 35). Yet, as Arendt has pointed out before, the theoretical, conceptual framework that corresponds to the dynamics of the feudal society is sustained (it was even kept by Rousseau and by the revolutionaries of the French Revolution) and used to understand modern societies and modern politics.

One characteristic of the sovereign power is that it is exercised over a territory and mainly as a means of deduction (*prelevement*), a subtraction mechanism. It denotes the right to “appropriate a portion of the wealth, a tax of products, goods and services, labor and blood, levied on the subjects. This

makes it possible to transcribe, into juridical terms, discontinuous obligations and tax records” (Foucault, 2003: 136).<sup>79</sup>

Another characteristic feature (and in fact one privilege) of sovereign power is “the right to decide life and death”, that is having the last word over someone’s life. This right has its roots in the Roman conception of *patria potestas*, which denotes the legitimate right of the father of the family “to ‘dispose’ of the life of his children and his slaves; just as he had given them life” (Foucault, 1978: 135). The theory of sovereignty, then initially referred to an absolute and unconditional power over the subjects and a territory. In time, however, this unlimited power of the sovereign was restricted and the use of the right over life was reserved for exceptional situations. Only when the sovereign’s very existence is in danger, the right to call for death might legitimately be invoked. In the presence of an external threat, for instance, the

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<sup>79</sup> Here I would like to note that Foucault’s depiction of the characteristics of juridical-sovereign power is like a snapshot of Carl Schmitt’s theory of the political. In the previous chapters, I have shown the German jurist’s affirmation of the sovereign as the decisive entity within politics and his emphasis on borders (in terms of the binary opposition between us and them) as a constitutive element of politics. The relation between law, territory and the logic of deduction is particularly dealt in his *The Nomos of the Earth*. In that book, Schmitt rejects the equation of *Nomos*, the Greek word for law with *Gesetz*, which originally connotes a norm, a word mostly used in the liberal-democratic discourse at that time. He further rejects the equation of *Nomos* as *Lebensgesetz* (law of life) due to its implied biological relation between law and life. (On the issue of *nomos* Arendt comes close to Schmitt as well but then she shifts her focus to the Roman conception of *lex* as a suggestive framework for law. This I will discuss in the next chapter) Schmitt firstly emphasizes the land-bound character of law and argues that the Greek noun *Nomos* that derives from the Greek verb *nemein* implies three meanings related with the management of a given territory. Firstly, *nemein* means to take or appropriate (*nehmen* in German), hence the first meaning of *nomos* is appropriation. Secondly, *nemein* means to divide or distribute (*teilen* in German). The second meaning of *nomos* then becomes the action and the process of division and distribution. Schmitt here notes a further link with *Ur-teil*, the combination of *Ur* the origin and the *teil*, the part that means judgment that is the outcome of a division. For Schmitt, *nomos* as an appropriation was forgotten in jurisprudence but its meaning as a process of division and distribution have been kept intact within the domain of jurisdiction. Law in relation with the second meaning of *nomos* denotes part or share (*anteil*). Concretely speaking, it refers to the piece of land every citizen-farmer cultivates as his property. The third meaning of *nemein* (*weiden*) connotes productive work, which I supposed to take place with ownership. In relation with this the third meaning of *nomos* obtains its content from the type and means of the production and manufacture of goods. See, Schmitt, Carl. 2006. *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of Jus Publicum Europaeum*. Telos Press Publishing.

sovereign could “legitimately wage war, and require his subjects to take part in the defense of the state; without ‘directly proposing their death,’ he was empowered to ‘expose their life’: in this sense, he wielded an ‘indirect’ power over them of life and death” (Foucault, 1978: 135). An emergence of an internal threat, however, referring to the case when “someone dare[s] to rise up against him and transgress his laws”, the sovereign may legitimately revive his ancient power (unlike the case of war) to exercise a direct power over the offender’s life: as punishment, the latter would be put to death. Since the invocation of the right over life and death is usually in the form of putting someone to death, Foucault names it as the right “to take life or let live”.

The symbol of the sovereignty thence becomes the sword (Foucault, 2003: 136). It is not a swashbuckling sword, however. It is bound and represented by law. As presented in the previous paragraphs, the theory of sovereignty initially viewed the law as an expression of sovereign’s will and then soon turned into an enterprise of determining the borders between the sovereign and the subjects (and among the sovereigns at the international domain) with reference to the rights of respective parties. Law, then, becomes the expression of that border and a means used in the protection of the border. The “law cannot help but be armed” writes Foucault (2003:244), “and its arm, par excellence, is death; to those who transgress it, it replies, at least as a last resort, with that absolute menace. The law always refers to the sword” (Foucault, 2003:244) as the sword always refers to the law. Thence, in Foucault’s depiction of sovereignty a link between law and violence is established.

The emphasis on the corporeality is another characteristic of sovereign power. The monarch symbolizes ‘the living body of sovereignty’ with his glamour and mightiness sitting in his throne (2003: 26; 1997b: 23). I have already argued that the theory of sovereignty is developed on the historical facts and necessities of the model of monarchy. Yet, in time, the idea of sovereignty gained an aspect that transcends the bodily existence or the mortal life of a king and denotes an eternal rule of the King. The sovereign power relies on an absolute expenditure of power that makes its impacts visible and felt by the subjects and enemies. When touched, the sovereign leaves its marks on subjects. Therefore, not only the body of the sovereign but also the body of the subject becomes an important aspect of sovereign power. The sovereign power supposed to make the subjects feel the presence, tremble and even fall apart in front it. In order to create this impact the sovereign power engages with an absolute expenditure of power. It has no concern of employing techniques that can reach the maximum effect of power with minimum expenditure (Foucault, 2003: 136). This, as I will show is a crucial features of the disciplinary power for Foucault.

This intricate relationship between violence, law and sovereign power embodied by the monarch is best epitomized by the issue of punishment. Foucault begins his *Discipline and Punish* (1979) with a scene, the 1757-dated depiction of the torturous and violent execution of Robert Damiens, a regicide.

The criminal

was condemned “to make the *amende honorable* before the main door of the Church of Paris”, where he was to be “taken and conveyed in a cart, wearing nothing but a shirt, holding a torch of burning wax weighing two pounds”; then, “in the said cart, to the Place de Grève, where, on a scaffold that will be erected there, the

flesh will be torn from his breasts, arms, thighs and calves with red-hot pincers, his right hand, holding the knife with which he committed the said parricide, burnt with sulphur, and, on those places where the flesh will be torn away, poured molten lead, boiling oil, burning resin, wax and sulphur melted together and then his body drawn and quartered by four horses and his limbs and body consumed by fire, reduced to ashes and his ashes thrown to the winds” (Pièces originales..., 372-4 in Foucault, 1979:3).

The detailed illustration of the execution process is followed by a penal record, written only eighty years later. The record shows a time-table of daily activities (including exercise, education, and working) of the prisoners of the House of Young Prisoners in Paris.<sup>80</sup> Rather than being exposed to tortures or other types of corporeal punishments, prisoners are treated as if they are soldiers. Having laid down two contrasting scenes with an eighty year-time difference, Foucault makes two arguments. The first one, apparently, points out the striking contrast between two settings; hence, the transformation that took place in the mechanisms and rationalities of power. The second one aims at revealing the juridico-political function of punishment in general and the public

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<sup>80</sup>Some of the articles of the list of the penal activities are as follows:

Art. 17. The prisoners’ day will begin at six in the morning in winter and at five in summer. They will work for nine hours a day throughout the year. Two hours a day will be devoted to instruction. Work and the day will end at nine o’clock in winter and at eight in summer.

Art. 18. *Rising*. At the first drum-roll, the prisoners must rise and dress in silence, as the supervisor opens the cell doors. At the second drum-roll, they must be dressed and make their beds. At the third, they must line up and proceed to the chapel for morning prayer. There is a five-minute interval between each drum-roll.

Art. 19. The prayers are conducted by the chaplain and followed by a moral or religious reading. This exercise must not last more than half an hour.

Art. 20. *Work*. At a quarter to six in the summer, a quarter to seven in winter, the prisoners go down into the courtyard where they must wash their hands and faces, and receive their first ration of bread. Immediately afterwards, they form into work-teams and go off to work, which must begin at six in summer and seven in winter.

Art. 21. *Meal*. At ten o’clock the prisoners leave their work and go to the refectory; they wash their hands in their courtyards and assemble in divisions. After the dinner, there is recreation until twenty minutes to eleven.

Art. 22. *School*. At twenty minutes to eleven, at the drum-roll, the prisoners form into ranks, and proceed in divisions to the school. The class lasts two hours and consists alternately of reading, writing, drawing and arithmetic.

(Faucher, 274-82 in Foucault, 1979: 6).

persecution in particular. The ways public executions serve to the functioning of the sovereign power, the reasons and the meaning of the disappearance of them, are contrasted with the power relations, institutions and mechanisms of the modern societies. Unlike some theorists like John Locke (1980), who asserts the foundation of a state is necessary for the regulation and for the ensuring of the just functioning of the penal-retributive system Foucault argues that punishment does not function as retribution or for restoring the harm that was done. The punishment can be retribution only with reference to the damage done to the sovereign power. The ceremony of penalty therefore aims at the reconstitution of the momentarily injured sovereignty. In this sense, Foucault affirms Benjamin's earlier argument on the intricacy of the law and violence in the mission of the preservation and foundation of Law by suggesting that punishment is an extension of the sovereign power and is an instrument of self-affirmation. An offence committed by a subject against another, is a crime not because of the damage it produces or its offense of a specific rule but because of the fact that it primarily attacks the sovereign. Also, confirming Arendt's observation on the identification of the notion of will, the sovereign and the law, he writes, any offence attacks the sovereign personally, "since the law represents the will of the sovereign; it attacks him physically, since the force of the law is the force of the prince" (Foucault, 1979: 47). The intervention of the sovereign, in such a case, aims at a direct reply to the person who has offended him and must be at its extreme point to reveal the asymmetry of the relationship between the subject dared-to-offend and the all-mighty sovereign (Foucault, 1979: 48-49).

Although redress of the private injury occasioned by the offence must be proportionate, although the sentence must be equitable, the punishment is carried out in such a way as to give a spectacle not of



a measure, but of imbalance and excess; in this liturgy of punishment, there must be an emphatic affirmation of power and of its intrinsic superiority (Foucault, 1979: 49).

Foucault notes that this superiority is not a comparison made in terms of right but in terms of physical strength. The body of the offender must be bent, marked and even crushed by the awe of the sovereign power. “The ceremony of punishment, then, is an exercise of ‘terror’” he (1979: 49) writes. The publicity of the execution, the requirement of being visible to all and being spectacular are other features of sovereign power. The spectacle functions as a simulation of a struggle of the sovereign with an enemy that ends with the triumph of the former.

As a result, the sovereign power, the juridico-political rationality that orchestrates the social, economic and political relations of the western societies until the nineteenth century, in its monarchical form appears to be closely linked with violence.

Starting from the end of the eighteenth century the direct relation between the body of the ruler and of the subject was loosened and even cut and the relations of political power has transformed and gained different characteristics.

### **6.1.2. Disciplinary Power: Rendering Violence Useless as a Political Instrument**

The Foucauldian analysis does not suggest a simple replacement of the sovereign power with novel forms of power mechanisms. Rather, he argues the

emergences of new forms of power relations in Europe took shape within the framework of the already established state apparatuses such as the army, police and the fiscal administration bodies of the state of the classical age. The most significant aspect of the transformation is the infusion of a new perspective or the economic rationality into the political ruling mentality, thanks to the development of capitalism. The procedures and techniques of new power mechanisms aim at increasing the effects of power throughout the entire social body. As opposed to the sovereign form of power, they aim efficiency, low-cost and low-risk, effective and thrifty. These techniques significantly differ from the ones employed by the sovereign form of power, which, “mixture of more or less forced tolerances (from recognized privileges to endemic criminality) and costly ostentation (spectacular and discontinuous interventions of power, the most violent form of which was the ‘exemplary’, because exceptional, punishment” (Foucault, 1980c: 119). While the sovereign form of power was operating as a total, direct and discontinuous way, the new forms of power circulates within the social body in a continuous, uninterrupted, indirect, adapted and individualized manner.

One of the important aspects of these new mechanisms of power is the increased dependence on bodies for the functioning of power. This is despite the fact that for Foucault body is always present within the network of power dynamics. As indicated in the discussion of punishment in the previous section, sovereign form of power is in a direct contact with the body of the subject. Whenever it needs reaffirmation of its strength, it leaves marks on the body of the subject. It marks, tortures, tears the body apart to make the spectators feel awe of its presence. The sovereign power treats the body as an object of

deduction: like wealth, commodities, land and things, the parts and even the life of the body is extracted by the power mechanisms (Foucault, 1980c: 104).

The new power mechanisms, on the other hand, politicized the body by making it as an object and subject of production at the same time. Rather than deducing its sources, the new forces of power invest in the body for more productivity and efficiency. In schools for instance, pupils are taught, then examined and corrected for the achievement of specific objects such as graduation. Similarly, in hospitals patients are examined, their 'values' are analyzed with reference to normal measures, their problems are diagnosed and they are treated with care, with regular monitoring they are aimed to get back to a normal or healthy status. Five specific techniques are assessed there. Firstly, specific individual actions are defined with reference to a previously determined field, a discipline. The students for instance are expected to form of a line every morning in front of their schools to sing their anthems; they are required to wear uniforms, sit in the places determined by the teacher, and should succeed in exams to pass a class. *Determination* of a guidelines and the establishment of rules to be followed are part of this first technique. With the determination of rule *differentiation* is made possible. The target, which going to be reached, the distance from it and the level of differentiation from every other member of the group are assessed. Based on the gathered data categorization of individuals, ranking subjects in terms of their differing capabilities, strengths or weaknesses that is a *hierarchical measuring* is realized. By the introduction of 'value-giving' measure the *constraint of conformity*, in other words the average values are established. Finally, the *limit values* that define the borders of normality are set (Foucault, 1979: 182-3). With these limit values it becomes possible to

regard some persons as mad, abnormal, challenged, genius etc. Foucault writes “the perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it normalizes” (Foucault, 1979: 183). For this reason, they are called as ‘disciplinary’ forms of power, which are directed towards the organization of actions and in a sense towards the producing of behaviors within structured social systems.

In the previous section, it was shown that the *Leviathan* raises its head when it is disturbed; when a subject transgresses the boundary and becomes a threat to the king’s persona the sovereign power intervenes the regular functioning of the system. As Schmitt suggested, the sovereign’s emergence or interference is an exceptional situation. It is the exceptional, extraordinary and spectacular nature of sovereign’s appearance that affirms the power. While this is the case, as long as there is no threat directed at the sovereign’s rule it is possible for the subjects to be free from the effects of its repressive and violent power. The disciplinary power, on the other hand, is broader in terms of its scope and extent, and it is more diffused within the social body. It establishes norms, which are not only created and monitored by various institutions (such as military, health or education) but also reproduced by the social or political groups and more importantly by the individuals. Individuals are required to monitor, control or discipline themselves and usually they do it most willingly, therefore become active agents of the functioning and reproduction of disciplinary power. While the sovereign power must be visible and present in its implementation to be effective, for the operation of disciplinary power neither visibility nor presence is required. By being dispersed within the social

structure, produced by diverse institutions and disciplines (medicine, psychiatry, economics) at times in conflicting forms and reproduced by the subjects disciplinary forms of power cannot be assessed as embodied by a specific body or an institution.

The violent execution of Damiens epitomized the operation mechanisms of sovereign power. A timetable that displays the daily activities of the inmates of a prison in Paris, only after eighty years after the execution constituted a striking contrast to the previous picture. This contrast, for Foucault, is a good example that reflects the transformation of the political power mechanisms in the western context. At a closer look, he suggests, *Panopticon*, an architectural design formulated by the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham as the symbol of disciplinary power. Bentham offered the *Panopticon* initially as a prison model but he immediately argued that it is applicable to many public institutions.

The *Panopticon* (having its roots in Greek *panoptēs*, which means seeing everything) is the design of a circular building at the center of which rises a tower with a room for an observer. The inner walls of the circle facing the tower are open so that the cells that constitute the circular building can be observed from the tower any time. The tower is equipped with a mechanism of illumination and it enables the watchman to chose a cell any time and to observe the inmate whenever he wants. The cells are separated from each other with thick walls so that none of the inmates can communicate with the other nor be aware of the presence of the other. The room where the observer is positioned must be dark to make the watchman invisible and the inmate be unsure about the observer's presence there and about the answer to the question

whether he is currently watching him or not. “Hence the major effect of the *Panopticon*” writes Foucault:

to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers.

According to Foucault, with this design Bentham laid down the logic of the disciplinary power. Disciplinary power should be visible and unverifiable (Foucault, 1979: 201). It must be visible: the inmate must see the tower before his eyes all the time so that he acquires the knowledge of being observed. It must be unverifiable: the inmate must never be certain of the presence of the observer or of his current attention “but he must be sure that he may always be so.” The (assumed) presence of a gaze engenders the internalization of the control and increases the effectiveness and the efficiency of the disciplinary power. The structure of *Panopticon* symbolizing the logic and the functioning of the disciplinary power also reveals how the “see/being seen dyad of the sovereign power” is transformed and even reversed in modern societies. The sovereign power must be visible for the re-affirmation of its presence. This visibility is emphasized by the use of symbols, glamorous garments, arms, rituals. Whereas, the disciplinary power, exemplified by the Panopticon makes the periphery totally visible and blind whereas the central tower is granted the privilege of seeing everything without ever being seen (Foucault, 1979: 202). The *Panopticon* further signifies the dissociation of power from individual

might. “Power is no longer substantially identified with an individual who possesses or exercises it by right of birth; it becomes machinery that no one owns. (Foucault, 1980b: 156) The techniques of surveillance operate on the body and the mind of the subjects in accordance with laws and rules of optics or physics, and many other rational criteria. With the emphasis on efficiency, the problem of the economic and political cost of power is raised. Excessive use of power or force, hence violence is rendered useless. The sovereign power becomes too costly albeit being spectacular. In the case of punishment, for instance, “a great expenditure of violence is made which ultimately only had the force of an example” (Foucault, 1979: 155). This singularity of the violent intervention makes it necessary to multiply the event to increase the scope of violence and to increase its impact. It aims at preventing possible future crimes or repressing revolts. However, this time it may face the political cost of the employment of violence: “If you are too violent, you risk provoking revolts. Again, if you intervene in too discontinuous a manner, you risk allowing politically costly phenomena of resistance and disobedience to develop in the interstices” (Foucault, 1979: 155).

The system of surveillance, on the other hand, does not need large amounts of arms or any other repressive instrument. An inspecting gaze, even better the creation of an illusionary presence is enough to control each individual. This control might even extend to making one to oversee oneself. Each individual thus starts exercising surveillance over, and against the self (Foucault, 1979: 155). In this sense, the disciplinary and sovereign forms of power significantly diverge and even come to be antithetical and incompatible with each other (Foucault, 1979: 104). While the sovereign power punishes,

violates and exterminates the disciplinary power normalizes, it treats, and corrects.<sup>81</sup>

### **6.1.3. Bio-politics of the Population: From Right of Death to the Power Over Life**

While the disciplinary power with its minute, continuous, indirect and non-violent operation of over every individual body gains preeminence in socio-political institutions, Foucault points out that another form of power too enters into the picture in seventeenth century in the western context (Foucault, 1978: 138). This new form of power focuses on the body as well but its attention is biological rather than anatomical. The dynamics of human life as the life of the species and biological processes such as reproduction, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity have gained attention with the rise of this new form power and with the development of

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<sup>81</sup> This does not mean, however, that the disciplinary power does not include a notion of punishment since it does but only as part of a double system: “gratification-punishment” (Foucault, 1979: 180). Particularly found in the processes of training and correction, the gratification-punishment system requires the employment of the first element as much as possible and the use of punishment only as a last resort. Rewards and encouragements are mostly used to achieve desired results. This mechanism also engenders a number of operations within the general framework of disciplinary power by defining a certain behavior or an act in terms of good and evil rather than a simple prohibition or ban; a range of measures can be taken between good and evil. By assigning quantitative values to acts, such as enabling students receive bonuses for their ‘good’ behaviors and penalties or disincentives for their ‘evil’ behaviors and by keeping a record of such performances it would be possible to rank subjects, categorize them and reward or punish them. In his analysis of the system Foucault writes,

Through this micro-economy of a perpetual penalty operates a differentiation that is not one of act, but of individuals themselves, of their nature, their potentialities, their level or their value. By assessing acts with precision, discipline judge individuals line ‘in truth’; the penalty that it implements is integrated into the cycle of knowledge of individuals (Foucault, 1979: 181).

Thence, rather than an exclusionary or eliminatory approach, political regulation has become through the “normalizing judgment” and the construction of norms as a field of possible knowledge.



related knowledge mechanisms. Statistics of birth, mortality, rates of fertility, population control or growth plans and many other political instruments are examples of the techniques and mechanisms of the newly emerging form of power: bio-politics of the population (Foucault, 1978: 139).

In the previous section, I have shown that a shift from sovereign power to disciplinary power unfolds its impact on the penal system (or we can say that Foucault assesses a shift in the mentality of government in his analysis of the penal system) that leads to the exclusion of violence as an instrument of rule. According to Foucault, a similar impact can be assessed with the emergence of bio-politics due to the shift in the governing mentality of the socio-political order. While the defining characteristics of the sovereign power is the 'right of death' that is the "ancient right to *take* life or *let* live" (Foucault, 1978: 138; emphasis original) with the rise of bio-politics this right or privilege turned into the "power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death" (Foucault, 1978: 138; emphasis original). The power over life denotes the responsibility of the administration of bodies and calculated management of life and the culmination of life as life (Foucault, 1978: 140) This transformation is significant for Foucault (1978: 143) since he argues, "for the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence." Life is not considered as an unknown phenomenon or a chanceful fact, being "amid the randomness of death and its fatality" anymore. In fact, a growing part of life has been included within knowledge's field with the rise of scientific disciplines like medicine, biology, genetics, and chemistry. Life has become the site of control as well

(Foucault, 1978: 143)<sup>82</sup>: policy plans and programs are developed to increase population growth, to promote health, to extend life and to monitor many activities people conduct to sustain their lives. New technological developments such as assistance procedures for reproduction, or practices like surrogacy, adoption, abortion have become issues of policy debates and regulations. According to Foucault modern society turned into society of “‘sex’ or rather society ‘with a sexuality’”. He writes, “through the themes of health, progeny, race, the future of the species, the vitality of the social body, power spoke of sexuality and to sexuality; the latter was not a mark or a symbol, it was an object and a target” (Foucault, 1978: 147). Similarly, sexual or reproductive rights constitute the agenda of many social movements. There has been an increased emphasis on the need for a rise of consciousness on issues of sexual and reproductive health and on the requirements of a body/health conscious subject. Various programs for weight control, smoking cessation, sexual health or pleasure etc. make individuals have a continuous control over their bodies and optimize their physical and psychological statuses. “Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings” (Foucault, 1978: 143).<sup>83</sup> Thence, modernity not

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<sup>82</sup> A growing debate has been focusing on this extended control of political power on ‘private sphere’, which also finds its equivalent in the domain of political activism reflected in, for instance, LGBT rights movements. For this reason, some suggests that the notion of citizenship should be broadened to include the bio-political dimensions of the (tensional) relation between the ‘state’ and the ‘subjects’. For such works See, Judith Butler. 1993. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’*. Routledge: London; Ken Plummer; Evans, D. 1993. *Sexual Citizenship. The Material Construction of Sexualities*. Routledge; London; Kaplan, M. B. 1997. *Sexual Justice. Democratic Citizenship and the Politics of Desire*. Routledge: New York. Ken Plummer. 2003. *Intimate Citizenship. Private Decisions and Public Dialogues*. University of Washington Press: Seattle.

<sup>83</sup> This historical assessment, however, is suggested to be limited with the western context and particularly with ‘modernity’ by Foucault. Famine, different types of illnesses, pauperization, wars, killings and tortures, the techniques of the sovereign form of power still exist outside the borders of Western world. Death and violence seems to be disciplined only in modern societies.

only avoids direct forms of violence but also aims at erasing indirect forms of violence such as natural disasters, sicknesses or casualties. Correspondingly, he (1978: 143) writes

what might be called a society's "threshold of modernity" has been reached when the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies. For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question.

It is against this background, Foucault points out the changed meaning and function of death from the perspective of the governing mentality society. For the sovereign power, death was the way in which power was manifesting itself. For bio-power, on the other hand, death is the absolute limit. The bio-power does not celebrate death; it aims to exclude it. Death represents an impasse and paradox for modern forms of political power. Therefore, suicide has become an important topic for psychological and sociological studies. In the classical age, within the framework of theological rationality it was simply called as sin; in modern societies, however, it becomes an indicative of abnormality. Bio-politics pays a special emphasis on life, birth, and population (Foucault, 1978: 137-144). Thus, it cannot commit violence or any activity that poses a threat to life, body or health of the individuals. Paradoxically, however, bio-politics may commit violence and even kill individuals for the promotion of life, for the well-being of the population. Those who do not fit into the scheme can be eliminated for the survival and the progress of the race. For this reason he (1978:137) writes "genocide is indeed the dream of modern power, this is not because of a recent return of the ancient right to kill; it is because power is

situated at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large scale phenomena of population.”

The transition from ‘right of death’ to the ‘power over life’ is important in the understanding of the contrast between two instruments of form of power: the law of the sovereign power and of the norm of bio-politics. The instrument of sovereign power is the ‘law’ symbolized by blood death, transgression, sword and violence. Sexuality, on the other hand, connotes the ‘norm’, knowledge, life, meaning, normalizing techniques of disciplines, and regulations (Foucault, 1978: 148).

The ‘norm’alization of ‘life’, according to Foucault has had a transforming impact on the sovereign power. The transformation unfolds in the functioning of law. Law, has come to operate more and more as a norm in modern societies and the judicial institution has increasingly incorporated into a range of apparatuses (from medical to administrative) “whose functions are for the most part regulatory” rather than being constitutive or prohibitive (Foucault, 1978: 144). I think this argument comes close to Schmitt’s critique of liberal democracies for stripping the political of its essential, conflict-based nature and for introducing an ethical (moral) perspective into politics.<sup>84</sup> It also makes a correction to the Benjaminian thesis of law-preserving violence: law in contemporary world turns into a ‘life-preserving’ force or power.

Another theoretical effort, which attempts to “re-inscribe the thematic of sexuality in the system of law”, has come to the scene since the end of the

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<sup>84</sup> I have already underlined one of the implications of the insertion of morality into politics to be in the presentation of the enemy. The political enemy (*hostis*) who who poses threat for the equivalent features cannot be judged morally or aesthetically. Within liberal discourse, however, the enemy turns into an *inimicus*, someone who is hated, degraded, viewed as an abnormal and inhuman creature. The discourse of terrorism and terrorist in our world exemplifies this ‘norm’alized politics and the moralized discourse.

nineteenth century, Foucault argues. The Freudian endeavor has aimed “to ground sexuality in the law-the law of alliance, tabooed consanguinity, and the Sovereign-Father, in short, to surround desire with all the trappings of the old order of power” (Foucault, 1978: 150).

Hence, we have a complex network of power mechanisms that interact, conflict, merge or combine with the elements of each other. In modern societies, power is exercised simultaneously through the discourse of right, sovereignty and its techniques and also through the disciplines that not only diffuse into different spheres of socio-political order for regulatory purposes but also “invade the area of right so that the procedures of normalization come to be ever more constantly engaged in the colonization of those of law” (Foucault, 1978: 108). Within this complex network, then, violence does not seem to have a place. Violence, as a costly, manifest and blatant technique of sovereign power lost its relevance and effectiveness in normalized societies. Violence is also a force that threatens the life. It is not reproductive rather destructive. It also has proximity to death, which makes it dangerous for bi-politics. For this reason, Foucault suggests, rather than turning towards the ancient right of sovereignty, one should invoke alternative conceptions of power and of a new form of right, “one which must indeed be anti-disciplinarian, but at the same time liberated from the principle of sovereignty” (Foucault, 1980a: 108).

## **6.2. Foucault’s Search for an Alternative Conceptualization of Power**

As I have shown, in his criticism of the socio-political and economic structuring of western societies, Foucault points out the gap between the

existing theoretical conceptions of power (liberal vs. Marxist) and the material historical practices that defy conventional understanding of political power. Conceptualizing power within the scheme of repression or the model of contract and even within the framework of war, for him, is limited and reductionist. Having assessed two dominant paradigms in the analysis of power and after criticizing them for being limited and reductionist, the French philosopher starts looking for alternative conceptualizations of power. As it will be clear in coming paragraphs, his enterprise reveals shifts and ambiguities and does not present a clear and complete model. He changed his opinion about one suggested way and tried something else.

Foucault, firstly, suggests to understand power in terms of a struggle, a conflict or war; a war conducted with means other than of violence (Foucault, 1980a: 90). The reversal of Clausewitz's famous formula ("politics is the continuation of war with other means"), he argues, has triple significance. Firstly, the present relations of power (which he argues to be effective in the western context) "rest upon a relation of forces that were established at a certain time as a result of a confrontation" (Foucault, 1980a: 90). The end of war by the political power, exemplified in the liberal thought with the notions of state of nature etc., "does not mean that it neutralizes the effects of war." On the contrary, he argues, "the political power re-inscribes this relation through 'an unspoken warfare' in social institutions, economic relations, language and bodies" (Foucault, 1980a: 90). A struggle for the transformation or reversal of the present power relations takes place in the background continuously, the terms of which cannot be negotiated by different parties, nor rationale can be reduced to forces of production. Thence, "none of the political struggles, the

conflicts waged over power, with power, for power the alterations in the relations of forces etc. come about within civil peace” (Foucault, 1980a: 91). Notions like consent, legitimacy or agreement are ruled out from politics as possible formations of power. Here, we see Foucault’s divergence from Arendt, for whom power means acting in concert and founding something on the basis of a collective agreement. For Foucault, alterations within the system “should be understood as episodes, factions and displacements (Foucault, 1980a: 91). Finally, echoing Schmitt Foucault argues that the end-result of war-like relations of power is ultimately determined by a real war, that war as a possibility lies at the door of politics all the time.

In his mid-1970 works, Foucault suggests a non-economic analysis of power that followed the route of the repressive scheme, which understands power to be carrying the “force of prohibition.” This formulation is wholly negative and limited for him since it cannot recognize and analyze the productive power relations that operate beyond the reach of law that says ‘no’ all the time to the subjects and rather empower subjects to challenge and transform the power relations. This conception can be found in “para-Marxists” like Marcuse who give the notion of repression an exaggerated role and read power as if it works only through the mode of censorship, exclusion, blockage and repression, in the manner of a great Superego, exercising itself only in a negative way (Foucault, 1980d: 59).

Foucault’s suggestion of conceiving power in terms of war-like relations can be found in his works such as *Discipline and Punish, Two Lectures* and *Society Must Be Defended*, (the collection of his Lectures delivered at the Collège de France) dating the years of 1975 and 1976. However, he did not

insist on this alternative conception and even started to modify his attitude later in 1977. In the first Volume of the *History of Sexuality*, he implies a difference between politics and war, and their corresponding logics. This time he writes:

Should one then turn around the formula and say that politics is war pursued by other means? Perhaps if one wishes always to maintain a difference between war and politics, one should suggest rather that this multiplicity of force-relations can be coded—in part and never totally—either in the form of “war” or in the form of “politics”; there would be here two different strategies (but ready to tip over into one another for integrating these unbalanced, heterogeneous, unstable, tense force-relation. The strategic model of intelligibility, with a vocabulary one of whose primary sources is the schema of war, applies to the forces of discourse as well as to nondiscursive force-relations subtly but significantly (Foucault, 1978: 93).

Later, in the *Security, Territory, Population*, however, Foucault replaces the war-like model with a new formulation, “governmentality” which denotes a web of rationalities working simultaneously on the constitution of the subject and the formation of the state and that links the technologies of the self and technologies of domination. According to Thomas Lemke (2000), the shift from a Nietzschean warlike model to the notion of governmentality was a result of his recognition of the impasse of the prior framework. For Lemke, after criticizing the juridical model and presenting the warlike model Foucault ended up with a simple reversal. “Instead of cutting off the king’s head, he just turned the conception that he criticized upside down by replacing law and contract by war and conquest” (Lemke, 2000: 3). His critique of sovereignty, firstly, suggests its vanishing power in socio-political relations and then criticizes the persistence of the conceptual model of sovereignty in politics and political theory. His famous statement, “one should cut off the head of the sovereign” in that sense aims at focusing on multiple and dynamic forms of relations in



modern societies. While this is the case, and although it is a powerful critique of the present, Lemke argues, Foucault faced the problem of addressing the question, (raised by Mitchell Dean as) “how is it possible that his headless body often behaves as if it indeed had a head?” (Dean 1994: 156 quoted in Lemke, 2003: 3). With the cutting of the head of the King, one faces the danger of missing the intelligibility of force/power relations or of defending that they are arbitrary chanceful happenings. *Governmentality* in that sense enabled him to conceptualize complex, multilayered forms of power that are effective in modern societies.

In his later years, in works like *Two Lectures*, Foucault asserts “power is neither given, nor exchanged, nor recovered, but rather exercised, and... it only exists in action” (Foucault, 1980a: 89). Like Arendt, he stresses that “power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with” but unlike her he emphasizes “it is the name that one attributes to a *complex strategic* situation in a particular society” (Foucault, 1978: 93; emphasis mine). The strategic nature of power does not imply that it is determined by a central authority or a group dominating the others but that it is rational, calculative and accumulative in terms of the knowledges on which it rises and in terms of the results it gets. The discipline of psychiatry for instance, once establishes itself as a discipline, engages with the collection of data and production specific knowledge, accumulated in time, materialized in mechanisms and techniques and used for the reproduction of the scientific discourse and for the preservation of the discipline. Hence, it is strategic.

Foucault also opposes the idea of evaluating power as a superstructure. Although power is in some sense part of the development of forces of

production (Foucault, 1980b: 159), for him, it “is not primarily the maintenance and reproduction of economic relations” (Foucault, 1980a: 89). In fact, relations of power are interwoven with many other forms of relations. They are interlinked with kinship, family, sexuality, for which they play at once a conditioning and a conditioned role. More importantly, above all power denotes a relation of force. This is an argument again that stands against Arendt who defines power as acting in concert. For Foucault, consent is an aspect of power relations as alliances are but struggles and confrontations determine the essential aspect of power relations. For him, the relation of power is always a relation of inequality or of a relation of asymmetry. Yet this inequality excludes oppression, repression, coercion or violence, includes, and even necessitates the possibility of resistance. Violence or pure force is the limit case; forcing someone to do something or making her not to do something else denotes the zero-degree of power. It is the moment when “power ceases to be power and becomes mere physical force”. On the contrary, making someone act in a way by using a certain type of knowledge or authority as an ‘influence’, as an ‘indirect effect’, that is making him or her choose to act that particular way is the exercise of power. Power “acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future...it incites, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely” (1982a: 220). In this sense, although power signifies a relationship of asymmetry it is required to take place between free subjects. Hence, freedom is a prerequisite of power.

Power can take a certain number of forms but more importantly, it should be open to transformations. One particular group or an individual might

have power over the other at a certain point of time, and then the other has the hand and changes the balance of the relationship. Resistance is intrinsic to any type of power relation and like “power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies” (Foucault, 1980d: 141-142). Foucault recognizes the fact that there are instances where relations of power are frozen; a state of asymmetry is fixed “so that a certain number of persons get an advantage, socially, economically, politically, institutionally” (Foucault: 1980d) but he asserts that an exhaustive and coercive determination is not possible.

In fact it is not possible to answer the question “what is power?” rather one should search the answer to the question “how it is exercised?” The search, in this sense, should not “concern itself with the regulated and legitimate forms of power in their central locations” such as the state or the sovereign rather should focus on “power at its extremities, in its ultimate destinations, with those points where it becomes capillary” and somehow “less legal in character”, in more regional and local forms and institutions” such as hospitals, prisons, barracks or schools (Foucault, 1980a: 96-97). Power mechanisms must be contextual and specific both in terms of their aspirations and in terms of their interpretations. Foucault, for this reason makes an emphasis on the relevance of his findings for the western context and eschews any kind of generalizations. His enquiry is limited with particular historical and institutional analyses. Additionally, an analysis of power should not consider power from its internal point to assess a rationality as if there is someone “who has power and what has he in mind” (Foucault, 1980a: 97). The rejection of conceiving power as a commodity is also followed by the idea of refuting the notion of the consolidated and homogeneous domination of one individual’s or that of one

group or class over others. Power, he argues, must be analyzed as something that circulates and that never is localized. “It is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power” (Foucault, 1980a: 97). Therefore, individuals are not mere objects or targets of power but are almost always the elements of its articulation. They produce, exercise power and are affected by the impacts of it (Foucault, 1980a: 98). Since it is not possible to locate a central place for power a deductive analysis, moving from top the lower layers is not a relevant form of analysis;

One must rather conduct an ascending analysis of power, starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics, and then see how these mechanisms of power have been - and continue to be- invested, colonised, utilised, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended etc., by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination. (Foucault, 1980a: 98)

Finally, then Foucault refutes the assumption that presents a direct link between ideological constructions and the formulation and functioning of power relations. The complex picture he draws leaves many causalities and explanations out and forces one to look for possible resistance mechanisms and ways of transformations.

### **Conclusion:**

In the previous chapter, I presented Arendt’s critique of traditional conceptions of politics and power. I have shown that she assessed an increased

employment and a rising discourse of violence within politics. Based on this assessment she aims at presenting a historical and a phenomenological analysis of power and violence. She found several reasons for the persistence of violence within politics. Conceptualizing politics on the basis of sovereignty is an important aspect of it. An attribution of centrality to sovereignty, law or of liberty for Arendt means a reduction of politics into a relationship of domination and violence. In this sense, the Schmittian and Benjaminian politics, which views violence as a constitutive and substantive force of politics, becomes a logical result of the sovereignty approach.

Foucault problematizes the notion of sovereignty as well. For him an emphasis on sovereignty causes one to overlook modern forms of ‘domination’ (that is the subjugation techniques) which are different from and at times in conflict with earlier ones in terms of their operations and end results. Like Arendt, he associates sovereignty with will and law, and argues that the sovereign law must be armed and violent due its functioning principles. He also argues that the relationship between violence and politics underwent a historical transformation and in modern societies, the sovereign form of power has been kept in the background, if not replaced, by the newly emerging modern forms of power, namely disciplinary power and biopower. These new forms of power operate on and through the bodies of individual for Foucault, in a direct, productive, and non-violent manner. Like Arendt, he notes the rising discourse of a social and an infusion of an organic mentality into politics. While Arendt problematizes this development as the ‘privatization of public life’, aims at putting the organic approach where it belong, i.e. the private sphere and reviving the political as a distinctive space, Foucault suggests the

transformation to be the ‘politicization of private life’. His conceptualization, then, requires an organization of resistance within private sphere a further ‘privatization of public life’ to intervene the functioning of power mechanisms. Since he is a skeptic, he rejects the idea of progress and is against any collectivity with an attribution of universality or totality, the form of political action we derive from his political theory is engagement with local resistance mechanisms, resisting the system and achieving partial, incremental changes.

For both Foucault and Arendt power is a non-restrictive phenomenon. It is rather productive further relational; produces subjects and is exercised by subjects. It emerges and circulates within collectivities but while for Arendt the emergence and circulation of power is a positive notion for Foucault, it is dangerous for it is regulatory and normalizing.

The coming two chapters will look into the issue of revolution and its relation with violence in Arendt and Foucault. Referring to a founding moment, an extra-legal, pre-judicial time, revolution I think presents itself to be a challenging topic for theorist. While there are diverging and opposing views on the relation between violence and politics, there is a common view that presents revolution and violence as essentially linked phenomena. Connoting a historical rupture, a sudden change in the form of the regime, norms, values and institutions with a great impact, revolution has almost always implied violence. It has been equated with outrage, outburst, revenge, and blood and considered as a politics of violence and chaos. Therefore, for some, revolution is an undesirable event. It is against this background I would like to explore Arendt and Foucault’s conceptualization of revolution and its relation to violence.

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **ARENDT ON REVOLUTION AND VIOLENCE**

One can argue that the idea of revolution acquired its contemporary connotations mainly with the experience of the French Revolution. The July Revolution of 1789 is considered to be different from previous forms of revolts, civil wars and struggles that had never intended to bring major changes at political and societal levels. As exemplified in the British Glorious Revolution of 1688 such uprisings were 'traditionalist' and 'restorative' in character (Arendt, 1963: 35). They aimed at modifications (such as the introduction of a Parliament or a Constitution) in monarchical form of rule. For Machiavelli, Hobbes and for Locke, therefore, revolution meant a 'restoration' in politics. Restoration of the sovereignty, authority and legitimacy of the ruler were the primary aims of the rebellions. The French Revolution, on the other hand, had nothing to do with tradition or restoration. It represented a total break with the past; meant change, novelty and destruction. It was miraculous, redemptive and singular in one sense. Yet it was also an intentional, rational and somehow an expected

development. Therefore, it was received with great enthusiasm and hope<sup>85</sup> by spectators and particularly by the Enlightenment philosophers. The French Revolution became such an important event it came to constitute the core of the idealistic systems on society and state formulated by philosophers like Kant, Hegel or Marx even after many years of its occurrence (Marcuse). The event is considered as a sign of human progress. It is a cornerstone, a step taken in the establishment of a utopian—peaceful, equal, rational, moral or free—world.<sup>86</sup>

At the same time, however, the Revolution came to signify fear and violence. There are the mass peasant revolts, fires, pillages and even murders. Then there is the famous storming of the Bastille. The guillotine to which thousands lost their heads became the symbol of the revolution. The word ‘terror’ was introduced into the political discourse due to the ‘Reign of Terror’ that denotes the bloody period between 1793 and 1794. This period was marked with the conflict between Girondins and the Jacobins for the control over the state and the mass executions of the so called “enemies of the revolution” by the Revolutionary Tribunals. In the two centuries since the French Revolution, as one scholar (Dunn, 1989: 214) writes, “the fundamental problem it has posed is the morality of political violence”.

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<sup>85</sup> In his *Philosophy of History* Hegel writes: “Never since the sun had stood in its firmament and the planets revolved around him had it been perceived that man’s existence centers in his head, i.e., in thought...Anaxagoras had been the first to say that *nous* governs the world; but not until now had man advanced to the recognition of the principle that thought ought to govern spiritual reality. This was accordingly a glorious mental dawn. All thinking beings shared in the jubilation of this epoch. Emotions of a lofty character stirred men's minds at that time; a spiritual enthusiasm thrilled through the world, as if the reconciliation between the divine and the secular was now first accomplished.”<sup>447</sup>

<sup>86</sup> According to Tocqueville, it has been argued, the French Revolution, albeit being political in origin, resembled and operated like a religious movement; as Dunn writes (1989: 214) going far beyond its territory, with a missionary zeal it called the rest of the world to convert to a new religion.



For these reasons, to many thinkers who like Burke, de Maistre, and Herder revolution, equal to turbulence, ambiguity, chaos and violence is a trouble and it was caused by the Enlightenment thinking in terms of its radicalism, absolutism (for its insistence on rationality, universality and foundationality) and atheism. Even Hegel's honoring of the French Revolution with a toast on the anniversary of the Bastille for Habermas (1974: 121), must be seen as a ritual of exorcism. If Hegel had celebrated the revolution, he must have done that out of fear.<sup>87</sup> For Habermas, even though the primary principle of Hegel's philosophy was revolution, it was a philosophy to overcome revolution. It was a critique of revolution (Habermas, 1974:121).

Albeit being known as a great supporter of the French Revolution, Kant's treatment of the event seems to be paradoxical too. In *The Contest of Faculties* (1798) he wrote that the French "[R]evolution has aroused in the hearts and desires of all spectators who are not themselves caught up in it a sympathy which borders almost on enthusiasm, although the very utterance of this sympathy was fraught with danger" (Kant, 1798: 182). This was because the revolution was "filled with misery and atrocities to the point that a sensible man, were he boldly to hope to execute it successfully the second time, would never resolve to make the experiment at such cost" (Kant, 1798: 182). After witnessing the Reign of Terror, Kant (1793) renounced his support to the

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<sup>87</sup> For a study, which reads Hegel's philosophical response to the French Revolution from the perspective of psychoanalysis by referring to concepts like trauma, mourning, melancholia and within the historical-political context of Germany, See Comay, Rebecca. 2010. *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution*, Stanford University.

Revolution (received praises for this)<sup>88</sup> and then even denied the right to rebel in his works.

Hence, the dual meaning of the revolution, derived from the experience of the French Revolution, as a progressive and a destructive force has implied a set of dichotomies for many Enlightenment philosophers. This duality gave way to a series of attempts to understand and at times overcome the relation between violence and politics and Arendt is one of the names who undertook such a task.

The next section will locate Arendt within a historical context to better understand her reflections on the topic of revolution and violence. This section will reveal her critique of revolutionary discourse targets Marxist tradition, which has its roots in the French Revolution. Then I will present a *précis* of her critique of the July Revolution of 1789. The critique will run along two axes: contours and dangers of conceptualizing revolution (and politics) within an organist framework and secondly, viewing the enterprise of revolution (and politics) within mechanistic and technical terms. These two forms of critique, we will see are in line with Arendt's general theoretical approach presented in the *Human Condition*. I will present how Arendt views the organist conception

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<sup>88</sup> A scholar (Beck, 1971: 411) notes that when in 1793 he sent his essay *On the Saying: That May Be True In Theory But It Does Not Hold In Practice* to the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, the editor wrote him back expressing his relief to see Kant's refuting the rumor that he had favored the "increasingly repulsive French revolution in which the actual freedom of reason and morality and all wisdom in statecraft and legislation are being most shamefully trampled underfoot". Biester to Kant, Oct. 5, 1793; Kants Gesammelte Schriften, Prussian Academy edition, XI, 456; Kant's Philosophical Correspondence, trans. Arnulf Zweig (Chicago, 1966), 208-09 in Lewis W. Beck, 1971. Kant and the Right of Revolution, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Jul. - Sep., 1971): 411-422. Within this framework, in his *The Metaphysics of Morals*, *Perpetual Peace*, and in *The Contest of the Faculties* Kant argues, if the opposition fails or gets caught by the government the rebels may be sentenced to death and they must obey. In order to prevent a counter-revolution, he writes, if the rebellions succeed, the failed rulers cannot invoke a right to return to the prior state and are required to obey the new rule. In *Perpetual Peace*, Kant writes, If a violent revolution, engendered by a bad constitution, introduces by illegal means a more legal constitution, to lead the people back to the earlier constitution would not be permitted; but, while the revolution lasted, each person who openly or covertly shared in it would have justly incurred the punishment due to those who rebel

of politics as the overgrowth of the private domain and the infiltration the rationality of ‘laboring’ (that is the substance of production and consumption) into the public sphere. The mechanistic conception, on the other hand, connotes the instrumental view of the activity of producing things and building structures. For Arendt, we will see, neither of the two activities is truly political and both of them result in violence in politics albeit in different ways. I will provide Arendt’s analysis of the French Revolution in these terms and review her views on the American Revolution for a contrary argument. I will end up my discussion with the argument that for Arendt violence is somehow linked to the political yet it cannot be political. Violence, as an instrument in reaching political objectives may be justified but it cannot be legitimized. A true revolution, in that sense, cannot be equated with its capacity of violence rather must be judged in terms of its capability of envisioning and establishing an order of political freedom.

### **7.1. Arendt on French Revolution: Crisis in the Old World**

As it is evident in her analysis in the *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt considers both Soviet and Nazi regime as examples of totalitarian form of rule. They represent the most evil form of political regime<sup>89</sup> and were made possible

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<sup>89</sup> In fact Arendt received a criticism for reducing the Nazi and Soviet regimes into the same category for erroneous reasons (Kohn, 2002; Whitfield, 1980; Benhabib, 2003). While amply elaborating on the political and economic historical background of Europe in the first two chapters the book misses a similar analysis of the Russian context. In her remarks on the operation of camps and the peculiarities of totalitarian regimes in the third section, however, Arendt puts the Soviet and Nazi regime together into the same pot. For Stephen Whitfield (1980), for instance, Arendt failed to take into account the class bases of Nazism and Stalinism and ignored the differences between two regimes. Similarly, it is not possible to argue that anti-Semitism was a preeminent factor in Russia or an imperialist experience preceded the Soviet Revolution (Benhabib, 2003).

by the historical transformations European economic, political structure and tradition underwent.<sup>90</sup> Neither the defeat of the Nazi regime at the end of the World War II nor the noted period of ‘detotalitarianization’ following Stalin’s death in 1953 convinced her that the threat of totalitarianism was eliminated. In fact, after some time other observers, too, decided that the transformation would not meet their expectations for a more pluralist and free political structure. The harsh crush of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 by the U.S.S.R troops, particularly, disappointed many European leftists and intellectuals including Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus.<sup>91</sup> Many thinkers started to question the meaning of revolution, counter-revolution, the subject of revolution and the role violence plays in it. While Camus, for instance, rejects violence as a political means in these years, his attitude concerning revolution becomes ambiguous as well. Sartre, on the other hand, thinks domination must be fought with all

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<sup>90</sup> Arendt’s encounter with the Nazi regime in its early period and finding out about the concentration camps in the U.S. at the end of the World War II had a great impact on her views on philosophy and politics. It was an event that blew out the old categories in her mind and that induce her to think about in novel terms. Violence is an indicator of the bankruptcy of the nation-state, of the idea of the rights of men, and the result of the reduction of human beings into mere producing and consuming individuals (*animal laborans*). In the *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1973), in that sense, she points out the realization of a dystopia in the modern world. The concentration camps were not only the places where violence rules absolutely; there the meaning of life and of death, human dignity, solidarity, culture and memory were also lost and the impact of those camps was already extended their physical borders. For Arendt the scary part of the story is that totalitarianism is not an issue of the past but is a tendency that might come up anytime in modern societies. In her works, therefore, she depicts the paths, crossroads and turning points that might lead to dead ends or precipices but also tries to provide the readers with a porch in order to enable them the right path by providing normative definitions of terms such as authority and clarifying political phenomenon like revolution. She tells stories from a distant past, mostly from Ancient Greece and Roman times to inspire human beings to revive a forgotten spirit and to remember the lost meaning of terms. She wants to encourage people to pursue an active and political life, to think with courage and perform heroic deeds. It is for this reason, one scholar argues, Arendt turned to the revolutionary tradition as a possible source of revitalized political action and public happiness (Grumley, 2008: 53). I also think that in Arendt’s decision on reflecting on the topic of revolution the historical context, which is the end of 1950s-mid 1960s, plays an important role too.

<sup>91</sup> Sartre criticized the Stalinist regime in his article *Le Fantôme de Staline*. See Jean-Paul Sartre. 1968. *The Ghost of Stalin*, translated by Martha H. Fletcher, John R. Kleinschmidt, New York: George Braziller. Albert Camus, on the other hand, on the anniversary of the event in 1957-dated gave a speech, “The Blood of the Hungarians” and criticized the Western Europe as well for not taking any action at the time.

means; hence, for him revolutionary violence is not a problem, rather it is a necessary even emancipatory force (Dunn, 1989). In the famous introduction to Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* (1961) Sartre writes

In the first days of the revolt you must kill: to shoot down a European is to kill two birds with one stone, to destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses at the same time: there remain a dead man and a free man; the survivor, for the first time, feels a national soil under his foot.

Watching the developments from the other side of the Atlantic, in New York, Arendt had the same questions in her mind. She penned her views firstly on the short-lived Hungarian Revolution in 1958, then in *On Revolution* in 1961.

Against this background, Arendt's engagement with the topic of revolution becomes a critique of mainly the Marxist and to some extent the liberal thought in terms of their conspicuous inability to comprehend the meaning of the phenomenon. Associating the French Revolution with a particular form of political thought that runs from Plato through Rousseau to Hegel and to Marx, in her enterprise, she points out the flaws in the historical event and in the tradition of political thought in Europe. "Ever since the French Revolution, it has been common to interpret every violent upheaval, be it revolutionary or counterrevolutionary, in terms of a continuation of the movement originally started in 1789" (Arendt, 1963:43). Each time adherents and opponents of these revolutions, and even the historians, philosophers understood the events as immediate consequences of 1789. Remembering an attribution of a comment to Marx which says, "the French Revolution had been played in Roman clothes" Arendt (1963: 44) argues "that each of the following

revolutions, up to and including the October Revolution, was enacted according to the rules and events that led from the fourteenth of July to the month of Thermidor and the eighteenth of Brumaire”. Nevertheless, they looked up for the wrong model. In her opinion, the July Revolution of 1789 was full of mistakes. The first and most important of these mistakes is the association of the social question with politics.

### **7.1.1. The Social Question and the Terror of *Les Malheureux***

In her observations on the Hungarian revolution in 1958, Arendt wrote that despite being crushed by the Soviet army in twelve days, it “was a true event whose stature will not depend upon victory or defeat; its greatness is secure in the tragedy it enacted” (Arendt, 1958:4). In fact, every revolution has a tragic aspect for her: they are historically short-lived. Like fireworks, which light up the sky at nights with myriad effects and beautiful colors and then fade within a very short span of time, revolutions break the historical route, take the stage and give people hope for freedom. The revolt in Hungary, in that sense, was impressive as well. It was unexpected. It broke the repetitive course of events and the apathy that inflicted people living under the control of Soviet Russia for years. The revolt induced public spirit, joy of acting and acting together. Therefore, Arendt (1958: 5) argues that the short-lived Hungarian revolution acquired more meaning than the twelve years of the Red Army rule. She also praises “this sudden uprising” for not being led by any organization, vanguard party, leaders or whatsoever. It is something that resembles Rosa

Luxemburg's "spontaneous revolution" (Arendt, 1958: 8) and includes a dimension of 'nobility'.

While praising the Hungarian Revolution for its 'nobility', Arendt seems to refer to the July Revolution. In Hungary (and also in Poland), she notes the "rebellion started with intellectuals and university students, and generally with the younger generation...Not the underprivileged, but the overprivileged of communist society took the initiative, and their motive was neither their own nor their fellow-citizens' material misery, but exclusively Freedom and Truth" (Arendt, 1958: 23). It was the revolting of oppressed people for the sake of "freedom and hardly anything else" (Arendt, 1958: 8). In contrast, in the famous march to Versailles, mothers whose children were starving in squalid homes played great role "and they thereby afforded to motives which they neither shared nor understood the aid of a diamond point that nothing could withstand" (Arendt, 1963). Thence, unlike Saint-Just who upon seeing the march uttered the words "*les malheureux sont la puissance de la terre*", which means "the wretched are the power of the earth", for Arendt the wretched are the terror of the earth and they are certainly the "doom" of the Revolution (Arendt, 1963: 55). This is because she thinks one of the reasons why the French Revolution ended with a tragedy was its carrying away by the 'social question'.

With the term 'social question', Arendt refers to the problem of poverty and the attempt to solve the economic misery of people through political means. For her, neither poverty was a new phenomenon nor did economic motivations come to play role in political strife first time in the history. Nonetheless, poverty as a state of impoverishment and a form of acute misery became widespread in the eighteenth century in Europe. Secondly, for the first time in history the

conviction that the difference between wealth and inequality inherent in the social system is natural, intact and unavoidable started to shatter. The overthrows and upheavals, prompted by economic interests, despite being violent until the establishment of a new political order have always depended on the “distinction between poor and rich which itself was deemed to be as natural and unavoidable in the body politic as life is in the human body” (Arendt, 1963:14). In the modern age, however, men began to question the distinction between poor and the rich, and doubt that the idea that the difference between the laboring many and the few who liberated themselves from the bonds of labor is inevitable and eternal.<sup>92</sup>

It is against this background, the social question emerged as a revolutionary force in the eighteenth century of France. Both the peasantry and the urban poor - workers, artisans and wage earners- who had been suffering from high taxes, rents and cost of living joined the ranks of the revolutionaries. Their principle was rage, and conscious aim was not freedom but life and happiness. For Arendt, this was somehow inevitable. The state of constant need means to be under the absolute dictate of biological necessities and not caring much about other concerns such as dignity, solidarity or freedom. She writes (1963: 54)

Poverty is more than deprivation, it is a state of constant want and acute misery whose ignominy consists in its dehumanizing force; poverty is abject because it puts men under the absolute dictate of

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<sup>92</sup> According to Arendt, this doubt might be American in origin meaning that the discovery of the continent inspired men to envision alternative world orders (Arendt, 1963). The vast land, rich natural sources and resources found in the New World gave way to the idea that not scarcity but abundance is a fact of nature. For instance, Locke in his depiction of ‘state of nature’ as a state of abundance and peace further argues that, in fact, labor is the origin of private property on the condition that it contributes to the increase of the natural sources and therefore constitutes the ground to the rightful claim to benefit from the products of the invested labor.



their bodies, that is, under the absolute dictate of necessity as all man know from their most intimate experiences and outside all speculations. It was under the rule of this necessity that the multitude rushed to the assistance of the French Revolution, inspired it, drove it onward, and eventually sent it to its doom, for this was the multitude of the poor.

Therefore, with the entrance of the multitude of the poor, the aim of revolution changed and the uprising turned it into a violent spectacle. The ‘men of revolution’ who for Arendt differed from the miserable people in their rise up against tyranny, oppression to achieve freedom (Arendt, 1963: 68) did not or could not resist the transformation, and they ended up with the aim of liberating people from the yoke of necessity (Arendt, 1963: 69). Thus, the role of revolution “became to liberate the life process of society from the fetters of scarcity so that it could swell into a stream of abundance.” (Arendt, 1963: 69) With this change of priorities, happiness and well-being of the people became the new idea of the political order, a predicament of the modern societies.

The term, the “rise of the social” foresees the dominance of the form of relations based on activities that serve for attending necessities of life over every sphere of life and the infiltration of that rationality to the domain of politics (Arendt, 1963: 59-114).<sup>93</sup>

For Arendt, the activities that attend or serve to the satisfaction of biological, intimate, reproductive necessities such as eating, resting or

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<sup>93</sup> From such a perspective, we can assess, for instance, how the world has been built upon the rationality that targets the human being’s will to satisfy their basic needs. The rationality of *animal laborans* operates with the initial creation of a perception of a lack or of a need and then with the promise of filling that lack or need by acquiring—that house, that type of clothing, that brand of car. By emphasizing consumption, the system reproduces itself and continues to function by appealing same desires and needs. This mentality of laboring can be translated into human relations as well. In such a world, people connect with each other for the satisfaction of their needs, which means short-term contacts and making humane actions such as caring, sharing, building enduring relations as archaic and irrelevant forms of relationships.

procreating correspond to 'labor'. Shared by animals, repetitive and lacking a durable end-product, labor is located at the lowest level of the Aristotelian tripartite of human activities, ('labor', 'work' and 'action') Arendt elaborated in *The Human Condition*.<sup>94</sup> The defining feature of labor is that it is ruled by necessity. The human beings in their mode of laboring, as *animal laborans*, are bound by their bodily needs and desires and are busy with the effort of satisfying those needs. Since necessity dictates, they cannot be free in the mode of laboring. Furthermore, one cannot free oneself from necessity or from the activity of laboring. One other feature of labor is that it belongs to the private domain. The private domain, is dark and hidden by its definition because the satisfaction of basic needs should be realized away from the eyes of the others.

Although it is not possible to free one from the burden of the activity of labor, in contexts such as Ancient Greece, the institution of slavery enabled the transfer of the burden of labor from one class to another. Slaves were handling all the laboring activities for their masters and the masters after fulfilling their needs went and participated in the polis life. The running of the house, *oikonomos* in Ancient Greece, in this sense, denotes a rule of necessity. It also refers to the despotic authority of the male over his wife, servants, and slaves

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<sup>94</sup> Dana Villa (2000: 96) has organized Arendt's use of the terms related with the activity of labor. They are:

the blessing of life as a whole, nature, animality, life processes, (human) biology, (human) body, (human) metabolism, fertility, birth, reproduction, childbirth, femaleness, cyclicity, circularity, seasons, necessity, basic life-needs (food, clothing, shelter), certain kinds of toil, repetition, everyday functions (eating, cleaning, mending, washing, cooking, resting, etc.), housework, the domestic sphere, abundance, consumerism, privatization, purposeless regularity, the society of jobholders, automation, technological determinism, routinization, relentless repetition, automatism, regularization, non-utilitarian processes, dehumanizing processes, devouring processes, painful exhaustion, waste, recyclability, destruction (of nature, body, fertility), and deathlessness.

See Dana Richard Villa.2000. The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt. Cambridge University Press.

determined by the dictates of the law of nature (*physis*). Therefore, force and violence were natural aspects of the private sphere. Apart from this historical argument, Arendt notes, by definition, violence is an aspect of the private sphere because by being ruled with the laws of necessity and the will to liberate from them the rationale of labor imposes violence. She (1998: 31; *emphasis mine*) writes

necessity is primarily a *prepolitical* phenomenon, characteristic of private household organization, and that force and violence are *justified* in this sphere, because they are the only means to master necessity—for instance, by ruling over slaves—and to become free. Because all human beings are subject to necessity, they are entitled to violence toward others; violence is the *prepolitical* act of liberating oneself from the necessity of life for the freedom of the world”

Also in another passage she (1961: 117-8) argues

The mastery of necessity then has as its goal the controlling of the necessities of life, which coerce men and hold them in their power. But such domination can be accomplished only by controlling and doing violence to others, who as slaves relieve free men from themselves being coerced by necessity. The free man, the citizen of polis, is neither coerced by the physical necessities of life nor subject to the man-made domination of others. He not only must not be a slave, he must own and rule over slaves.

With the rise of capitalism and the emergence of social domain in modern times, however, the walls that separate the private sphere from the public was put down, economics (*oikonomos*) was elevated to a matter of public concern. The modern nation state emerged as the political form of this development and now we “see the body of peoples and political communities in the image of a family whose everyday affairs have to be taken care of by a

gigantic, nation-wide administration of housekeeping” (Arendt, 1958a: 28). In *On Violence*, she (1963) writes

Nothing, in my opinion, could be theoretically more dangerous than the tradition of organic thought in political matters by which power and violence are interpreted in biological terms. (...) The organic metaphors with which our entire present discussion of these matters, especially of the riots, is permeated – the notion of “sick society”, of which riots are symptoms, as fever is a symptom of disease – can only promote violence in the end.

In the process of the placement of “necessity” and “welfare” at the center of politics, Arendt also assesses the entrance of “compassion” as an emotional drive into the equation of revolution.

A genuine compassion towards people and identification with their sufferings and desires became a common attitude adopted by the revolutionaries. Compassion was exalted as the kernel of revolutionary passion and an altruistic selflessness was regarded as a supreme political virtue. For Arendt, the very definition of the word, *le people* and their “connotations were determined by those who were exposed to common people’s sufferings, which they themselves did not share. Yet they willed to identify themselves with *le people*, the equivalent for misfortune, unhappiness and absolute innocence. Arendt implies that this was some sort of a re-formulation of the religious grammar; revolutionaries seemed to import moral, religious ideas to political domain by placing, for instance, Godly love within human beings. Compassion aims at transcending the virtuous affirmation of suffering from wrong rather than doing wrong, “by stating in complete and even naive sincerity that it is easier to suffer to see others suffer” (Arendt, 1963: 81). Furthermore, she said, the search for a sin was replaced with a search of goodness; again a reversal of

an old formula. Reminding the old myth (that she referred to four times in *On Revolution* and that I will quote at the end of this section) she asserts:

“Let us suppose that from now on the foundation stone of our political life will be that Abel slew Cain. Don’t you see that from this deed of violence the same chain of wrongdoing will follow, only that now mankind will not even have the consolation that the violence it must call crime is indeed characteristic of evil men only?” (Arendt, 1963: 83)

According to Arendt, morality has no place within politics. Feelings like passion or compassion, “the capacity for suffering,” and “the capacity for suffering with others” (Arendt, 1963: 71) respectively, or sentiments such as pity, for her, belong to the private domain. They abolish the distance, the required “*in-between* which always exist in human intercourse” between persons (Arendt, 1963: 81; *emphasis mine*) therefore cannot be part of the domain of politics. In fact, unlike pain, the most intimate and inexpressible feelings of all, “passion and compassion are not speechless.” They have a language yet that language consists of gestures and expressions of countenance and cannot be articulated in words.<sup>95</sup> In that sense, similar to necessities’ destructive impact over public domain, moralistic claims, and idealized sentiments such as goodness and innocence for being non-public and even non-humane features act violently when they are brought in to public sphere.<sup>96</sup> As

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<sup>95</sup> Arendt pays a special emphasis on *inter-est*, denoting a relation, some sort of engagement and care as a form of human existence. She writes, “predicative or argumentative speech, in which someone talks *to* somebody *about* something that is of interest to both because it *inter-est*, it is between them.” (Arendt, 1963: 81)

<sup>96</sup> Her (1963) reading of Melville’s *Billy Budd* (and her reference to Dostoevsky’s *The Grand Inquisitor*), in this sense, aims at demonstrating the irrelevance of the notions of ‘innocence’ and ‘goodness’ within public realm. For Arendt, although the absolute goodness of Billy Budd (who is somehow depicted as the reincarnation of Jesus of Nazareth) is for sure and his forceful and violent response (as if Billy Budd was God’s Angel) against wickedness (of Claggart who bore false witness against him) is morally just, Captain Vere’s verdict of death penalty was also politically just. From the perspective of politics and law, the violation of a rule and order even if

Shiraz Dossa (1982: 310) has argued, the paradoxical nature of morality is that when it “strays outside its legitimate sphere it inevitably becomes tyrannical and dangerous because its only concern is the integrity of its own self, not the shared community, not the common world.”

Albeit being ambiguous at times, one can say that Arendt’s conception of politics is formal, spatial and implies artificiality. This is so because she understands the political as a shared common space. The membership of a political community is not defined with a previously established communal bond or general will or by a social consciousness “but the world they set up in common, the spaces they inhabit together, the institutions and practices they share together” (D’entrèves, 1994: 145).

For this reason, she argues that the Revolution had come to its turning point when the Jacobins seized power. The drastic nature of change did not derive from the priors’ radicalism. It was due to their difference from Girondins. Jacobins neglected Girondins’ concern for the form of government and “pinned their faith on the natural goodness of a class’ rather than on institutions and constitutions”. Arendt quotes Robespierre who asserted “under the new Constitution laws should be promulgated ‘in the name of the French people’ instead of the ‘French Republic’” (Arendt, 1963: 70).

Based on the fear of homogeneity and of the terror of the idea of equality conceptualized as sameness Arendt renounces the concern for social inequalities and the argument that inequalities hinder human development and the realization of freedom; she does not think the elimination of poverty and

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it is committed for the provision of natural justice, even if the committee is purely innocent it does not make a difference.

taking care of the well-being of citizens is the purpose of politics. This is a mistake committed by the French revolutionaries but more importantly shared and disseminated by the great philosophers of Enlightenment.

She particularly has Karl Marx as her target.<sup>97</sup> As the greatest theorist of the revolutions, Arendt argues Marx was “more interested in history than in politics and therefore neglected almost entirely, the original intentions of the men of the revolutions, the foundation of freedom” (Arendt, 1963: 55). As opposed to her own view, Marx had contended, “the reason why the French Revolution had failed to found freedom was that it had failed to solve the social question” and argued essentially “freedom and poverty were incompatible” (Arendt, 1963: 56). The lesson he derived from the “French Revolution was that poverty can be a political force of the first order” (Arendt, 1963: 56). This transformation of the social question into a political force is contained in the term ‘exploitation’ (Arendt, 1963: 56). Based on the idea of a ‘slave economy’ where a ruling class dominates and victimizes another group by possessing the ‘means of violence’ (Arendt, 1963: 57) it suggests the economic order is based on political power hence can be “overthrown by political organization and revolutionary means” (Arendt, 1963: 57). Nonetheless, Arendt thinks the assessment that the capitalist relations are based on the threat and monopoly over violent means is relevant only for the early stages of capitalism. She argues that the Marxist theory “could not have survived more than a century of

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<sup>97</sup>In fact, Arendt’s engagement with Marx in her works is always controversial. As Hanna Pitkin notes, Arendt’s interpretation and detailed formulations of Marxist concepts are “almost always mistaken, sometimes blatantly so” (Pitkin, 1998: 115). The discussion of such mistakes is beyond the scope of this dissertation but it is possible to say that she located and analyzed Marx’s theory of labor within her theoretical framework and therefore failed to understand the prior’s own logic (Holman, 2011). Despite being so, in order to understand her disturbances about the ideas on revolution and violence, I present a brief review of Arendt’s views on Marx in *On Revolution*.

historical research if it had not been for its *revolutionary* (for introducing the idea that economic relations can be undone with the seizure of political power) rather than its *scientific* content” (Arendt, 1963: 56; *emphasis mine*).

Arendt asserts “by reducing property relations to the old relationship which violence, rather than necessity establishes between men...[Marx]...summoned up a spirit of rebelliousness that can spring only from being violated, not from being under sway of necessity” (Arendt, 1963: 57). With this, she means Marx treats exploitation, the equivalent of slavery, to be rising on the ground of violence. As noted earlier, Arendt defines slavery as a system built upon necessity. With the will to get rid of the burden of necessity made the one group of people compel another group to be their slaves to attend their basic needs. For this reason, for Arendt, it is the will to do away with necessity that violent and exploitative relations are established rather than the way Marx suggested (Arendt, 1968a).<sup>98</sup>

Based on this argument she assesses several mistakes in Marx’s theory. Firstly, Marx assumes it is possible to free human beings from labor and from necessity by abolishing exploitative relations since he argues poverty is not a natural but a political phenomenon. Although Arendt accepts that some poverty is political and such poverty might be the result of violence and violation rather than scarcity, she also argues, “necessity, which we invariably carry with us in the very existence of our bodies and their needs, can never be simply reduced to

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<sup>98</sup> Moreover, Arendt makes a critical intervention to Aristotle’s conception of slavery and reverses his construction to support her own case. As he writes in his *Politics* for the ancient philosopher, slavery is a natural institution. Since some human beings lack certain capabilities, that would make them complete human beings and citizens such as the ability to speech and reason, they need mastery and are only useful for attending the needs of some others.<sup>98</sup> According to Arendt, however, it is continuous engagement with the activity of laboring (that is the tending to necessity of oneself or of the others) that disposes one from her/his humane capabilities and makes one slavish. Misery, which by its definition denotes being bound to necessity, therefore, can never produce ‘free-minded people’ (Arendt, 1963: 57).



and completely absorbed by violence and violation” (Arendt, 1963: 59). Another point underlined by McGowan (1998: 51), is that in a second move Arendt presents the problem of poverty as an administrative matter. For her, it is not an issue of politics something that should be dealt by bureaucrats. Moreover, thanks to the technological advancements, modern societies offer all the means to achieve prosperity. We can minimize the time devoted to laboring activities with the use of technological machines and even of robots. Nonetheless, as it is the case with western societies in terms of a growing disinterestedness and even apathy towards politics, liberation from necessity does not guarantee search for freedom or for distinction in the public realm. Secondly, she attacks Marx for inverting the relation between violence and necessity and opposes his assertion “violence is the midwife of history”. She argues conceiving capitalist relations as rising on the ground of violence led twentieth-century-Marxist theorists to defend violence as a necessary act to undo them all. In the end, we have an emphasis on and even celebration of violence, which is required to abolish violence. Within this conceptual framework, Arendt argues that Marx, like Hegel before him, commits the mistake of assuming freedom to be the fruit of necessity.

### **7.1.2. Another Distortion on Revolution: *Poiesis* and Violence**

Another distortion made in the meaning of the action is due to the substitution of it with the activity of work. Work (*poiesis*), defined in the *Human Condition*, simply “is the activity which corresponds to the

unnaturalness of human existence” (Arendt, 1998: 7).<sup>99</sup> It is the activity through which human beings transform the world, build durable and permanent structures that outlast and transcend them all. Humanity when engaged with this form of activity is called as *homo faber* “who makes and literally ‘works upon’ as distinguished from the *animal laborans* which labors and ‘mixes with’—fabricates the sheer unending variety of things whose sum total constitutes the human artifice” (Arendt, 1998: 136). Work, despite sharing some similarities with labor differs from the latter on significant accounts. Labor is cyclical, natural and repetitive. Work is linear, unnatural and does not have to be repetitive. As the fruits of labor are consumed, products of work are used and continue to exist even when they are not used; they do not rot or perish in a short period of time. While laboring requires reproduction “fabrication, the work of *homo faber*, consists in reification” (Arendt, 1998: 139). One other important aspect of work is that “the process of making is itself entirely determined by the categories of means and end”. Work ends with the fabrication of the final product, which in turn is used as a means in the production of another artifact or employed in the process of laboring; hence, instrumentality and utility becomes an important aspect of fabrication. What guides the work of fabrication lies outside the fabricator and precedes the actual work process, which is somehow similar to laboring in the sense that the urgencies of the life

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<sup>99</sup> Villa (2000:97), similar to labor presents a compilation of the terms that are associated with work in Arendt’s text. They are:

the work of our hands, the man-made world, fabrication, (human) artifice, (human) creativity, production, usage, durability, objectivity, building, constructing, manufacturing, making, violation, maleness, linearity, reification, multiplication, tools and instruments, rules and measurement, ends and means, predictability, the exchange market, commercialism, capitalism, instrumental processes, utilitarian processes, objectifying processes, artificial processes, vulgar expediency, violence, predictability, deprivation of intrinsic worth, degradation, disposability, destruction (of nature, world), and lifelessness.

process precede the actual labor process. Nonetheless, the guidance of a model either in the form of an image viewed by the eye of the mind or a “blueprint in which the image has already found a tentative materialization” is required since creation is an essential part of the work (Arendt, 1998: 141).<sup>100</sup> For this reason, Arendt argues, work has been seen “in the image of a Creator-God, so that where God creates *ex nihilo*, man creates out of given substance” (Arendt, 1998: 139). While labor is associated with slavery to the necessities, in Arendt’s conceptualization of human existence, work is equated with mastery over things and the world. Consequently, unlike labor, which is painful and exhausting in its sheer experience but peaceful as an activity, destruction characterizes fabrication; it is a required process of transformation. “We must kill a tree in order to have lumber, and we must violate this material in order to build a table” (Arendt, 1998: 283). Like a Promethean revolt, Arendt writes, work attempts to build a man-made world only after destroying part of God-created nature. Violence, within this framework, is an “interruption of the cyclic movement of nature for a certain use and an irreversible destruction of it” (Yazıcıoğlu, 2009: 112).

We know that labor characterizes the private domain, which in contrast to the public realm is a domain of necessity, intimacy, inequality and isolation. Unlike labor, work requires a public realm; in fact, it also has the capability of creating that realm. Like the activity of labor, however, work is not political. The historically well-known realm of the activity of work is the exchange

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<sup>100</sup> In cooking, for instance, we do have recipes or some sort of an idea before we cook, therefore we can argue that the line between labor and work might not be that certain; but for Arendt, probably, this form of envisioning is secondary in the activity of cooking since in eating the primary aim is to satisfy hunger at the end. For the activity of work, however, a model is essential; one cannot make a shoe by putting a piece of leather, some nails and strings together.

market where the end-products of the activity are displayed and esteems are received by the creators (Arendt, 1998: 160). Therefore, the realm of work differs from the political domain, which is the home of action (*praxis*), the highest form of human activity. Action derives from human condition of plurality. It simply means persons' coming together, relating with each other without the intermediary of things, speaking, debating and acting together. (Arendt, 1998:7) Utility, instrumentality, necessities or desires are irrelevant concepts from the perspective of action. It does not produce any durable product nor satisfies a need. While all three human activities are somehow related to the political life, as labor enables politics by satisfying needs, work precedes action by building the political space, action requires and enables freedom, human togetherness, meaning, history that is remembrance.

We have seen that for Arendt the diffusion of the rationality of labor into the political sphere brings about homogeneity in term of reducing human beings to the equal members of the same species. Given the fact that there is a will to liberate from 'laboring' activities and that in the presence of unfulfilled necessities men are bound with the drives of these basic necessities, a transfer of such wills and necessities to the realm of politics in the form of 'politics of labor' leads to violence that acts as a natural and destructive force.

Concerning the role of the entrance of the rationality of work to the domain of politics, one can say emergence of violence is inevitable. In fact, while violence in the activity of labor is secondary in terms of its emergence, it is primary in work that is inevitably inherent in all activities of making, fabricating, and producing (Arendt, 1998; 1968a). The substitution of *poiesis* with *praxis* has several aspects and impacts on politics. Firstly, it conceives

politics as a process of making. The political order is envisioned as if it is an architectural design, something to be built from the ground and for the erection of which destruction of the nature is seen as required. Action is formulated, justified and judged within the framework of utility, efficiency and effectiveness rather than with reference to excellence, distinction and freedom. Secondly, it replaces the notion of ‘beginning’ one of the fundamental notions of politics with an origin true source (*arche*) that equates any type of beginning with violence and destruction, rather than hope.

Conceiving praxis in terms of *poiesis* is a problem Arendt assesses back in Plato’s philosophy in Ancient Greece.<sup>101</sup> The Platonic thinking was kept intact and even strengthened in Middle Ages until seventeenth century when modern science rose as a new paradigm, reached its climax in the revolutions of the eighteenth century and put the traditional philosophical approach into a crisis. For her, the introduction of scientific thinking into the realm of human affairs became path breaking since only by then the idea that had maintained since Plato that whatever is not given to senses, whatever is beyond mere appearances is more truthful, more real and more meaningful, could not be held true anymore.

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<sup>101</sup> She traces the sustenance of this problematic conception through Middle Ages, discusses its transformation from the sixteenth century till modern times to point out the destructive impacts. According to her, with the death of Socrates, Plato blamed Athenian citizens for his teacher’s death, resented them, disgraced the life in polis for its hypocrisy and even doubted certain fundamentals of Socrates’ teachings for they did not save the philosopher’s life. As known Socrates, the great *maieutics*, the interrogator of beliefs and ideas was charged with impiety, undermining state religion and corrupting youth, found guilty of these crimes and sentenced to death. Rejecting escape plans offered by his student he declared the necessity of obeying the city’s verdict and took his own life. In response to this tragedy Plato turned to ideas rather than people, exalted *vita contemplativa*, which refers to the withdrawal from active city life and engagement with meditation in an attempt to find eternal truths. It is only with the development of absolute standards *via* inner vision, Plato thought, the philosopher-king can return to the city to build the perfect order and rule harmoniously.

With the intersection of the two paradigms, one viewing life/labor as the basis of human activity praising necessity and will as the transformative force in history (an organic view) the other that views life to be ordered with universal, objective laws (a mechanistic view) politics has turned into a process of production and reproduction. For Arendt, the French Revolution is the example of the failures of the adoption of the dual approach; while the revolutionaries were conceptualizing the aim of the political order as the provision of human necessities, they were also hoping to establish an order regulated by scientific laws.

#### *Law and Violence*

The problem of conceiving the establishment of a political order in the model of *poiesis* brings about the understanding of law-making as an activity transcending politics. Quoting Rousseau “the great problem in politics, which I compare to the problem of squaring the circle in geometry... [is]: How to find a form of government which puts the law above man” (Rousseau in Arendt, 1963: 184), Arendt points the ambition and the perplexity of this enterprise. Law making is confused with laying down the fundamental law, which, from then on, is supposed to incarnate the ‘higher law’ from which all laws derive their authority” (Arendt, 1963: 184). This was a difficult task for the simple reason for those who came together with the will of constituting a new form of regime were themselves unconstitutional and in a secular world, they lacked any authority to do what they were intended to do.

As stated earlier the new Republic and following political regimes were founded on the model of a sovereign; the King-God, both omnipotent and the

legislator of the universe. For Arendt this turn to the religious realm for inspiration or establishment of the laws by the image of God, was not those men's conscious choice: they were enlightened and deist, not traditional or religious. Yet, the "enormous risks inherent in the secular realm of human affairs caused them to turn to the only element of traditional religion whose political usefulness as an instrument of rule was beyond any doubt" (Arendt, 1963: 192). Even Machivalli, who in Arendt's view is the spiritual father of the Revolution<sup>102</sup> with his passionate yearning to revive the spirit and the institution of the Roman antiquity, which was adopted later by the eighteenth century revolutionaries as well, was puzzled with the task of foundation and had to recourse to God. His appeal to 'high heaven', Arendt argues, was certainly not inspired by any religious feelings but exclusively dictated by the wish to escape the difficulty of finding an irrefutable authority and establishing a stable political order.

The problem of foundation, apart from the recourse to higher sources, unfolds in the argument of the necessity of violence. This necessity is expressed in the statements like "you cannot make a table without killing trees, you cannot make an omelet without breaking the eggs, you cannot make a republic without killing people" (Arendt, 1968a: 139). The association of violence with beginning is a historical fact and a tendency she assesses in the political

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<sup>102</sup>Arendt's views of Machiavelli seem to differ in *On Revolution* and in *What is Authority?* and they somehow contradict. In *On Revolution*, she argues that Machiavelli is the father of revolution not by his insistence on violence nor for his conception of revolution as a history breaking event, which makes him different from the men of revolutions but due to his understanding of foundation—as a renovation (*rinovazione*) as the only beneficial alteration (*alterazione a salute*) (Arendt, 1963: 29) and for being the first to "think about the possibility of founding a permanent, lasting, enduring body politic" (Arendt, 1963: 29) . In *What is Authority?*, however, she asserts that the "double respect, because of his rediscovery of the foundation experience and his reinterpretation of it in terms of the justification of (violent) means for a supreme end Machiavelli may be regarded as the ancestor of modern revolution" (Arendt, 1968:140).

tradition. In their desire of founding a public-political realm both Machiavelli and Robespierre, “felt that for this supreme “end” all “means,” and chiefly the means of violence, were justified” (Arendt, 1963; 1968a:139). She writes

They understood the act of founding entirely in the image of making; the question to them was literally how to “make” a unified Italy or a French republic, and their justification of violence was guided by and received its inherent plausibility from the underlying argument: You cannot make a table without killing trees, you cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs, you cannot make a republic without killing people. In this respect, which was to become so fateful for the history of revolutions, Machiavelli and Robespierre were not Romans, and the authority to which they could have appealed would have been rather Plato, who also recommended tyranny as the government where “change is likely to be easiest and most rapid (Arendt, 1968a:139).

While Romans differed from Machiavelli and Robespierre in their capacity to locate the source of political authority within human realm, Machiavelli can be distinguished from the French revolutionaries in terms of the absence of a conception of revolution as a history breaking and new event in his theory (Arendt, 1963: 30). Revolution originally an astronomical term, in Copernicus’s *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, designated the “regular, lawfully revolving motion of the stars, which, since it was known to be beyond the influence of man and hence irresistible” (Arendt, 1963: 35). When translated to the political realm it connoted restoration, i.e. renovating government that is one among the few, which revolve among the mortals in eternal recurrence and with the same irresistible force, as exemplified in the Glorious Revolution in England in the seventeenth century. Only with the French revolution all revolutionary actors have been possessed and obsessed with the idea that they are the agents of an inevitable, historical process which is going to put an end to



the old order and bring about of a whole new world (Arendt, 1963: 35). While she agrees with the idea that novelty characterizes the modern revolutionary spirit, Arendt argues that invocation of an old and wrong myth dramatizes the idea of novelty and taints the revolutionary public spirit.

The relevance of the problem of beginning to the phenomenon of revolution is obvious. That such a beginning must be intimately connected with violence seems to be vouched for by the legendary beginnings of our history as both biblical and classical antiquity report it: Cain slew Abel, and Romulus slew Remus; violence was the beginning and, by the same token, no beginning could be made without using violence, without violating. The first recorded deeds in our biblical and our secular tradition, whether known to be legendary or believed in as historical fact, have travelled through the centuries with the force which human thought achieves in the rare instances when it produces cogent metaphors or universally applicable tales. The tale spoke clearly: whatever brotherhood human beings may be capable of has grown out of fratricide, whatever political organization men may have achieved has its origin in crime (Arendt, 1963: 10).

All in all, so far we have seen the faults Arendt has assessed within the revolutionary tradition. I have argued that she mainly criticizes the distortion made in the meaning of politics, revolution and political action through several mechanisms. The first of these is the conceptualization of politics within organismic terms, a result of the infiltration of the rationality of laboring into the public sphere. The historical correspondence of this infiltration is the rise of the social domain and the emergence of the welfare state. For Arendt the social question is not the concern of the political. This is a mistake committed by the French revolutionaries and followed by political thinkers like Marx in the following years. Any issue bound with necessity for Arendt cannot aim nor reach freedom. The attempt of solving social problems in politics would lead to violence, which is tried to be justified with a discourse of necessity, the

employment of which we have seen in the first chapter in the discussion of the essentialist/instrumentalist approach.

A second distortion made in the meaning of revolution is the formulation of politics within the framework of work, that is making or building. This conception, hardly modern, has gained increasing currency with the rise of modern science and technological developments and created the illusion that man is capable of producing a perfect order. Violence, since it is inherent in the rationality and activity of making for Arendt becomes a destructive force in politics in the first degree. In what follows, I will present Arendt's intervention to the meaning of the revolution and her reception of violence as a force that can be used for political purposes.

## **7.2 . Arendt on American Revolution**

### **7.2.1. The Difference between Liberation and Freedom**

As the biblical stories conveyed, beginnings might include a dimension of violence Arendt argues that crime or violence is only part of a story and that part does not constitute the true nature of any revolution.<sup>103</sup> For that aim, as opposed to the story of Abel and Cain she refers to two other legends, one the biblical story of the exodus of Israeli tribes from Egypt and the story of the wanderings of the Virgil of Aeneas after he had escaped the burning city of

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<sup>103</sup> In fact, it is possible to read Arendt's views on revolution, an event that enables the political to emerge in comparison with Schmitt and as a critique of Schmitt. While both theorists disregard liberal conception of politics as a petty business and emphasize the autonomy of the political as a distinct domain and to be a part of collectivity, Arendt differentiates herself from Schmitt with her rejection of violence.

Troy. The significance of these two stories for her is that both are “legends of liberation, the one of liberation from slavery and the other of escape from annihilation, and both stories are centered about a future promise of freedom” (Arendt, 1963: 206).<sup>104</sup> She argues, these stories contain an important lesson for the revolutionaries. They “indicated that freedom is no more automatic result of liberation than the new beginning is the automatic consequence of the end” (Arendt, 1963: 206).

This distinction between ‘liberation’ and ‘freedom’ is an important point in Arendt in passing a judgment about the ‘true’ character of a ‘revolution’. It constitutes the criterion, based on which she asserts that the American Revolution is superior to the French Revolution. This criterion also enables one to decide whether *coups d’état* or civil wars, phenomena that have commonalities in terms of attempting a change of governmental power and of their employment of violence are revolutions are not.

When one talks about a revolution, she asserts, one should always keep in mind that as a distinctively modern matter, “the aim of revolution was, and has always been, freedom” (Arendt, 1963: 2). Freedom, she asserts, does not refer to individuals’ having ‘fundamental’ rights such as the right to life, liberty and property or civil rights, which are considered to be under the guarantee of constitutional governments. These are liberties, defined negatively as the freedom from unjustified restraint, violence or fear and are results of “liberation but they are by no means the actual content of freedom, which...is participation

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<sup>104</sup> For a study that traces the theme of myth and mythology not much articulated by Arendt, See Barash, Jeffrey Andrew. 2009. Hannah Arendt and the Mythology of Violence, in: Yazıcıoğlu, Sanem (Ed.): *Doğumunun 100. Yılında. Hannah Arendt*. On her birth centenary, Cogito: Istanbul

in public affairs, or admission to the public realm (Arendt, 1963: 24). While liberties seem to define private and apolitical enjoyments, freedom is an issue of politics; it signifies the enjoyment of equality and plurality with the peers within public sphere and sharing the pleasure of togetherness and collective action.

only where change occurs in the sense of a new beginning, where violence is used to constitute an altogether different form of government, to bring about the formation of a new body politic, where liberation from oppression aims at least at the constitution of freedom can we speak of revolution (Arendt, 1963: 2)

Interestingly however, “the very word freedom disappeared from the revolutionary vocabulary” (Arendt, 1963: 2), and wars, which have a longer history than the revolutions, have adopted the discourse of freedom. This happened once aggression was defined as a crime after the First World War and once the scale and the destructiveness of modern warfare increased (Arendt, 1963: 3). Although the conception of justification of war under certain conditions, which is exemplified in the notion of ‘just war’ goes back to the Roman times, freedom has appeared in the debate of modern warfare, “like a *deus ex machina* to justify what on rational grounds has become unjustifiable” (Arendt, 1963: 4).

The entry of the idea of liberation into the equation of freedom and revolution is a novel development for Arendt. The line between liberty and freedom has been erased in the process and modern revolutionaries have come to equate the struggle for liberation with the desire for freedom. As stated, although liberty is a necessity for reaching political freedom it is not the sufficient condition. In fact, we know that she (Arendt, 1973; 1968a; 2000; 2008) called for the establishment of a Jewish Army to fight the Nazis during

the World War II.<sup>105</sup> Rather than being bystanders or victims of a tyrannical regime, people should rise up and fight for their existence, identity and for their freedom. In these cases, she argues that the use of violence may be ‘justified’. Nevertheless, this does not mean that it can ever be ‘legitimate’ (1969: 151).<sup>106</sup> For Arendt, liberation could have been fulfilled under monarchical regimes. Freedom, however, requires the formation of a new republic. This is exemplified in the Hungarian Revolution, when a student demonstration turned into an uprising in less than twenty-four hours, with no vanguard party, no programs, points or manifestos or civil war. “What carried the revolution was the sheer momentum of acting-together of the whole people whose demands were so obvious that they hardly needed elaborate formulation: Russian troops should leave the territory and free elections should determine a new government” (Arendt, 1958: 26). The Hungarian army, Arendt writes disintegrated in hours, it did not resist the protestors. The dictatorship, on the other hand, was stripped of all of its power in a couple of days. Legitimacy, therefore, lies in a collective act: “No group, no class in the nation opposed the

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<sup>105</sup> Albeit being against, what we today call as ‘identity politics’ that is the political struggle on the basis of identities such as womanhood, ethnicity or religion, Arendt argues “when one is attacked as a Jew one must respond as a Jew not as a German not as a *world-citizen*, not as an upholder of the Rights of Man”. For her, in the case of a direct attack defending oneself in abstract terms would have been “nothing but a grotesque and dangerous evasion of reality”. See: Hannah Arendt. 2000 [1941]. ‘The Jewish Army – the Beginning of a Jewish Politics?’ in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, edited by Peter Baehr, London: Penguin, 46–8 and *Power and Violence*, Lecture delivered at Bard College, New York.

Available online: <http://www.bard.edu/arendtcollection/digitalproject.htm>.

Yet still, as known, she opposed the foundation of a Israeli state and defended the formation of a dual-state with Arab-Jewish councils.

<sup>106</sup> On the issue of calling for a Jewish Army, one scholar (Birmingham, 2011) offers an alternating view. Upon juxtaposing Arendt and Benjamin, she argues that Arendt’s distinction between violence and power is very close to Benjamin’s distinction between mythical and divine violence in the sense that both reject instrumentality and offer something else. Instead of Benjamin’s Messianic violence that ends all forms of worldly violence, Birmingham argues, Arendt locates revolutionary power, which in my opinion means to close a very big gap between the two. She further argues that in her call for a Jewish army, Arendt is calling for a revolutionary act, a collective action and power. However, as I have tried to show, a fight conducted by a Jewish Army cannot be revolutionary but liberationist from an Arendtian perspective.

will of the people once it had become known and its voice had been heard in the market place” (Arendt, 1958: 27).

As a result, violence of liberation movements, liberation wars, fall under the category of ‘prepolitical’ acts as Villa (1996:157) too has observed. “Domination, liberation, administration, representation—determined by the force of necessity and destructive of plurality they are all prepolitical in character” (Villa, 1996: 31). The use of force in these cases, or the employment of violence against tyranny and oppression may be ‘justified’, and even morally affirmed but Arendt reasons they can never be political nor can be ‘legitimized’.

### **7.2.2. Founding Freedom: Law and Violence**

By now, we are familiar with Arendt’s views on the problem of conceiving revolution as an act of liberation from necessity, domination and oppression, the distorted view of conceptualizing action as making. We have also seen that there is a difference between liberation and freedom. We know that revolution does have the component of liberation, and although violence can be employed at this stage and even though it can be morally justified, acts of violence are prepolitical phenomenon. They are secondary in terms of their role in revolution and they can never be legitimate politically. Furthermore, the phenomenon of revolution cannot and should not be reduced to liberation. Hence, it cannot be reduced to violence either, establishment of a political order where members of the political community can enjoy action and public freedom is the second and the most important stage of a revolution. One of the reasons of this error is the historical fact that there had been not many revolutions that

could have successfully ended up with constitution making; either the revolution became permanent or the counter forces imposed new laws to seize them or when revolutions failed.

Recognizing the difficulty of founding a new political order Arendt writes “psychologically speaking the experience of foundation combined with the conviction that a new story is about to unfold in history will make men ‘conservative’ rather than ‘revolutionary’, eager to preserve what has been done and to assure its stability rather than open for new things, new developments, new ideas” (Arendt, 1963: 34).

Ironically, she writes most of the time, men of revolutions lacked expectations and inclinations for novel things. They were not aware of the fact they were in the process of a revolution. What they aimed, on the contrary was restoration: revolving back to some ideal arrangement. Nevertheless, the process and the experiencing of political freedom during the process brought up the problem of foundation.<sup>107</sup>

The perplexity in the face of the problem of foundation is particularly materialized in the task of laying down a constitution. Formulating a new constitution without referring to extrapolitical (transcendental, higher) sources of authority, establishing a stable political order and lasting institutions with the knowledge that all these structures can be undone with a counter-revolution,

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<sup>107</sup>Bonnie Honig (1991) argues that Arendt faults the American revolutionaries for being inadequately conscious of themselves as innovator but I have my doubts about this comment. Honig gives reference to a passage where Arendt (1963: 37) writes “...especially with respect to the American Revolution, which did not devour its own children and where therefore the men who had started the ‘restoration’ were the same men who began and finished the Revolution and even lived to rise to power and office in the new order of things. What they had thought was a restoration, the retrieving of their ancient liberties, turned into a revolution, and their thoughts and theories about the British constitution, the rights of Englishmen, and the forms of colonial government ended with a declaration of independence”. In fact as Honig herself later acknowledges the experience of public freedom, opened the way to carry on the revolutionary process and to establish a new political realm for the American revolutionaries.

were true challenges the American and French revolutionaries faced. In fact, Arendt does not deal with the topic of law as in her view legislation is a technical matter. Yet still, as I have already stated, she points out the flaw in French Revolution as the futile but tragic search for an absolute law, which is conceived as a sovereign will. For this reason, she makes a comparison between the Greeks and the Romans in an attempt to offer a true meaning for law. As a result of this comparison she offers a twofold meaning for law. Neither for Greeks nor for Romans law was something above politics, has she argued. In Greek city-states, in the founding of a city, a legislator came from outside of the city. That law-giver “could be a stranger and be called from abroad but this was because, as Arendt suggests, due to the fact that laying down the law was a *pre-political* act. Just as the erection of walls around the city before establishing the city (Arendt, 1963: 187), laws were made before the foundation of politics. The similarity of the laws and walls are noted with the following paragraph:

“The very word νόμος (*nomos*), which apart from its etymological significance, receives its full meaning as the opposite of φύσις (*phusis*; later became *physis*) or things that are natural, stresses the ‘artificial’, conventional, man-made nature of the laws. Moreover, although the word νόμος came to assume different meanings as throughout the centuries of Greek civilization, it never lost its original ‘spatial significance’ altogether, namely, ‘the notion of a range of province, within which defined power may be legitimately exercised.’” (Arendt, 1963: 187)

The Roman *lex*, on the other hand, “was not coeval with the foundation of the city”. Nor was the law a pre-political activity (Arendt, 1963: 188). *Lex* signified a relationship, an intimate connection, something that connects two things or two partners whom external circumstances have brought together. The function of law is exemplified in the case of wars in Roman history. Arendt



argues that laws were established at the end of wars not to re-establish peace but to constitute new alliance and a new unity (in the form of treaties and agreements) between altogether different entities, which were thrown together by war and now entered into a partnership (Arendt, 1963: 188). Having assessed the same conception in Montesquieu, whom she favors a lot, Arendt argues for the Romans, “a law is merely what relates two things and therefore is relative by definition” (Arendt, 1963: 189).

According to one scholar (Birmingham, 2011) Arendt’s understanding of law has shifted from the Greek conception of ‘wall’ or ‘border’ to the Roman notion of ‘alliance’ in time.<sup>108</sup> The conceptualization of law as a border, presented in the *Human Condition*, enables her to make a neat distinction between the city and the nature, between politics and violence, a citizen and a

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<sup>108</sup> My explanation of such a shift would be that upon realizing the problems of the existence of the ‘borders’ to be one of the defining features of the ‘nation state’—a problematic political structure (among many others particularly) for equating human rights with citizens’ right and therefore, for instance, stripping refugees of all rights—Arendt might have favored the relational formulation. We know that in her opinion federalism is superior to the unitary state structure. Her view on the issue has a specific reference to the Jewish Question not only in terms of the sufferings Jewish people underwent during the Nazi regime but also with regards to the establishment of the long-awaited Israeli state in Middle East in 1948. As known, Arendt opposed it with the argument that it should have been founded as a federated and pluralistic state, a homeland for the Jews and the Palestinians. In *Origins*, she (1973: ??) writes “after the war it turned out that the Jewish question, which was considered the only insoluble one, was indeed solved – namely, by means of a colonized and then conquered territory – but this solved neither the problem of the minorities nor the stateless. On the contrary, like virtually all other events of the 20th century, the solution of the Jewish question merely produced a new category of refugees, the Arabs, thereby increasing the number of stateless and rightless by another 700,000 to 800,000 people. And what happened in Palestine within the smallest territory and in terms of hundreds of thousands was then repeated in India on a large scale involving many millions of people”

Arendt debates the problems of the nation-states in the *Origins of Totalitarianism*. One can also take a look at her essays on the matter. See Arendt, Hannah. 1949. ‘The Rights of Man’: What Are They? *Modern Review* 3 (1): 25-3 and Arendt, Hannah. 1978. We Refugees. In Ron H. Feldman, ed. *The Jew as Pariah*, NY: Grove Press, 1978: 55-66. For further discussions on the relation between human rights, citizenship and the nation-state from an Arendtian perspective and works that enter a dialogue with Arendt, for instance, See. Benhabib, Seyla. 2002. *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press & Benhabib, Seyla. 2004. *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. Isaac, Jeffrey C. 1996. *A New Guarantee on Earth: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Human Rights*. *American Political Science Review* 90 (1): 61-73 and Rancière, Jacques. 2004. “Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103 (2/3): 297-310.

barbarian. So that she can argue although the city connotes a non-violent domain, outside the walls of the city violence is a natural aspect of human affairs. The conception of the treaty and alliance, on the other hand, is relational rather than spatial and it suggests that the law is constituted through political action. Within this framework, law becomes a productive and regenerative instrument; it establishes a relation between two distinct entities that inevitably creates a space for politics. Following Thomas Paine, then, Arendt argues: “a constitution is not the act of the government, but of a people constituting a government” (Arendt, 1963: 143).

In the previous sections, I have pointed out the distinction Arendt makes between freedom and liberty. I have argued that she associates freedom with revolution and does not think that a movement, which aims at the provision or guarantee of liberties, is revolutionary. Although a constitutional government is considered as a form of government with limits on its absolute power; hence, limited, the liberties guaranteed by the laws of constitutional government are negative in character. Thence, the aim of revolution cannot be reduced to this problem since then they would not differ from restoration. The establishment of a new constitution, therefore, cannot revolve around the question of “how to limit power but how to establish it” and “how to limit a government but how to found a new one” (Arendt, 1963: 146). Among the modern attempts,<sup>109</sup> she assesses and praises the revival of ‘council’ model. These councils, referring to a direct regeneration of democracy through the proliferation of local sites

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<sup>109</sup> Arendt finds 1871 Paris Commune, the first weeks of the first Russian revolution of 1905, the October revolution in Russia, the November revolutions in Germany and Austria after the First World War, the workers’ councils of the 1956 uprising in Hungary, and the American Revolution inspirational examples of revolutions. Yet all except the American revolution failed for her.

(Arendt, 1963: 263) acted as truly revolutionary forces, “born exclusively out of the actions and spontaneous demands of the people, and they were not deduced from an ideology nor foreseen, let alone preconceived, by any theory about the best form of government” (Arendt, 1958: 28). Yet among many trials only the American Revolution survived and for this reason can be evaluated as successful.

Restriction of violence is an important aspect and the success of American Revolution. This was made possible, firstly, due to the geographical distance between the New World and Europe, inflicted by mass misery and unhappiness. By not being crippled with the problems of necessity, the American Revolution could successfully deal with political problems, the form of government and the formation of freedoms (Arendt, 1963: 63). This does not mean, however, that inequality was totally absent in the American context and that the founders of the Republic were not preoccupied with distinctions present within society. Yet, Arendt argues these men were convinced that these distinctions were eternal as old as the creation, and as extensive as the globe.<sup>110</sup> Slavery, she confesses, carries an obscurity darker than the obscurity of European poverty in the American context. “The slave, not the poor man, was ‘wholly overlooked’” by the newly established Republic just like it was in the Athenian democracy. Without problematizing the meaning of the exclusion of this problem from the sphere of politics, she declares her relief with the

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<sup>110</sup>From this, we can only conclude that the institution of slavery carries an obscurity even blacker than the obscurity of poverty; the slave, not the poor man, was ‘wholly overlooked’. For if Jefferson, and others to a lesser degree, were aware of the primordial crime upon which the fabric of American society rested, if they ‘trembled when [they] thought that God is just’ (Jefferson), they did so because they were convinced of the incompatibility of the institution of slavery with the -foundation of freedom, not because they were moved by pity or by a feeling of solidarity with their fellow men.

statement that the Founding Fathers of the American Revolution, in fact, recognized the incompatibility of the fact of slavery with the foundation principles of freedom. In a strange way, she implies a comparison with the French Revolution and again declares the superiority of the American Revolution: They judged it so, “not because they were moved by pity or by a feeling of solidarity with their fellow men” (Arendt, 1963: 66).

The separation of powers, the application and elaboration of Montesquieu’s theory of the three branches of government (the legislative, executive and the judiciary) are also important features that made the American Revolution successful in the eyes of Arendt. The separation of powers should also be celebrated for its abolition of the notion of sovereignty, which within the realm of human affairs is the same with tyranny (Arendt, 1963: 152). The ‘Founding Fathers’, managed to create a new realm where, public happiness and personal desire to excel in public affairs can be pursued (Arendt, 1963:131). In French Revolution, she argued, the emphasis shifted from public freedom to civil liberty, exemplified in the Declaration of Human Rights, which for her is the equation of the rights of ‘man’ and the rights of the citizen with the rights of the ‘bourgeois’. The disappearance of the ‘taste’ for ‘political freedom’, the withdrawal from public affairs into an ‘inward domain of consciousness’ and the pursuit of private happiness” (Arendt, 1963: 131) determined the physiognomy of the nineteenth century as it partly does even that of the twentieth century in Europe.

As a result, the foundation of a political domain for the enjoyment of public freedom, laying down laws that relate people to each other, formulating power not in absolute terms rather generating them through local mechanisms

and endorsing a spirit which inspires individuals to participate in public affairs, emerge as major issues a revolution has to address.

### **Conclusion:**

The endeavor of understanding the relationship between violence and politics in the works of Arendt and Foucault in comparison with the traditional approaches has been running along two axes of power and revolution. I have presented and discussed how Arendt and Foucault conceive power and its relation to violence. As seen, the Arendtian analysis of violence has been more complex and nuanced than Foucault and it has two dimensions. Both in the discussion of power and revolution, firstly, she engages with a historical critique, analyzes the present and looks for possible explanations. Then, she builds up her argument by refuting the mistakes she assessed and replacing them with the true meanings of the concepts. Redefinition of the meaning of revolution and separating its link with violence was the attempt I have tried discussing in this chapter.

She pointed out the dangers made in the formulation of political action; showed how the domination of the rationality of laboring turns societies into conformist, apolitical and homogenous masses that pursue the mere satisfaction of their biological needs. Viewing politics in the image of making, on the other hand, she argued results in destruction, domination and exclusion. Both of these problems, she argued are present in the European tradition and was embodied by the French Revolution.

In her opinion, there are two stages to a successful revolution: liberation and freedom. There is the will to liberate from any form of domination and there is the volition to found a novel form of regime, which engenders the experience of political freedom. The true meaning of revolution, as a political act *par excellence* lies in its unfolding of the establishment of a political order. For Arendt it is possible to succeed at the initial project of liberation and to fail at the subsequent project of the foundation. From an Arendtian perspective, one can argue, the French Revolution succeeded the process of liberation yet failed in the successful foundation of the political order, hence freedom. The American Revolution was successful in both terms and this, for Arendt was apparent in the marginality of violence within the event. The next chapter will discuss how Foucault understands the problem of revolution and its relation to violence. As we will see, his review of the Iranian Revolution will be a challenge to Arendt's definition of revolution as a freedom founding act.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FOUCAULT ON REVOLUTION AND VIOLENCE

I have argued that the experience of the Nazi regime had a traumatic impact on Arendt and throughout her career, she writes on and against violence in her works. The *Human Condition*, was a reaction to the totalitarian nightmare; *On Violence* and *On Revolution* were penned as fearful responses to the political events of the 1960s.

Foucault's reflections, on the other hand, do not reflect a worry or fear. Although he provides numerous works that can be considered to be touching upon the topic of violence in terms of its transformation at polity and societal levels, none of these works makes an explicit statement about the necessity of avoidance of violence. Nor he defended a non-violent form of politics in his historiographies. Within this context, revolution was a theme Foucault did not grow any interest in until the late 1970s.

Starting from the early 1970s, however, he became an increasingly politicized figure. A particular interest and engagement with the prison system support to prisoners with Gilles Deleuze characterized this period. During this

time, he got also busy with thinking about an alternative concept of power, the contours and oscillations we have seen in the previous chapter. For Foucault the importance of the 1968 events derive from their embodiment of a critique of traditional frameworks of politics and political action, therefore might be illuminating for him to develop his notion of resistance. The critique of 1968 particularly targets Marxism<sup>111</sup> and blames it for failing to understand complex dynamics of capitalist societies and a whole series of questions, such as questions about women, relations between sexes, medicine, mental illness, environment or identities (Kritzman in Foucault, 1988). The movements of 1968 brought these issues forward and they demanded solutions; they asked for state's withdrawal from one domain, or called for its intervention on environmental issues or some other domains, which were not considered as political issues. In an interview where he explicates the meaning of his work on the relationship between body and power, Foucault notes the importance of 1968 events with the question

One can say that what has happened since 1968, and arguably what made 1968 possible, is something profoundly anti-Marxist. How can European revolutionary movements free themselves from the 'Marx effect', the institutions typical of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Marxism! This was the direction of the questions posed by '68. In this calling in question of the equation: Marxism = the revolutionary process, an equation that constituted a kind of dogma, the importance given to the body is one of the important, if not essential elements (Foucault, 1980: 57).

The 1968 events were also important for the reawakening of a sense of revolution yet the desire for an overthrow of the existing regime for the establishment of a novel one seemed to be dim in western contexts. In the U.S.

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<sup>111</sup> This however does not mean that Foucault disregards Marx as an important figure. In fact, his critical analyses have affinities with the Marxist analysis. Yet, he has a particular distance with the "Marxism" which attempts at defining itself as a science.



and in Europe, there were antiwar demonstrations, rise of student movements, civil society movements with various agendas such as feminism, antiracism, gay and civil rights, environmental concerns. These new forms of political movements (also known as new social movements) led people go to streets and cause them to demand more rights, democracy and equality. Yet they did not ask for another world, a regime or a form of government. They did not demand nor could transform existing economic (capitalist), political and social relations. In non-European contexts, on the other hand, the revolutionary spirit was more radical. The Cuban Revolution of 1959 was followed by a series of revolts, uprisings, anti-colonial struggles. The Vietnamese opposition to U.S.'s occupation, and many wars of independence in Africa and Asia took place in this period.

### **8.1. Iranian Revolution: An Alternative to Western Modernity?**

It is against this background when in 1978, a protest against the Iranian Shah Reza Pahlavi turned into a massive revolt<sup>112</sup> Foucault expressed his enthusiasm, went to Iran two times for one-week-long visits (in September and November 1978), and penned his observations. These observations were published in the form of newspaper reports, interviews, opinion pieces and letters to the editors between September 1978 and May 1979 in Italian

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<sup>112</sup> Shah's secular regime had long suffered from a legitimacy crisis. By the mid-1970s, however, protests became widespread; they met with increased political repressions and at times with some attempts reforms. In the early phases demonstrations leftist urban intellectuals are noted to be active but when the protest organized by seminary students against the publishing of an article, which criticizes Ayatollah Khomeini in a newspaper in January 1978 was suppressed with several killings, Iranian clergy came to the scene and overtake the role of organizing mass protests. On September 8, a massive demonstration in Tehran was crushed by the regime forces and received the name of Black Friday. This event accelerated and intensified the uprisings and ended up with Shah's departure on January 16, 1979.

newspaper *Corriere della sera*, French newspapers and journals, such as the daily *Le Monde* and *Le Nouvel Observateur* (Afary and Anderson, 2005). The French theorist's sudden interest in the event aroused surprise and curiosity but as soon as his writings came out, they received harsh criticisms from different groups including feminists, leftists, Middle Eastern scholars and scholars of Middle East. The critics blamed the thinker for his unconditional sympathy and even fascination with the spectacle, for his ignorance of the history of the country (Keating, 1997) and the scope of violence and repression the new regime brought. Foucault's neglect of women, homosexuals who have been marginalized, excluded and oppressed by the religious Khomeini regime was also attacked particularly by the feminists (Afary and Anderson, 2005; de Beauvoir in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 246-247). Some of these texts and their critics appeared in a volume, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism* (Afary and Anderson, 2005) and fuelled debates that aim to understand Foucault's position in the issue (Afary and Anderson, 2005; Honig, 2008; Bernauer, 2006).<sup>113</sup>

For some, Foucault made a mistake by celebrating the Iranian Revolution too early (Bernauer, 2006). He just could not realize the radical, anti-modernist and oppressive nature of the religious movement. For others this was not an isolated incident; rather Foucault's comments are a symptom of the problems of a political/theoretical stand he too belongs to, that is as one scholar labels, "the

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<sup>113</sup> For one scholar one can assess a revived interest in Foucault's Iran writings particularly after 9/11. He asserts that most works on Foucault in the English language published after 2002 dedicate a separate section or chapter on Foucault and Iran. According to him, "what clearly was a source of discomfort and possibly embarrassment in the scholarship for two decades... has evidently become a central theme" in contemporary Foucault readings. See: Beukes, Johann. 2009. Foucault and Iran 1978-1979 (2: Scholarship and Significance) *Hamartia*, Vol. 65 No: 1: 116-126.

kind of left-wing thinking that mixes postmodernism, simplistic thirdworldism, and illiberal inclination” (Cohen, 2002: 17-18). Walzer (1983), on the other hand, calls Foucault’s political position in response the events of May 68, prison revolts in seventies and Iranian Revolution as “infantile leftism”, which however, should be separated from his political theory.<sup>114</sup> Within French leftist circles, there were others who supported the Iranian Revolution with the argument that the movement is anti-imperialistic in nature and includes some socialist elements. The latter assessment was partly correct due the support the Iranian left gave to the mass protests during the revolutionary period.<sup>115</sup> Many newspapers with Islamic-leftist tendencies published the pictures of young martyrs who had died in the prisons by Shah’s regime (Afary and Anderson, 2005) and contributed to the expansion of the support to the demonstrations and the fall of the Shah regime.

Foucault explicitly stated that he would not answer his summoning for the acknowledgement of his errors (Foucault, 1978: 114) nor respond to critics that look for polemics on the issue.<sup>116</sup> In an interview where the reception of the

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<sup>114</sup> Foucault on the other hand, labeled Walzer as a polemicist and denied his right to respond to the critique of “infantile leftism”. He argues, “[I]f I open a book and see that the author is accusing an adversary of “infantile leftism” I shut it again right away. That’s not my way of doing things; I don’t belong to the world of people who do things that way.” See: Foucault, Michel. 1997. *Polemics, Politics and Problematizations* translated by Lydia Davis, in *Essential Works of Foucault Volume 1 Ethics*, The New Press.

<sup>115</sup> Leftist reviewers still argue the mobilization of the working class and the poor was effective in the Iranian Revolution and they were the ones who pushed the system into crisis. See, Saman Sepehri. 2000. *Internationalist Socialist Review*, Issue 9 August-September. Available online: [http://www.isreview.org/issues/09/iranian\\_revolution.shtml](http://www.isreview.org/issues/09/iranian_revolution.shtml)

<sup>116</sup> An interview conducted by Paul Rabinow in May 1984 Foucault expressed that not engaging in polemics is his general attitude. His views on the nature of the polemic and the polemicist and the way he differentiates the prior from interviews where one asks and the other responds are interesting because they seem to contradict his thoughts on relations of power. By arguing, “in the serious play of questions and answers, in the work of reciprocal elucidation, the rights of each person are in some sense immanent in the discussion. They depend only on the dialogue situation...The polemicist... on the other hand...possesses rights authorizing him to wage war and making that struggle a just undertaking; the person he confronts is not a partner in search for the truth but an adversary, an enemy who is wrong, who is armful, and whose very existence

Iranian revolution by the French left was interrogated, however he said, apart from the sympathy that can be felt towards the Revolution due to its service to the socialist ideals and the total rejection of it on the basis of its anti-modernism there is a possible third reaction, which, exemplified in his case, is “astonishment” (Foucault 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 251). Foucault contends the event in Iran does not resemble a revolution in the known sense; it is a previously unknown form of politicization and will have impacts, which cannot be foreseen in the near future. His thoughts in different articles not only confirm that feeling of “astonishment”. But they also suggest ‘confusion’ and ‘indecisiveness’. Foucault could not immediately decide whether he was witnessing a revolution or not. In the essay entitled, *The Mythical Leader of the Iranian Revolt* he says

... I wanted to say that it is not a revolution, not in the literal sense of the term, not a way of standing up and straightening things out. It is the insurrection of men with bare hands who want to lift the fearful weight, the weight of the entire world order that bears down on each of us, but more specifically on them, these oil workers and peasants at the frontiers of empires. (Foucault 1978, in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 222).

Then in another essay, in *Iran: The Spirit of a World without Spirit* he writes

We recognize a revolution when we can observe two dynamics: one is that of the contradictions in that society, that of the class struggle or of social confrontations. Then there is a political dynamic, that is to say, the presence of a vanguard, class, party, or political ideology, in short, a spearhead that carries the whole nation with it. Now it seems to me that, in what is happening in Iran, one can recognize neither of those two dynamics that are for us distinctive signs and explicit marks of a revolutionary phenomenon (Foucault 1978, in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 251).

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constitutes a threat” sounds more like Habermas than the familiar Foucault. See, Foucault, Michel. 1997. *Polemics, Politics and Problematizations* translated by Lydia Davis, in *Essential Works of Foucault Volume 1 Ethics*, The New Press.

Iran did not undergo a colonial experience even though it was divided into two zones, which were controlled, by the British and the Russian governments in the nineteenth century. Starting from the mid-nineteenth century the United States gained greater influence on the state and this influence increased its scope during the rule of Shah Pahlavi. The substantial inflow of oil revenues transferred to a group of privileged and used for the strengthening of the army but neither transformed the country's social structures nor create new social forces (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 221). In the absence of an antinomy of a colonizer and occupier, hence an organized struggle for independence/decolonization and under the shadow of a strong army and police forces backed up by the Shah regime, Foucault reasons, political-military organizations could not emerge. For this reason, he argues, "the rejection of the regime is a massive *social* phenomenon" (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 220; emphasis mine) and operates as a negation of politics in Iran.<sup>117</sup>

A distinction between the 'social' and the 'political' domain is not meaningful for Foucault. I have already shown it is Arendt who argues the 'social' signifies a hybrid domain of private and public characterized by a set of relations of necessity, homogenizing norms and values and individualism. For her the rise of the social, its expansion into the political has a degrading impact on political, the sphere of excellence, distinction, freedom and plurality.

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<sup>117</sup> This is a point underlined by Asaf Bayat as well. In his comparison of social movements in Middle East Bayat argues that the Iranian revolutionary movement in 1978 aimed to solely negate the existing order without considering and not knowing whether they may or may not be able to build alternative structures. For him movements in other Middle Eastern countries such as Egypt or in Europe such as European Socialist Movements, Poland's Solidarity are more organized and had attempts of establishing alternative structures and value systems before a total change. See: Asef Bayat. 1998. Revolution without Movement, Movement without Revolution: Comparing Islamic Activism in Iran and Egypt, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 40,(1) :136-169.

Foucault, like Arendt he points out an increasing concern for the welfare of the population, the increase of its wealth, health, cycles of reproduction and other indicators such as rates of birth, death etc. in the western societies since the eighteenth century. Arendt's argument that asserts the nation-state corresponds to a form of politics that conceives ruling of body of peoples and political communities in the image of a family –a form of housekeeping, echoes in Foucault's essay on governmentality (Foucault, 2001). Referring to Rousseau's entry on 'Political Economy' in his *Encyclopedia*, however, he points out the meaning of economy as the 'management of a household by the father' but also reminds Rousseau's warning that this model cannot be accepted; the political economy is not the economy of the family anymore (Foucault, 2001: 218). As I have already presented, he offers a more complex analysis and argues that while the 'politics of sovereignty' looms in the background, a 'politics of discipline' and a 'politics of government' have emerged in the West, they have merged and become effective in the functioning of modern societies. The politics of sovereignty, briefly refers to the rule of the sovereign over a territory on the basis of his will; the politics of discipline connotes an emerging political interest in the individual as a subject to be regulated; finally the politics of government corresponds to the ruling of the society as a collectivity to be taken care of. Thence, while Foucault agrees with Arendt on the 'rise of the social', he would probably argue that it is not simply the infiltration of the social into the political but the diffusion of the political rationalities into the social. From a Foucauldian perspective, politics does not have a normative value. It connotes a domain composed of a set of power relations that produce, maintain and transform subjects, the epistemological, economic and socio-cultural framework

within which those relations operate in western societies. In the West, thence a distinction between the social and the political is not meaningful.

In the Iranian context, however, Foucault makes such an ‘odd’ differentiation. With this, he might have attributed a relative autonomy to the social. He assumes that the economic-political rationality of the West was not present and it did not infiltrate into the social with its regulative mechanisms. He does not elaborate the meaning or the implication of the distinction. This however, he adds does not mean that the revolt, as a social phenomenon, is “confused, emotional, or barely self-conscious”, a rather rough implication of the adjective. As a total form of collective organization that negates politics (in its existing form), the revolution constitutes a perfectly unified collective will and spreads in an unprecedented and effective manner (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 221).

In arguing that the revolt is not a proper revolution and that it operates as a negation of politics in Iran, Foucault seems to have a Marxist conception of revolution in his mind. Therefore, he writes it is a tidal wave without a military leadership, without a vanguard, without a party or political ideology (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 211; 221). The protestors have an immediate political goal, they want Shah leave. A whole nation opposes the Shah, his regime and his strong, well-armed military and police “with bare hands, without resorting to armed struggle, with a determination and a courage that are in the process of immobilizing the army, which, little by little, freezes and hesitates to fire on them” (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 211). Resisting a military force, which did not hesitate to employ violence against demonstrators and to kill several thousand people in earlier months,

with bare hands is the first feature Foucault notices and labels as a paradox of this movement. When two hundred thousand people come together he says, “recourse to violent repression seems less and less possible. The uprising a whole society has choked off the possibility of civil war” (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 211; 254). Foucault comes close to Walter Benjamin and Slavoj Žižek who argue for a divine violence to take place a total mobilization of people (workers) and an absolute negation of the existing political system would be enough.

“Movement” is the word mostly used by Foucault while referring to the revolt.<sup>118</sup> He does this to make the difficulty of putting the spectacle under the category of revolution and within the boundaries of known versions of collective action explicit.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> The revolt was in the form of a continuous demonstration. He writes, “It’s the repetition of the demonstration...I believe the demonstration, in its very repetition, had an intense political meaning. The very word demonstration must be taken literally: a people were tirelessly demonstrating its will” (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 254).

<sup>119</sup> It is interesting that in the *Origins of Totalitarianism* Arendt (1973) made the same observation concerning the functioning of Nazism and Stalinism and of the Mussolini regime. Accordingly, all of these totalitarian regimes established and presented themselves as movements, continuous and dynamic; they avoided any identification with a stable political structure such as the state. As movements international in their ambition and all-comprehensive in their ideological scope Bolshevik and Nazi movements, Arendt argued, faced the dilemma of either becoming “‘ossified’ by taking over the state machine and frozen into a form of absolute government” or being “‘limited by the borders of the territory’ by transforming into national parties (Arendt, 1973: 389). In order to avoid stabilization and normalization, hence the gradual decline of the effectiveness of propaganda and mass organization, these regimes claimed to be initiators of a ‘permanent revolution’. The movement was defined as being above state and people ready to sacrifice both for the sake of its ideology. The discourse of ‘movement’ for Arendt is one of the important indicators of the shift in the understanding of politics. She writes, “one should not forget that a building can have a structure, but that a movement...can have only a direction, and that any form of a legal or governmental structure can be only a handicap to a movement which is being propelled with increasing speed in a certain direction” (Arendt, 1973: 398). The ‘totalitarian state’ is a state in appearance only; it operates more like a shapeless, sinister and secret organization. Far from being monolithic structures, these organizations surprise their observers either by the lack of enduring source of authorities or by the co-existence of dual authorities. Additionally, there was no established hierarchy; rather than operating as top-down management system a cell-like configuration was in control; no one except the leader had any information about the functioning of their units and its role within the whole system. “If there is a totalitarian personality or mentality”, Arendt (1973: 266) writes, “then it is possible to argue, that it is the trait of adaptability and absence of continuity”. For Arendt, like Foucault, a form of politicization, which presents itself as a movement and acts



Foucault underlines that the protest is determinate and had a very clear objective. It “is always based on the same thing, a sole and very precise thing...the departure of the shah.” (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 221) The “endlessly demonstrated rejection” of the Shah, for him not only is a collective action and is an expression of public right but also it is a performance of a religious ritual. Comparing the demonstrations to Greek tragedies, within which “collective ceremony and the reenactment of the principles of right go hand in hand” (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 254), “in the streets of Tehran”, he writes, “there was an act, a political and juridical act, carried out collectively within religious rituals—an act of deposing the sovereign” (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 254).

A second paradox Foucault assesses in the movement is the absence of internal conflict. He argues that no class struggle or clash of interests split the opposition, although this argument can be challenged with some socialist registers that note the formation of *shuras* (factory councils) from the beginning of 1979 as an indicator of a clash of interests between the clerical leaders and the workers’ movement.

The lack of long-term objectives is the third paradox of the movement (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 211). There was no specific political program; however, this is not an indication of weakness for Foucault. On the contrary, he thinks, an almost unanimous obstinate popular will could be formed because of the lack of a plan for government and due to the simplicity of the slogans (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 212). Confirming

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accordingly, is anti-political in nature. However, from an Arendtian viewpoint this is a dangerous development.

Arendt's observation on the movements' dislike towards established structures and practices, he notes that the mullahs refused the idea of having a referendum, which could possibly transform the 'collective will' into a 'political coalition' (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 213). In response to the demands when Khomeini finally proposed a referendum, he demanded it to be held only after Shah's leave. The rejection of Shah was guaranteed to be total and immediate with the threat of a civil war if he would not leave and the threat of expelling from the movement any person who would possibly agree on the temporary preservation of the dynasty with limited powers. The proposed referendum, furthermore, was required to have the establishment of an 'Islamic government' as its main topic. For Foucault, this "is a way of reviving openly the slogan of a "strike against politics"" (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 213).

Confirming Bayat (1998)'s thesis that the Iranian Revolution lacked a previously constructed alternative form of institutions and relations, he contends that even though four out of five person declare the will for "an Islamic government" (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 205), "nobody in Iran means a political regime in which the clerics would have a role of supervision or control" (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 206). Arendt too takes a note of the existence of a political awareness on the issue of knowing what to do next in her observations on the Hungarian Revolution. The peculiar and important aspect of the Hungarian revolution is its 'political'ity: the instant organization of councils and the already existing form and plan of an alternative politics. On the other hand, both of the revolutions owed their success (in terms of the organization of the revolutionary movement) to the

existing collective action mechanisms. In the Iranian case mullahs and religious collectivities, particularly those that worked in the task of the rebuilding Tabas that was hit by an earthquake; again, the workers' unions gave the movement an impetus. In the Hungarian case, the councils, councils of the workers, students, artists etc. were the carriers of the revolt.

Somehow romanticizing Islam and its meaning for the people in Iran, Foucault asserts that for these people the idea of the Islamic government is like a "utopia", an "ideal". It is "something very old and also very far into the future, a notion of coming back to what Islam was at the time of the Prophet, but also of advancing toward a luminous and distant point where it would be possible to renew fidelity rather than maintain obedience" (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 206-207). The revival of *Asr-i Saadet* (Golden Age or Era of Bliss), is the desire of the revolutionary people.

Yet still, for Foucault this is not a regressive or reactionary movement. It is not a shrinking back in the face of modernization but a rejection of which, in his words, is itself an archaism (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 195). After a visit paid to a local bazaar, Foucault takes notes of an observation that struck him and somehow clarified his ideas on the Iranian revolution. In the bazaar,

Incredible sewing machines, high and misshapen, as can be seen in the advertisements of nineteenth-century newspapers, were lined up in the stalls. They were adorned with patterns of ivy, climbing plants, and budding flowers, roughly imitating old Persian miniatures. These unfit-for-use Western objects, under the sign of an obsolete Orient, all bore the inscription: "Made in South Korea" (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 195).

It is the will for modernism, an already expired concept in Europe and has never been a property and the product of Europe seems to be surreal and archaic to Foucault. The shah unfortunately and obliviously adopted this archaic view; he aspired to realize an old-fashioned dream and tried to ward it by a corrupt and despotic system despite the dynamic and 'modern' forces of his own country. It is the "dead weight of modernity" the people in Iran is trying to lift. For this reason, he writes, "it is perhaps the first great insurrection against global systems, the form of revolt that is the most modern and the most insane" (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 222).

From Foucault's perspective, the Iranian movement is like witnessing the coming back of spirit into a long-dead body and watching its resurrection. Hence, the title of one of the articles: *Iran: The Spirit of a World without Spirit* (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 250-60). He reminds Marx's famous statement "religion is the opium of the people" several times and argues that this assertion is not relevant for Islam, especially Shi'ism. For him Islam is not simply a religion, but an entire way of life, an adherence to a history and a civilization (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 241). The religion is a form of expression and a mode of social relations, "something that allows one to be listened to by others and to yearn for something with them at the same time as they yearn for it" (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 202-203). He presents how Shi'ism historically functioned in enabling national unity, maintaining political consciousness and more importantly in inciting a political awakening. The Shi'ite religion operated as a force that mobilizes common people and transforms the discontent, hatred, misery, and despair of thousands into a collective will. For this reason, for Foucault Islam is a form of

“political spirituality” that has been forgotten since the Renaissance and the great crisis of Christianity in the western contexts (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 209). The desire to make Islam as the foundation of social and political life, on the other hand, is an expression of a will to change oneself radically; it is a desire to renew an entire existence. This is what makes Islam and the revolt revolutionary (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 255).

In Foucault’s reading of the Iranian revolution, it is possible to assess enchantment felt by both the spectators and the participants. While he is depicting revolution, Foucault narrates the story as if a magic spell was cast and the Iranian people in their ecstatic moods are living a magical moment. When one reads Arendt’s depiction of the Hungarian revolt, for instance, one can sense that her language implies the breaking of a spell. She writes, “it was as though ideology, of whatever shade and brand, had simply been wiped out of existence and memory the moment the people, intellectuals and workers, communists and non-communists, found themselves together in the streets fighting for freedom” (Arendt, 1958: 27).

For Afary and Anderson (2005), the Iranian Revolution is an event that constitutes a turning point for Foucault who in the late 1970s was shifting his emphasis from the analysis of power to the question of subject and the issue of ethics. Afary and Anderson (2005) argue that Foucault’s will to explore alternative forms of existence and relations in non-Christian eras and contexts led him to develop an interest in and sympathy for the Iranian Revolution. His “Nietzschean-Heideggerian” impulse that critiqued the mediocrity and spuriousness of modernity give way to an Orientalist and spiritualist reading of

the spectacle, the role of religion and the motives of the mullahs. The authors conclude that Foucault was particularly impressed with the fearless will to die in Shi'ite martyrdom and with the religious rituals of penitence<sup>120</sup> (Afary and Anderson, 2005).

Concerning the great role the Iranian Revolution played in Foucault's theoretical-critical work some scholars challenge Afary and Anderson. A scholar (Keating, 1997: 194), for instance, argues that despite his lack of interest and knowledge in Iran before the Revolution, Foucault became interested because the Revolution seems to exemplify "a mode of resistance that had resonances throughout his work but which he had been developing as the necessary corollary of the conception of power that he had developed in the 1970s".

Almond, again, reminds us that Foucault's first and long encounter with the East did take place during his stay in Tunisia between 1966 and 1968. Having witnessed the Tunisian Marxist student uprising, Foucault stated that despite the lack of a Marxist theoretical approach he is impressed with the 'violence', 'radical intensity' and 'impressive momentum' of the actions of the Tunisian students (Foucault, in Almond, 2007:). On this Almond (2007) writes,

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<sup>120</sup> The religious rituals of penitence are the Shi'ite Ashura ceremonies that are held every year for ten days in the month of Muharram. During these ceremonies the Shiites mourn for the murdering of Husain in 680 AD in Kerbela and commemorate the 'martyrs' i.e. Husain, his family and his supporters by Yazid. Husain was the grandson of the prophet Muhammad and son of Ali the fourth Caliph (successor to the prophet) and also the prophet's last direct male descendant. Ali's immediate succession of the prophet upon his death was challenged and prevented by a sect of Islamic community. The controversy over the caliphate gave way to a clash that between Sunnis and Shiites and from the Shi'ite perspective to the illegitimate dominance of the Sunnis for centuries. The Husain's death, in this sense, "sealed this illegitimate rule and decency. The Ashura ritual, then aims to simulate Husain's and his supporters suffering and their death at Kerbela by suffering physical pain indicted by the participants themselves by rhythmically beating their breasts or foreheads. Bleeding because of the wounds, weeping and passing outs are also part of these rituals. While for the Shiites suffering and martyrdom are part of the belief, for the Sunnis inflicting pain and suffering to one's body is not approved.

Whereas for their European counterparts, Marxism was simply ‘a better way of analyzing reality’, for the student movements Foucault witnessed in Tunisia it constituted ‘a kind of moral energy, wholly remarkable’. A Tunisian *politics of the heart* rather than the *head* seems to have impressed a Foucault weary of the endless armchair intellectualizing he had left behind in Paris (*emphasis mine*).

Therefore, the ‘political spirituality’ Foucault praises in Iran, in fact, refers to a certain mood, a form of existence he already witnessed and admired in Middle East. In Iran, this mood unfolds itself in the politicization of people around Islam. In the Tunisian case, it was channeled through Marxism. In both cases, unification was impressive. As opposed to the individualist concerns of the West, the collectivities were formed easily. Acts were radical, intense and dramatic. In his search for a ‘heart’, which he assessed to be put under the command of the ‘head’ in the West Foucault might have attributed Islam and Shi’ism a primary role. His approach in some way might romanticize the dynamics he witnessed in Iran. Further, his knowledge about mullahs and Shi’ism is probably flawed. Yet still, isolating Iranian case from his general interest in religion or labeling him an Orientalist<sup>121</sup> might obscure his general theoretical critique.

Thence, while having some reservations about the argument that the Iranian Revolution plays a transformative role in the theorist’s intellectual route and that there is a “Nietzschean-Heidegerian Orientalist subtext” in his

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<sup>121</sup> In his *The New Orientalists, Postmodern Representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard*, similar to Afary and Anderson (2005) Almond (2007) too argues that Foucault’s observations on Iranian Revolution are somehow shaped by Nietzsche and his sympathetic reading of Islam. Yet this reading, he notes, is part of Nietzsche’s critique of European modernity and employed for the development of a modern critique. Both Nietzsche’s and Foucault’s essentialization of the West, that is their Occidentalism plays effective role in their affective relationship with the East, and this is why theirs can be read as a peculiar form of Orientalism. See: Almond, Ian. 2007. *The New Orientalists, Postmodern Representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard*. I. B. Tauris: London New York.

interpretation along with some other scholars (for instance Honig, 2008; Keating, 1997), I agree with the idea of reading Foucault's views on Iran in line with his ethico-political concerns.

In terms of their concentration, Foucault's historiographies are divided in three periods: archaeology, genealogy and as Afary and Anderson (2005) note, ethics. Archeology is the term he used for his research he wants to differentiate from both social history, which analyzes society and from analysis of discourses, which like a philosophical hermeneutics attempts to interpret what has been said or decipher which wouldn't have been said. It deals with a set of discourses. Despite being in the terrain of knowledge, for Foucault discourses has to be analyzed as an event or as a set of events with a particular focus on their special effects that are not similar to, for instance, economic events, law or demographical change. Borrowed from Nietzsche, the genealogical approach, on the other hand refers to a methodology that refutes the idea of progressive and linear history. Genealogy conceptualizes history as a scene of power struggles; it looks for continuities and discontinuities in power relations, and traces the visible effects of such struggles. In his later works, Foucault announced that he had always been interested in the 'subject' and argued that knowledge, power and ethics are three axes that are being constitutive of the subject. Having studied the impact of knowledge and power, he shifts emphasis to ethics in 1980s, dealt within history of sexuality. The subject of ethics refers to the study of a mode of self-formation, the way we, as subjects, fashion our freedom and know our limits. In this endeavor, Foucault attempts to understand the practices one performs on oneself to produce, monitor, regulate and transform the self (Foucault, 1978). For him limits are inescapably part of the



idea and reality of freedom because the encounter with the limits creates the opportunity of trespassing, violating and transgressing them. The ‘limit experiences’, e.g. walking on the thin line between life and death, wandering into the domain of insanity, irrationality, pain or pleasure, in this sense, become important.

In a short essay, *Lives of Anonymous Men*, written in 1977 as an introduction to a collection of stories from the early-18th-century records of internment of anonymous women and men, Foucault explains his attraction to these narratives for their vividness. “They constitute the instrument of a retaliation, the weapon of a hatred, an episode in a battle, the gesticulation of a despair or a jealousy, an entreaty of an order” (Foucault, 2000:160). In the misfortunes of these petty people, in their passions, loves and hatreds, he argues it is possible to see “something gay and ordinary in comparison with what is usually deemed worthy of being recounted” (Foucault, 2000:160). Their stories include “the most intense point of a life the point where its energy is concentrated...where it comes up against power, struggles with it...[and]... attempts to use its forces and to evade its traps.” (Foucault, 2000:162). Despite their mundanity “propelled by a violence, an energy, an excess expresses in malice, vileness, baseness, obstinacy, or ill-fortune” the lives of these people gave in their fellows a sort of appalling or pitiful grandeur. (Foucault, 2000:161).

Similarly, he was impressed with the story of Pierre Rivière, who after killing his mother, sister and brother in rural France in the 1830s left a memoir of more than a hundred pages. Foucault (1982) published a dossier on the case to show that when in 1830s Rivière’s case was handled by the judiciary and the

newly emerging discipline of psychiatry around the question of sanity. The memoirs revealed that there is rationality behind an insane crime. Furthermore, they also asserted that the frontier between rationality and madness could indeed be trespassed. Now, this is a challenge to the tradition of thought, which conceptualizes reason and violence in oppositional terms. As modern individuals, we should accept the fact that we find particular relief when we can classify a violent act, a murderous crime or a terrorist activity as an act of insanity, prompted by malevolency or some sort of abnormality. The difficulty emerges when we face the presence of a rational motive, when we are required to understand the rationality. We face this dilemma when we give up the modernist claim to or aspiration for normativity.

When we go back to the limit experiences, we see that in his analysis of the Iranian case Foucault pays a particular emphasis on the protestors' lack of fear in the face of violence and death as well. In an interview with Claire Brière and Pierre Blanchet, he expressed his surprise to find happy rather than terrorized people when he arrived in Iran immediately after the Black Friday, when a great number of people were killed by the Shah's regime<sup>122</sup> (Foucault, 1979 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 257). It is also possible to sense the idea of 'enchantment' in this paragraph, I have mentioned before.

There was an absence of fear and an intensity of courage, or rather, the intensity that people were capable of when danger, though still not removed, had already been transcended. In their revolution, they had already transcended the danger posed by the machine-gun that constantly faced all of them.

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<sup>122</sup> The Black Friday refers to the protests of September 8 in 1978. The number of killings, however, is not certain. For Foucault it was four thousand (Foucault, 1979 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 257) but this might be an information he received from the clerics in Iran. Afary and Anderson (2005) notes the number of killing to be at least two hundred and fifty.

He was also surprised to see the long succession of festivities and mourning, thousands of men invoking god's name in the streets, mullahs calling people to revolt and prayer and rituals of commemoration of martyrs. This was quite contrary to the case with Iranians he knew in Paris. He states that he was struck by their fear from agents of SAVAK, the secret police of Shah, for keeping company with left-wing people, for reading certain books, and many other things (Foucault, 1979 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 256-257). What did make the prior so brave and the latter so timid? The difference in their religious beliefs, degree of religiosity or their being in different geographical location, socio-political contexts? Although it is not possible to find an explanation on this, we can assume that the docility Foucault witnessed in western contexts was what caused his fascination with the Iranian protestors. Does this, however, mean that he exalts violence? Considering the impasse he attributes to Kantian philosophy, is it possible to reason that he prefers violence/destruction to order/reason?

To these questions, many including Afary and Anderson (2005) respond positively. This is because, Honig (2008) argues they identify Foucault's notion of political spirituality with premodernity, his disdain for judicial order, and praise for willingness to risk life would mean as part of his anti-westernism and his personal interests. In my opinion, however, reading Foucault's interest in limit experiences as a glorification of violence, pain and death or arguing that he admires Shi'ites for their 'sodomasochistic' tendencies would be reductionist. Rather, one can claim that he celebrates the overcoming of the fear by the Iranian people, their courage to stand up against the pain, violence and death the Shah's military and police forces inflict upon them. It is not the will to

violence but the will to resist violence, the rejection of docility and servitude he sees as a radical element.

The impulse by which a single individual, a group, a minority, or an entire people says, 'I will no longer obey', and throws the risk of their life in the face of an authority they consider unjust seems to me to be something irreducible ... People do revolt; that is a fact, and that is how subjectivity (not that of great men, but that of anyone) is brought into history, breathing life into it (Foucault, 1979 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 263) .

It is the stubborn rejection of the regime by a collective and their hope for the coming of a new order.<sup>123</sup> It is like the waiting for the 'divine violence' both Benjamin and Žižek called for a revolution to take place in the third chapter. He writes,

Around 90 percent of the Iranians are Shi'ites. They await the return of the Twelfth Imam, who will create the reign of the true order of Islam in earth. While this creed does not announce each day that the great event will occur tomorrow, neither does it accept indefinitely all the misery of the world. When I met Ayatollah Shariatmadari (he is undoubtedly the highest spiritual authority in Iran today), one of the first sentences he uttered to me was: 'We are waiting for the Mahdi, but each day we fight for a good government.' Shi'ism, in the face of the established powers, arms the faithful with an unremitting restlessness. It breathes into them an ardor wherein the political and the religious lie side by side (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 201).

To the question that can be possibly directed to the mullahs which asks whether Islam by calling the faithful to battle against the Shah and the Americans and regularly commemorating the martyrs, is profoundly fascinated with death or not or, again, is it more focused on death than life, on martyrdom than on victory Foucault himself provides a response:

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<sup>123</sup> This point was underlined by Foucault in his open letter published in April 1979 in *Le Nouvel Observateur* addressing Mehdi Bazargan, who was a leader of the National Front, a coalition of secular and religious factions and became the Prime Minister until 1979 February.

What preoccupies you, you Westerners, is death. You ask her to detach you from life, and she teaches you how to give up. As for us, we care about the dead, because they attach us to life. We hold out our hands to them in order for them to link us to the permanent obligation of justice. They speak to us of right and of the struggle that is necessary for right to triumph (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 201).

“Each one staked his life and his death!” (Foucault, 1979 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 265), he writes. This, he repeats several times. Even in his writings when he was disappointed with the establishment of the government of mullahs especially the quick replacement of the violence of the Shah’s regime with the violence of Ayatollah, he reminds himself, the mullahs and the readers the revolutionary aspect of the event. Foucault was certainly disappointed with the ending of the Revolution. Upon witnessing the summary trials and the hasty executions of oppositions and penned a public letter addressing Mehdi Bazargan, who was a leader in the revolutionary movement and became Prime Minister for a couple of months after the foundation of the Islamic government. In the letter, he expressed his complaints about the violence of the newly founded Ayatollah regime. He wrote “a spiritual dimension, you said, pervaded the revolt of a people where each one risked everything for an entirely different world...It was not the desire to be ruled by a “government of mullahs” (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 261). Nevertheless, as he had asserted before, nobody knew what he or she wanted except his or her strong will to Shah’s leave.

Well then, we might ask, how is it possible to understand the revolution? Why there is a need to reflect on the meaning, role and the possibility of revolution? Is there a revolution anymore? What role could the intellectual play

in the face of revolution? How can s/he narrate about it? What should be the purpose of such praxis? What kind of a judgment can s/he pass? On what grounds one should praise and approve an upheaval? Is it possible to make a distinction, as Arendt did, between a good and bad revolution? What kind of a revolution do we want? Finally, as Foucault reminds, is it really so desirable, the revolution? These are questions, the answers of which are hard to find within this essay, some of them however seem to be on both Arendt's and Foucault's minds when they were witnessing and reflecting on political developments. The following then is an attempt to review their idea on the role of the intellectual as a participator and interpreter of political events.

## **8.2. What is Revolution? Is it Useless to Revolt? Marking the Contours of the Position of Ambivalence**

The age of revolution has constituted a gigantic effort to acclimate uprisings within a rational and controllable history... By thus repatriating revolt into the discourse of revolution, it was said, the uprising would appear in all its truth and continue to its true conclusion. This was a marvelous promise. Some will say that the uprising thus found itself colonized by *realpolitik*. Others will say that the dimension of a rational history was opened to it. I prefer the question that Horkheimer used to ask, a *naïve* question, and a little feverish: "But is it really so desirable, this revolution?" (Foucault, 1979 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 264).

At the beginning of chapter eight I have asserted that the experience of the French Revolution has given a dual meaning to the concept of revolution; it is conceptualized both as a progressive and destructive force. It was violent, hence fearsome. It was emancipating, hence hopeful. Within this framework, however, I have argued that the fear of violence inflicted many of

Enlightenment thinkers' views on revolution and even at their most radical moments, they do ponder on the possibility of overcoming revolution. The need for an order and the emphasis on reason outweighed the will to change and liberty from constraints. We have seen that this was a problematic Arendt addresses in her work too. She attempted to overcome the problem of violence and the fear by assessing the mistakes in revolutionary tradition and to find a 'best practice', an example of 'good' revolution. Her enterprise is characterized with the effort of dissociating the link between revolution and violence by pointing out the distortions made in the conception of political action. We have seen the conceptualization of action within the framework of labor and work albeit in different ways end up with violence. A second point concerns the distinction she has drawn between liberation and freedom.

When in 1980s Foucault gave seminars on Kant's writings on Enlightenment, this aroused a shock on the side of many who viewed Foucault's works to be contrary and hostile to Kantian philosophy. In these seminars, Foucault interrogated the meaning of Enlightenment, its relation with revolution and the role of the intellectual and even argued that his work can be located within the Kantian tradition. In these seminars, he noted the perplexity caused by the French Revolution and asserted the spectacle gave way to an impasse for the philosophers. The perplexity unfolds itself as the problem of Reason and Revolution with which the Kantian philosophy has to deal in the following centuries. He (Foucault, 2007: 94) writes,

The question of the *Aufklärung*, or of reason, as a historical problem has in a more or less occult way traversed all philosophical thought from Kant until now. The flip side of the actuality that Kant encountered was the Revolution: the Revolution both as an event, as rupture and upheaval in history, as a failure, also as a value, as the

sign of a predisposition that operates in history and in the progress of the human species.

Despite his sympathy towards the French Revolution, Kant faced the paradox of the will to establish and to destruct of an order. Arendt too addresses this paradox when she discusses the question of the foundation of an order. The authority and the legitimacy of a political order cannot be sustained with reference to transcendental sources anymore; but it should be formulated in such a way that can provide a ground for a valid and stable structure to prevent and sustain revolution. Having equated revolutionary spirit with the will for freedom Arendt like Kant faced the challenge of stabilizing that ‘spirit’ without domesticating or alienating it within a political order. This is an impasse, Foucault argues and it led Kant to limit his critical project with epistemological realm that is the search for the conditions of truth, thereby losing its political relevance. For Foucault (2007: 94), following this line a tradition of philosophy, the “analytic of truth” defined and developed from the nineteenth century on and has looked for the conditions and possibilities of reaching true knowledge.

However, there is another kind of critical interrogation that can be traced from the Kantian thinking. This critical tradition, which Foucault names as the “ontology of the present” asks for the meaning of the present. It does not dwell into the problem of knowledge, but to that of the relations of power. It does not take the form of an investigation into legitimacy, but as something he calls an examination of “eventualization” (*evenementialisation*) (Foucault, 2007: 59). It tries to locate the subject in question within a historical context, aims to understand the conditions that produced that particular context and looks for the possibilities of transformation. What differentiates the ‘ontology of the present’



from an ‘analytics of truth’ is the awareness of being constituted by the history and the attitude, which permanently questions one’s relationship with oneself, with others and with authority. It is this form of philosophy, which runs from Hegel to the Frankfurt School, passing through Nietzsche, Max Weber and so on Foucault puts himself within.

Though being linked with Enlightenment and Revolution, he takes note that this certain mode of thinking; the critical attitude emerged in the fifteenth century in the form of suspicion. The suspicion did not mean a total negation of a domain of knowledge or denial of a normative universe, however. It was limited to specific practices where one can grasp the possibility and desirability of change. In his *Governmentality* lectures at the Collège de France, Foucault points out that a process that was concerned with “subjugating individuals in the very reality of a social practice by mechanisms of power that appeal to truth” expanded since the sixteenth century in Europe.

Within this context, as I have already presented in chapter eight, Foucault argues that productive rather than restrictive forms of power have become the hallmark of Enlightenment. Traditional, visible and violent forms of power were abandoned and replaced by more subtle “technologies of subjection”, which are more effective increasingly meshed, minute, and disciplinary than brute punishment. Thence, one can say that the revolutionary violence, feared by the modern philosophers was eliminated with the establishment of the reign of reason. In Foucault’s view, the Enlightenment, albeit discovering the liberties and despite its emancipatory claims invented the disciplines (Foucault, 1977a, 222; Afary and Anderson, 2005: 15). Again, he contends, unlike the claims of modern philosophy, knowledge has been linked

to power by disciplines such as psychiatry or medicine and they operate on lives of individuals with reference to scientific truths. The modern individual is imagined, produced, disciplined and reproduced *via* a web of institutions of normalizations.<sup>124</sup> The body has become the site of the functioning of these power and knowledge mechanisms.

Complementing this analysis (and in line with the famous argument that can be simply put as the inevitability of resistance in the presence of power), Foucault points out that a movement of critique by “which the subject gives itself a right to question the truth concerning its power effects and to question power about its discourses of truth” emerged in western societies (Foucault, 2007: 47). This form of critique historically became effective in three domains: a biblical critique conducted the search for the truth in scripture in the domain of religion. At the level of government, critique was carried out for the restriction upon the sovereign powers, and it led to the question of the limits of the right to govern. Within the domain of authority, finally, there appeared a resistance to the authority’s claim to truth (Foucault, 2007: 45-47). This attitude was occupied with the question ‘how not to be governed like that?’ It was in the form of a will not to be governed by those rules, by that particular ruler or government. Reformulating Kant’s term “voluntary servitude”<sup>125</sup> used in the definition of Enlightenment, Foucault names his critique as an ‘art of voluntary inservitude’ (Foucault, 2007: 47). In this sense, this historico-political attitude

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<sup>124</sup> “In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault (1961) argued that in Western Europe at the time of the Renaissance, madness was a mundane fact of life and was even endowed with a certain respect” madness a gate to imagination and even truth as opposed to reason. “Beginning with the seventeenth century, the insane were incarcerated, tortured, and tormented. During and after the French Revolution, Foucault argued, the physical torment lessened but was replaced with a psychological one” (Afarly and Anderson, 2005: 22).

<sup>125</sup> It has been also noted that the notion of “voluntary servitude” was used by Etienne de La Boétie’s political tract of 1550, *Le Discours de la Servitude Volontaire* will.

was not absolutist but particular, not emancipatory but transgressive; it was not even revolutionary but experimental. It attempted to challenge the borders, existing limits, norms and rules. It could work as a reformative or transformative force or might give way to the trespassing or destruction of the borders, that is with a revolution.

For Foucault ‘revolution’ signifies an event, which can be called as *Entstehung* (emergence) within the framework of Foucault’s Nietzsche inspired historical analysis. In his essay (1977) *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* while presenting the contours of his genealogy Foucault locates it as opposed to traditional historiography and challenges the latter’s reference to the concepts of rationality, causality and linearity. Accordingly, the traditional/modern history puts an emphasis on an *arche* (origin) and a *telos* (end and aim) in explaining events and “attempts to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities... ‘that which was already there’” (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984: 78). The genealogical approach, on the other hand, is defined as the study of *Herkunft* (descent) and *Entstehung* (emergence).

From a rather organicist perspective of history in Arendt’s terms, the analysis of *Herkunft* involves a consideration of race or social type; but rather than looking for ‘essential’ features of a particular identity, *Herkunft* “seeks the subtle, singular, and subindividual marks that might possibly intersect in them to form a network that is difficult to unravel. Far from being a category of resemblance, this origin allows the sorting out of different traits” (Foucault, 1977: 148). Hence, as opposed to the assumptions of continuity within history, to the presumption that it rises on solid grounds and progresses towards the

fulfillment of an end at the end, Foucault argues that genealogy aims to disturb “what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself” (Foucault, 1977: 148). Within this scheme, *Enstehung* designates a place of confrontation, a non-common space where the endless play of dominations takes place (Foucault, 1977: 150). He writes, “the domination of certain men over others leads to the differentiation of values” for instance “class domination generates the idea of liberty; and the forceful appropriation of things necessary to survival and the imposition of a duration not intrinsic to them account for the origin of logic” (Foucault, 1977: 151). This relationship of domination is continuous, like an unending wrestling its rounds are won by a party, then by some else and the marks of the struggle can be traced in languages, things and even on bodies.

Revolution, in this sense, is an event, which opens the possibility of challenging the domination of certain men over others. It designates the time when confrontation of forces become explicit, intense, and somehow equal. Revolution operates as the means whereby new forms of subjectivities are introduced into history. Resembling Walter Benjamin who argues that it is not possible to eschew from violence in revolutionary moments and in fact, violence is inscribed in any worldly law and political order, Foucault thinks that it is wrong to search for the possibility of non-violence. He writes (1977: 151)

Following traditional beliefs, it would be false to think that total war exhausts itself in its own contradictions and ends by renouncing violence and submitting to civil laws. On the contrary, the law is a calculated and relentless pleasure, delight in the promised blood, which permits the perpetual instigation of new dominations and the staging of meticulously repeated scenes of violence.

In this sense, Foucault seems to be immune to the fear from violence, which inflicts the thoughts of Enlightenment philosophers like Kant and Hegel and their paradoxical views on revolution. He is not a fan or an ardent supporter of order per se. It is not possible to argue that for him freedom is experienced in a domain, secured by borders or walls or among peers who were linked to each other with the ropes of politics as it is the case for Arendt. Quite the contrary, for him 'freedom' is an experiment of challenging, pushing these limits, trespassing borders or teasing or seducing the border patrols. This will to resist, the attempt to push or pull, to bend or break the rules, boundaries and the claim to an absolute truth, a totality is what secures the continuity of human life.

If societies persist and survive, that is to say if power in these societies is not "absolutely absolute," it is because behind all the consent and the coercion, beyond the threats, the violence, and the persuasion, there is the possibility of this moment where life cannot be exchanged, where power becomes powerless, and where, in front of the gallows and the machine guns, men rise up (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 263-4).

Furthermore, this moment of revolt, when a lone man, a group, a minority, or an entire people stand up and say, "I will no longer obey' and are willing to risk their lives in the face of a power that they believe to be unjust" is 'irreducible'. "No power is capable of making it absolutely impossible. The moment of revolution, in that sense, is the intensification of power relations, a scratch Warsaw will always have its ghetto in revolt and its sewers populated with insurgents" (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 263).

For this reason, Foucault does not seem to be concerned with the enterprise of judging the revolution. He does not respond to the question of whether a certain revolt is progressive or whether as a form of resistance it is

emancipating or not. Also, rather than determining “what part of the Revolution should be retained and set up as a model”, he says the task of the philosopher/historian/intellectual

is to know what is to be done with that will to revolution, that ‘enthusiasm’ for the Revolution, which is quite different from the revolutionary enterprise itself. “What is the *Aufklärung*?” and “What to do with the will for revolution?” together define the field of philosophical questioning that is concerned with what we are in our present (Foucault, 2007: 94).

When Kant addresses the questions “What is Enlightenment?” (1784) and “What is Revolution” (1798) his response exemplify the type of philosophy Foucault labels as ‘ontology of the present’ I have mentioned before. To the question, whether the French Revolution is a sign of progress or not Kant responded differently than expected. He says, “it matters little...if the revolution of a people full of spirit that we have seen occur in our day...succeeds or fails, it matters little if it accumulates misery and atrocity, if it accumulates them to the point where a sensible man who would do it over again with the hope of bringing it to fruition would never consider, though, trying it out at this price” (Kant, in Foucault, 2007: 90). Kant’s appreciation of the enthusiasm and of the reviving spirit, which emerged with Revolution, implies a subjective position. It denotes a preoccupation with the specificities of the present as opposed to ahistorical universals and as part of a larger community.

In ‘*What is Critique?*’ Foucault (1978:387) says, “we must not forget that this is a newspaper article.” This is significant for it refers to a moment when Kant, the philosopher takes off his robe sewed for grand tasks, cares for a current phenomenon and speaks to the public via a newspaper in order to say something that is for him philosophically and politically interesting. The

question Kant asks himself - revolves around understanding his relationship with the present, and it is different from the question of how one belongs to a doctrine or tradition. This is not a search for universal categories but for an immediate environment, context and group, and an idea of us. Foucault argues that the philosopher thus confronts the question of how he belongs to this 'us'. This point is important for Foucault in terms of his proposition on the role of intellectual.

Secondly, ever since the French Revolution, he argues, "the intellectual has played the role of a prophet, a foreteller of the future society. In other words, the intellectual was one whose responsibility was to deal with general and universal principles for all of humanity" (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005:184). However, during the French Revolution, at that particular instant Kant did not engage with such concerns. His main concern was to understand the present, to comprehend what was going on and to share the whole experience. For him, as an intellectual, it is not possible to write history or predict the future. He defines his ethics as "antistrategic" (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 267) which cannot be reduced to the question of political success. A strategist is one who takes into account the importance of a "particular death, a particular cry, a particular uprising...in relation to the great necessity of the whole", and also calculates the importance of that particular event to herself/himself with reference to a general principle. This attitude, he argues, characterizes his position *vis-à-vis* that particular person rather than his identity as a politician, a historian, a revolutionary, or someone who supports the Shah or the Ayatollah. He asserts his "theoretical morality" lies in opposition and argues that his "is 'antistrategic'... [it is]...respectful when

singularity rises up, and intransigent when power infringes on the universal”. As an intellectual, he says, “I would like to try to grasp what is happening right now, because these days nothing is finished, and the dice are still being rolled. It is perhaps this that is the work of a journalist, but it is true that I am nothing but a neophyte” (Foucault, 1978 in Afary and Anderson, 2005: 220).

A while ago, I have argued that '68 events are significant for Foucault and other theorists for they made them to think about the relationship between theory and practice and the role of the intellectual. In an interview with Gilles Deleuze, Foucault argued

political involvement of the intellectual was traditionally the product of two different aspects of his activity: his position as an intellectual in bourgeois society, in the system of capitalist production and within the ideology it produces or imposes (his exploitation, poverty, rejection, persecution, the accusations of subversive activity, immorality, etc); and his proper discourse to the extent that it revealed a particular truth, that it disclosed political relationships where they were unsuspected. These two forms of politicization did not exclude each other, but, being of a different order, neither did they coincide (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977a: 207).

While these two positions were fused at certain historical instances such as “after 1848, after the Commune, after 1940” once the new system is established the intellectual was sent to exile, rejected by the system and stayed somehow outside of the conventional power relations again. In the 1968 upheavals, Foucault argues, “the intellectual discovered that the masses no longer need him to gain knowledge.” The masses had their own notion of truth, their opinions and political judgments even “far better than” the intellectual and “they are certainly capable of expressing themselves” (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977a: 207). This transformation of the role of the intellectual, her conception



at public level is also due to the transformations, as he presents in his works, in the establishment and the functioning of power relations within modern societies. As I have already shown, modern forms of power denote diffused, enmeshed and complex form of relations produced and implemented in every type of relations, which can be transferred to the political rationality as a governing mentality in case of a need. The economic rationality with concepts like efficiency, effectiveness has been adopted by the political discourse easily in the last thirty years. Within this context, every individual and the intellectual become one of the active agents of the system engendering its reproduction and transformation. For this reason, she cannot place herself/himself “somewhat ahead and to the side’ in order to express the stifled truth of the collectivity” (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977a: 207). Her role becomes now “to struggle against the forms of power that transform her/him into its object and instrument in the sphere of ‘knowledge’, ‘truth’, ‘consciousness’, and ‘discourse’” (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977a: 207). The struggle and the role of the intellectual, Foucault asserts, must be ‘local’, ‘regional and in the form of ‘resistance’ (not ‘universal’, ‘total’ and ‘revolutionary’).

Foucault’s rejection of the traditional role of the intellectual as an enlightening and guiding subject is something Arendt would reject too. As we have seen in the previous chapters, she has a dislike towards the Platonic philosophy and the idea of the philosopher-king that rules over the city with an absolutist and mechanistic view. This being so, she has also directed criticisms towards the modern conception of history, theory and politics, problems in her view are exemplified in the actors’ experience of the French Revolution and in the theorists’ interpretation of the event. This perspective understands history

as a process that imitates the nature's primarily cyclical, rotating, ever-recurring movement. The paradoxical development here is that the conviction that necessity is inherent in the history survived when a rectilinear understanding emerged. The rectilinear conception does not require an eventual revolving back to a previous point but always foresees a move and even progress towards an unknown future. According to Arendt, this idea of historical necessity perplexed the minds of theorists since the beginning of the nineteenth century but it was formulated with the French Revolution and consolidated with the October Revolution. Oddly, she argues, both theorists and revolutionaries have come to believe that the 'History' not their actions played role in the development and proceeding of the events. Such a conception has given way false attributions that might be evaluated as unearthly belief. 'Irresistibility', in this sense, is one of the attributions Arendt finds problematic in revolutionary discourse. She assesses "various metaphors in which the revolution is seen as not the work of men but as an irresistible process, the metaphors of stream and torrent and current" in the discussions of the actors (Arendt, 1963: 42). Such a conception, visibly displayed in the French revolution, in the absence of a factor that could stabilize the events presented the uprising as a natural destructive force whereas in reality it turned into a violent spectacle. She (1963: 42) writes,

for the mighty current of revolution, in the words of Robespierre, was constantly accelerated by the 'crimes of tyranny', on the one side, by the 'progress of liberty', on the other, which inevitably provoked each other, so that movement and counter movement neither balanced nor checked nor arrested each other, but in a mysterious way seemed to add up to one stream of 'progressing violence', flowing in the same direction with an ever-increasing rapidity."

‘Spectacle’, then, becomes an important term to describe the event and the phenomenon of revolution. It denotes the fact that the agents did not see themselves as actors, that they had no control over the course of natural events. It also points out the fallacy of the new type of philosophy that understands the human realm from standpoint of the ‘spectator’ who derived from the French Revolution the lesson more than the actor and believed that the things that took place are required by historical necessity or that Napoleon Bonaparte was “destiny” (Arendt, 1963: 43). Arendt seems to have the Hegelian-Marxist philosophical response in her mind while penning her ideas on the spectator, which epitomizes the problematic attitude that ontologizes the realm of human realms as History, attributing the philosopher the role of revealing the Truth of a certain event and neglecting the importance of actor and action within that event. For Hegel, she thinks, the task of the philosophy was to distinguish the contingent, which is meaningless from the necessary since the latter reveals the absolute and truth in history (Arendt, 1963; Villa, 1996: 67). The philosophical spectator, when looking at the events assumes that there is a rationally necessary progress towards freedom. This progress, like a flood, sweeps everything that stands on its way, and like the Titan Saturn, it devours its own children. The revolution is conceived as if an irresistible, irreversible and uncontrollable force, both the energy it reveals and the tragedy it brings are received with awe and amazement by the philosophers. Such a view minimizes both the role of actor and the spectator, and their capability and responsibility of taking one-step back from the current to reflect upon the courses of events.

Nonetheless, we know that Kant too had a spectatorial account of the French Revolution when he expressed his enthusiastic response to the French

Revolution. We know that he argued that the event was as a clear sign of a moral disposition in humankind in the *Contest of Faculties*. He further argued that violence could be a vehicle for progress in the *Idea for a Universal History* even though such a statement conflicts with his philosophical perspective that forbids any kind of revolt. For Foucault, we have seen, such a conflict is not a problem. In fact, he feels and underlines an affinity with Kant who was perplexed in the face of the French Revolution, affirms his enthusiasm for there is an irreducible character of the will to provoke existing power mechanisms and for the magical impact of the events on the ones who are witnessing its taking place. Foucault chose to focus on the revolutionary moment rather than its ends or means.

The feeling of enthusiasm and the appreciation of the revolutionary spirit is something present in Arendt as well. She considers revolutions as events when political action can be seen in its true form. In fact, she has a conception of a 'spectator' too; this she developed in her late life in the lectures on Kant's political philosophy given at New School for Social Research in 1970 and in the uncompleted section *Judging in the Life of the Mind (Vita Contemplativa)*.

The need to turn the shift to the process of thinking is due to assessment that one of the most tragic problems in modernity (among the rise of the social, the loss of the meaning of freedom, plurality and action, dominance of scientific thinking) is giving up the faculty of 'thinking' i.e. critical engagement with the given form of truths (norms, ideologies) and forming of opinions. She particularly underlines the importance of thinking in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*,

the book she wrote after following Eichmann trial in Israel in 1963.<sup>126</sup> In the *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt had argued that the atrocities of the Nazi regime could only be understood with a notion of ‘radical evil’, which denotes the adoption of evil as a policy. Evil as a policy aimed at making human life superfluous in a systematic manner. Then in 1963, when she confronted Eichmann, who she envisaged to be a person with terrifying and demonic qualities yet turned out to be a quite ordinary man, she changed her mind. She wrote that “the deeds were monstrous, but the doer ... was quite ordinary, commonplace, and neither demonic nor monstrous” (Arendt, 1981: 4). She was also surprised when Eichmann stated that he had lived his life according to the Kantian moral imperative (Arendt, 1994a), which turned out to be reformulation of the categorical imperative as “act in such a way that the Führer, if he knew your action, would approve it” (Arendt, 1994a:136).<sup>127</sup> Having studied Eichmann’s past as well as his behaviors and speeches during the trial she decided that the only specific characteristic one could detect in him is “something entirely negative: it was not stupidity but a curious, quite authentic inability to think”. In a letter, to her old-friend Gershom Scholem<sup>128</sup> she (Arendt, 1978: 250) also writes,

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<sup>126</sup> Adolf Eichmann was one of the officers under the command of Himmler who was responsible with and participated in the organization of the deportations and evacuations of Jews and bringing them to the extermination camps to send them to death. After being captured in Argentina, he was brought to Israel (which was a controversial issue in terms of international jurisdiction rules) and was tried with the accusation of crimes against the Jewish people, against humanity, and of war crimes. For more information, see Arendt, Hannah. 1994a. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Penguin Classics.

<sup>127</sup> Facing Eichmann, Arendt is confronted with the specificity of the general claim she first made in *Origins in Totalitarianism* (1951):the terror of radical evil and total domination is possible through the perversion of the symbolic dimension of the Law, that is, a human being becomes its embodiment, its sovereign will: “In Kant's philosophy, that source [of the law] was practical reason; in Eichmann's household use of him, it was the will of the Fuhrer” (1963, 137)

<sup>128</sup>Gershom Scholem charged Arendt for being a self-hating Jew and ended his friendship with her after the publication of *Eichmann Book*. According to him, Arendt’s depiction of the trial as an international show, her aestheticization of Nazi crimes with her notion of ‘banality of evil’

“I changed my mind and no longer speak of ‘radical evil’.... It is indeed my opinion that evil is never ‘radical’, that it is only extreme, and that it possesses neither depth nor demonic dimension. It can overgrow and lay waste to the whole world precisely because it spreads like a fungus on the surface. It is ‘thought-defying’, as I have said, because thought tries to reach some depth, to go to the roots, and the moment it concerns itself with evil it is frustrated, because there is nothing. That is its ‘banality’. Only the good has depth and can be radical”<sup>129</sup>

Therefore, watching the expansion of the epidemic of thoughtlessness, the inability to think<sup>130</sup> and assessing its relation with evil-doing Arendt comes to the decision to revive the link between politics and philosophy and attempts to make philosophy a politically relevant activity. If it is possible to argue that Foucault’s motive was to strip the intellectual of the assumed ‘privileges’ and ‘responsibilities’ as a servant of History, Arendt’s aim is to provide everyone with the necessary equipment so that they can act and judge responsibly and as the agents of history. We already know that her conception differs from the traditional understanding of history and in some senses overlaps with Foucault’s approach but her aspiration includes normative elements.

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and her remarks that accused Jewish organizations and high-class Jews for collaborating with the Nazis on the provision of the names of lower-class Jews in order to escape the country.

<sup>129</sup> As one scholar (Assy, 1998) notes with ‘banality’ Arendt does not mean ‘commonalty’. The idea of banality does not imply that the evil itself is trivial or common to everybody. On this, at a conference as a response to a question from the audience Arendt says, “You say that I said there is an Eichmann in each one of us. Oh no! There is none in you and none in me! This doesn’t mean that there are not quite a number of Eichmanns. But they look really quite different. I always hated this notion of ‘Eichmann in each one of us’. This is simply not true. This would be as untrue as the opposite that Eichmann is in nobody”. Hannah Arendt. 1979. On Hannah Arendt. In *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*, edited by Melvy A. Hill: 308. See, Assy, Bethania. 1998. Eichmann, the Banality of Evil, and Thinking in Arendt’s Thought, Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy. Boston: Massachusetts.

<sup>130</sup> For Arendt “Inability to think is not stupidity; it can be found in highly intelligent people, and wickedness is hardly its cause, if only because thoughtlessness as well as stupidity are much more frequent phenomena than wickedness. The trouble is precisely that no wicked heart, a relatively rare phenomenon, is necessary to cause great evil. Hence, in Kantian terms, one would need philosophy, the exercise of reason as the faculty of thought, to prevent evil” See Arendt, Hannah. 2005. Responsibility and Judgment. Random House, Inc.

In *Human Condition*, where Arendt depicts action as if it is a theatrical performance in terms of its heroicness, excellence, she asserts that the spectators too are substantive elements of any performance. It is not the actors, who are absorbed by their immediate environment and within the sequence of their actions, but the spectators, who with a broader perspective and vision can reflect in a disinterested manner. Actors, with their capacity for novelty, for new beginnings, also need spectators to make their actions communicable by talking about them, judging them in terms of their excellence and ultimately telling stories about them (Arendt, 1998; Kristeva, 2001). The spectators enable remembrance and meaning, which is a different phenomenon than truth or knowledge. Meaning requires a spatial and historical context and a subject who attributes certain qualities to the matter based on ‘her/his’ historical background and subjective judgement.

The judgment of the spectator “does not tell one how to act” (Arendt, 1992: 44). On this point, Arendt goes to Kant and reformulates his judgment of taste, debated in his *Third Critique* to suggest thinking as a historically situated and politically relevant praxis. Belonging to the domain of aesthetics, taste reveals one’s opinion with a statement like “this painting is beautiful” or “that sculpture is ugly” and denotes a subjective partiality that does not subsume the ‘particular’ under the category of ‘universal’. Furthermore, taste can be shared with others. It is communicable and plural and thus enables to think with an ‘enlarged mentality’ by which she means the ability to consider others’ perspectives and imagine their opinions; in her words “training one’s

imagination to go visiting” (Arendt, 1992: 43).<sup>131</sup> If Eichmann had thought about his actions, the impact of such actions on other people’s lives, if he had conducted a dialogue with himself to think thoroughly about the things he had been doing, he would not commit those crimes or at least would be aware of the nature and scope of his actions. Conceptualizing thinking as a dialogue with oneself, Arendt (1990: 440; 1981) reminds Socrates’ answer. One does not need to ask others why one should not kill even under the condition where nobody could see you. For her, the other voice in you would tell you that it is because by committing murder you would deliver yourself to the company of a murderer as long as you live and no one wants the company of a murderer.<sup>132</sup>

Based on this formulation, we can say that the stage that is the political domain, the actor and the spectator constitutes fundamental elements of politics. The spectator’s capacity to judge the events contribute to the revelation of meaning of an act or event to be shared and discussed with the others. The spectator also engenders remembrance that is history what makes human life humane. The critic, the narrator, or the spectator is not a different person than the actor. “It sits in every actor” (Arendt 1992, 63): spectatorship does not denote another person, but simply a different mode of relating to, or being in the world.

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<sup>131</sup> With this reformulation one scholar argues, “communicability... becomes the true compact of mankind ...not the social contract, which is an idea of reason that still requires external enforcement” (Necula, 2008: 30).

<sup>132</sup> This is a controversial argument. One can question the presence of a voice, which tells one “thou shall not kill” where murder is not defined as a crime by the society and not transmitted to the individual as an evil one should refrain from. The discussion of this statement is beyond of the scope of this essay, however.



**Conclusion:**

Up until now, I have debated the problem of revolution. In this enterprise, my primary aim was to understand its relation with violence in the works of Arendt and Foucault. I have tried to juxtapose both theorists' views with the political tradition as well so that I can present their challenges, and differences.

In the previous chapter, I have discussed Arendt's engagement with the phenomenon of revolution to rescue it from its equation with violence. Upon presenting the distortions made in the meaning of action and political order she introduced a distinction between liberation, breaking free from the present domination and freedom, the establishment of a new political order that sustains plurality and free action. From an Arendtian perspective, the French Revolution succeeded the process of liberation yet failed in the successful foundation of a political order. The American Revolution was successful in both terms but that too lost its political character after the foundation of Republic.

From an Arendtian perspective, one can argue the Iranian Revolution is a movement of liberation; it passed the criteria of a collective action, coming together for the purpose of overthrowing a dictatorship and acting on it. However, she would probably argue, the Revolution failed the test of establishing a political order on the basis of political freedom because the Iranian Republic assumes to be rising on the grounds of an 'absolute truth' and it attempts at regulating the political and social life in line with the dictates of

that ‘absolute truth’. It does not promote plurality and the expression of individual opinions, hence cannot establish freedom.<sup>133</sup>

For Foucault, however, no political order can establish freedom, to put it more correctly: every political order enables freedom in the form of agency. As I have shown, in the western context each subject is located within a power matrix and is an active agent of it. Thus, he contributes to the functioning and reproduction of power. Like Arendt for Foucault, freedom is different from liberation and it is praxis as well. It is something experienced, enjoyed, tried, succeeded or failed. The practice of liberation relates to aesthetics rather than morality or science. The enterprise of working on freedom takes the private sphere at its center and starts from there. Any revolution that breaks out within this context, for Foucault is a peculiar thing to be understood, examined for the possibility of acquiring a different vision on politics. Different from Arendt, therefore, Foucault does not locate freedom in the moment of founding an order. He would probably argue that Arendt, in her final insistence on the necessity of an establishment of an order for a revolution to be successful, locates herself within the camp that fears from revolution. For him, in modern societies we are beyond revolutions. Revolutions are not possible anymore. In this context, modern individuals are left with the choice of pursuing critique, that itchy feeling they have when they encounter with the authorities that tell them how to live like that, diet, exercise, love and die like that. That disturbing

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<sup>133</sup> For Norma Morruzzi, the Iranian Green Movement, which emerged after the controversial presidential elections in 2009 can be considered as a form of political action Arendtian theory would approve. The massive, peaceful, marches across the major cities were coherent in their presentation of a collective political agency and albeit being silent they expressed a very clear message with a multiple, single voice: “Where is my vote?” See, Norma Moruzzi. 2011. Reading Arendt in Iran/ Reading Iran through Arendt: Speech, Action and the Question of Street Politics. Paper presented at Bilkent University, September.

little voice that asks “how not to be governed like that?” is the mood of the critical attitude. The European modernity had exhausted its resources for a revolutionary spirit largely and it, therefore, has become archaic like the sewing machines he had come across in the bazaar in Iran..

It is against this background, he evaluates the Iranian Revolution as the emergence of “political spirituality” that has been forgotten in the western contexts. The desire for conducting a life with reference to Islam, on the other hand, is a desire to renew an entire existence. This is what makes Islam and the revolt revolutionary in his eyes. This is the irreducible will to revolt Foucault likes to embrace. He embraces it without knowing its direction or final destination. This is the ambivalent attitude he defends in his Kant seminars and envisions as the role of the intellectual.

## **CHAPTER IX**

### **CONCLUSION**

Ethnic, religious conflicts, violent outbursts, and civil and international wars have been taking place in many parts of world causing many deaths, casualties, damages and sorrows. The need for reflection on violence is due to the increased scale of the impairments it brings, grief it causes so that ways of reducing it can be searched and implemented.

The aim of this dissertation has been to understand the relationship between violence and politics in political theory. Such a project is necessary because despite a growing number of studies on the topic of violence, I think neither the existing empirical research nor debates that dwell on the denotative or connotative aspects of the term violence can solely settle questions of “What is the relationship between violence and the politics?” Is violence an intrinsic feature of politics or is it outside of it? What counts as violence what counts not? What counts as political violence? Is it possible to view violence as an instrument in politics? Is it possible to justify the use of violence in politics? Is it possible to make a distinction between different forms of violence? Is there a

difference between violence, force or terror? Is it possible to develop a critique of violence? Can we oppose violence and if so on what grounds?

In order to find answer to these questions I have surveyed some of the contemporary political theories. I have labeled the task undertaken as a ‘critique’ of the existing literature on the relation between violence and politics. With the concept of critique, I imply a way of thinking and elaborating on an issue by reviewing existing perspectives, analyzing and sorting them, comparing and finally passing a judgment.

Three chapters outlined three approaches on the relationship between violence and politics in the literature: “the liberal-democratic paradigm”, the critique of the liberal approach that views “violence as a constitutive force in politics” and the “position of ambivalence”.

The liberal-democratic approach is the major paradigm in the literature and the dominant political discourse in contemporary world in the understanding of violence and politics. Constructing politics on the basis of reason, mutual agreement and the exclusion of conflict, this paradigm considers violence as an irrational, exceptional, apolitical and abnormal phenomenon. I have reviewed Habermas and Rawls’s theories as examples of the liberal-democratic paradigm. I have shown that in Rawlsian theory violence is seen as a problem of those who are blinded by comprehensive doctrines and those who lack virtues of civility. In Habermas, violence is seen as a product of the disruption of communication channels. Although Habermas may seem to acknowledge a structural link between political order and violence, his theory I have argued, does not pay attention to the analysis of structural (socio-

economic, historical, political) factors that contribute to the distortion of communication channels in the beginning.

Within this framework, I have argued that the liberal-democratic approach treats violence as an issue of private, social or cultural sphere and in therapeutic terms. The problem of violence against women, for instance, can be considered as a problem of aggressive men or as a cultural malady victimizing women and threatening their individual human rights. The legal framework aims at reducing the damages of violence by punishing the perpetrators, by providing protection to the victims and finally by creating awareness on the unacceptability of violence against women. The issue is never considered politically, however. The patriarchal structure that defines gender roles, constructs unequal gender relations, and produces mechanisms that sustain and reproduce such relations and gendered practices is usually left intact. We have seen that this is the case in the issue of terrorism. Hence, the relationship between violence and politics is non-problematized. This non-problematization extends to the topic of coercive function of the state. While state's monopoly over violence is assumed legitimate and within the framework of law and justice, the problems occurred in reality such as police violence are usually neglected or again marginalized in political debates. The liberal-democratic approach denies other rationalities expressed in forms that are not recognized by the political order and overlook its trespasses such as tortures or state inflicted violence.

The critiques raised by Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, Frantz Fanon and Slavoj Žižek attack these points. Schmitt's theory of decisionism underlines the ever-present possibility of violence in politics and argues that the threat of

violence engenders the vitality of the political. Benjamin's analysis of the law, again, asserts violence to be inherent to any political order. Both the act of founding and the act of the preservation of law include violence. In an attempt to overcome violence in politics, Benjamin proposes an appeal to divine sources and asks for a pure and final violence. Frantz Fanon's attack on western humanism points out the violent functioning of western reason in colonial context. His theory aims at exposing the destructive nature of colonial politics at the physical and psychological levels of the native people. Like Benjamin, Fanon aims at eliminating existing relationship between violence and politics and he proposes the solution to be a revolutionary and emancipatory anti-colonial violence. Slavoj Žižek's critique of the contemporary discourse on violence and terror too points out the necessity of thinking about the systemic violence inherent to the current political and economic system. Nothing is personal, cultural or private in Žižek's account and everything is related to the reproduction of the capitalist political and economic system; hence overthrowing of it can be done either via massive violence or total withdrawal.

As a result, the critique of the liberal-democratic paradigm emphasizes the link between politics and violence in structural or even ontological terms. Except Schmitt who treats ever present possibility of violence necessary for the dynamicity and vitality of politics, theorists of the second position would like to overcome the existing affinity of two. The process of overcoming, however, calls for violence and this violence is not problematized rather promoted and at times celebrated for its emancipatory impact.

It is against this background, I have argued that the liberal-democratic approach and its critique have something in common: they both offer analytic

distinctions between what count as violence and what not and whether violence has a place in politics or not. Their conceptualization of the relationship between violence and politics are in the form of necessary propositions; hence is a postulate of reason (*a priori*). For Habermas and Rawls the definition of politics excludes violence (by naming certain types apolitical or anti-political in nature and by naming one type of violence as the legal use of force). In Schmitt and Benjamin, violence is included within the definition of politics. For Fanon and Žižek, violence is structurally present within politics and necessarily defended for the destruction of politics. They do not offer a critique of their own conceptualizations. The liberal-democratic approach does not conceptualize something like state violence or can suggest a link between violence against women and political structure. The critique raised by the illiberal thinkers like Schmitt and Fanon rejects labeling destructive violence as violence. I have to note that I think both of the theories successfully address the questions I have raised in the beginning of the dissertation: “What is violence and what is not? Does violence have a place in politics or not?” Yet, their responses to the questions are necessary propositions meaning that we have to choose either one or the other as true and take an *a priori* stand—being for or against political violence.

As I have stated in the introduction, exclusion of violence from the political sphere as it has been promoted by the liberal-democratic approach seems naïve and limited in the world we live in. With this, I do not denounce pacifism or reject the ethical preference of non-violence. Yet, I would like to take note the apolitical attitude hinted at the expression of “being against all forms of violence” that rejects facing the reality of violence and the message it



is transmitting to us. A very legitimate cry for 9/11, when formulated as a question asking “why do they hate us so much?” closes the door for discussing the event politically (Butler, 2002c: 177). When the relationship between violence and politics is read with reference to abstract concepts or universal norms without having any reference to the social and historical reality its meaning can be interpreted differently than the intended one. We can condemn perpetrators of violence, label them as irrational people and feel comfortable about ourselves by thinking about ourselves as ‘civilized’, ‘peaceful’ and ‘innocent’ people but the social, economic or political mechanisms that lead to the emergence of violence would not change as long as we do not question them. As Judith Butler (2002c: 177) pointed out, “the cry that ‘there is no excuse for September 11’ has become a means by which to stifle any serious public discussion of how U.S. foreign policy has helped to create a world in which such acts of terror are possible.” Questions like “why do they hate us?” or “what is wrong with them?” defer the responsibility of facing the historicity of violence and its relation to politics.

I have also asserted that the discourse commonly used by resistance movements that reject the evaluation of their acts as violence (defined or applied by the system) should not go without criticism. Any relationship between violence and politics must be questioned in its context and any type of determinism in action or in theory should be resisted. The ‘necessary propositions’ that end up with the formal exclusion of violence from the political or that makes violence the only way to change some things in politics fail to understand violence in politics or politics in violence in a context and in terms of its message.

After outlining main arguments of the two approaches, I have introduced the third approach, which I call as the “position of ambivalence.” This approach, I argue can be characterized by its recognition of the relationship between violence and politics. By accepting that violence can be an aspect of politics as it can be an aspect of every form of relationship, it aims investigating its emergence or sustenance. Violence is understood as a rational and communicative phenomenon and as a means for reaching political ends. The critical engagement with violence and politics denotes analyzing dynamics and rationalities present in specific contexts. Available knowledge, beliefs and assumptions on violence and politics are studied to understand how they define and produce the relationship between the two. Practices and institutions, which contribute to the production, transformation or termination of political violence, are also considered.

My argument is that works of Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault can be considered as exemplary figures of the position of ambivalence. My will to juxtapose the two thinkers derive from a theoretical concern they share and I found valuable for this project. Theoretical reflection understood as a ‘critique’ of certain practices, beliefs and relations is significant for both and the way they treat it differs from the figures I have reviewed in the discussion on the relationship between violence and politics.

For Arendt, the faculty of thinking is distinct from the faculty of cognition and the two are related with reason and intellect respectively (Arendt, 1981: 57). The desire to know and the need for reason are two different impulses; one is looking for certain, essential, irrefutable answers, the other opens up the possibility of imagination, interpretation and judgment. In

Arendt's opinion, thinking is political by implication since it destroys values, theories, and even convictions. It might not be possible to uphold the benefits of thinking but it is still possible to show the effects of non-thinking, which historically has been proved by the experiences of Nazism and Stalinism. To the question "how one could possibly commit evil?" Arendt responds that it is possible with the "absence of thought." In the absence of thinking, people can be easily manipulated by more general structures. Conviction to values does not prevent assimilation; rather, it paves the way for it. Thinking, as Arendt conceives it receives its importance from its capability of questioning the values, beliefs and truth claims. Its significance lies in its potential to challenge, disrupt, and transform the existing order. Although the piece on Judgment was not complete by the time she passed away, we know that she wanted to construct a theory of judgment which is politically relevant—not derived from universal laws or imperatives rather is based on particular, subjective positions that can be shared with others.

A similar concern can be found in Foucault's works. He emphasizes the role of thinking since it enables questioning our relationship with ourselves, the world and with others. With a particular attention to the historical contexts, to the power mechanisms and power relations it is possible to understand the conditions that delineate our limits of knowledge. "Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects it as a problem" (Foucault, 1984: 388). In his late writings when he delivered several lectures on Kant's text, 'What is Enlightenment?' Foucault locates himself within the Kantian critical tradition, which, for him, from the nineteenth century on presented and developed solely

as the ‘analytics of truth’. Another kind of critical interrogation that derives from the Kantian thinking is asking for the meaning of the present, trying to locate the self in a historical context to understand the conditions that produced that context and wonder about the possibilities of transformation, the ‘ontology of the present.’ What differentiates the question of “what is our present” from an analytics of truth is our awareness of being constituted by our history, and the attitude, which permanently questions our relationship with ourselves, with others and with authority. For Foucault this “mode of relating to contemporary reality”; this “way of thinking and feeling”; “acting and behaving”; “that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself a task” is the attitude that he calls the *ethos* of Enlightenment.

In order to dwell more on the possibilities of thoughts Arendt and Foucault invoke with regards to the relationship between violence and politics, I have examined their work and tried laying out the basic elements of the challenge they brought to the liberal-democratic approach and the illiberal-radical view and their understanding of politics and violence. I have conducted the interrogation with a particular focus on power and revolution, two political phenomena linked to violence in the political theory literature. Power, regardless of the way it is defined (either a form of domination or a collective force of a group) constitutes one of the major issues of politics. Furthermore, both Arendt and Foucault avoid reading politics from the lens of law, sovereignty and justice, thence power becomes the major notion to challenge the orthodox understanding of politics. Revolution, on the other hand, designates the constitution of a political order; it refers to the moment of the setting of the main parameters of a political order. The general tendency in the

literature is the association of revolution with violence and destruction. It is the experience and the knowledge of the French Revolution that led to the reflections on the problem of the handling of the possibility revolution, the construction and destruction of a given political order. That particular and historical event constituted a major case based on which universal lessons can be derived. Liberals interpreted it as chaos, try overcoming it by constructing politics around the notions of contract and consensus, and with an emphasis on order. Radicals, on the other hand, embraced contestation and change and aimed to sustain the revolutionary spirit. Revolution becomes an important issue for Arendt and Foucault for both wanted to deal with the question of being either for or against revolution. One of the ways of doing this was taking other historical examples and studying them either singly or in comparison with the primary example, the French Revolution. The intention was not to derive abstract assumptions or finding truths about human nature, politics or revolution but to understand the meaning of revolution.

Foucault's challenge comes from the historical analysis of the relationship between violence and politics. The direct and manifest relationship is replaced with non-violent, indirect yet subterranean networks of power relations. Foucauldian understanding of power points out the ever-present nature of power (ranging from relations with institutions to daily life interactions and to the self) and in that sense, represents a direct attack to the liberal premise of freedom and its exclusion of violence. Absence of violence does not mean freedom; the taming of violence within modern societies engendered establishment of normalizing institutions, disciplines and rationalities where subjectivities are continuously produced and regulated. The

argument that there is a historical relationship between violence and politics would side with thinkers like Schmitt and Benjamin. Yet the point that the link is transformed and even weakened, violence is constituted at the margins of political order and that intermeshed power relations regulate the social, economic and political spheres, would defy the argument that violence is a force capable of a radical change. Foucauldian understanding of power suggests one should look for the possibilities of local resistances rather than massive revolutions.

Arendt's discussion of power and politics aims at assessing the faults she assesses in the political tradition as well. The link between violence and politics is not an ontological one for her; it was engendered by the rise of economic and social concerns and the introduction of instrumental rationality into politics and through hanging on the old beliefs about politics such as sovereignty. Unlike Foucault Arendt provides a normative account of power by viewing it as a process of empowerment and as a product of empowerment. For her power is something that is produced, reproduced and transformed by the subjects as well. It is relational and collective. Power is a transient and fragile entity so formation of it and the implementation of a collective will is something that should be protected and promoted. Yet still, one can argue that the link between violence and politics is kept not absented. If the liberal-democratic approach excludes violence from the political with the arguments of irrationality and marginality, Arendt locates it as constitutively outside of politics: the historical and political context of violence and politics is seen as mutually related and dependent.

She recognizes possible causes for the emergence of violence in human relations or in history. Perception of injustice is one of the reasons of such

emergencies. Circumstances that offend people's notions of justice or conditions that prevents argumentation or speech may lead to violent outbursts and these outbursts may have a therapeutic and restorative function. The strategic usage of violence within politics is again an understandable phenomenon for Arendt because in many instances violence can be an effective means in reaching the ends. It is swift, dramatic and effective. In terms of its impacts, violence has some resemblances with action as well: It operates as an unpredictable, at times expressive and disruptive force in human realm. The problem with is that it needs implements, functions within the framework instrumental rationality, destructive and is generally a silencing force. The circle of violence is a difficult to break and as long as the use of violence prolonged its justification becomes impossible. Arendt's distinction between justification and legitimacy becomes an important criterion. Accordingly, justification implies understanding of the causal dynamics and the emergence of a certain event. Legitimacy, however, is a binding and bonding phenomenon and is related to power, people's will of getting and acting together.

Arendt's comparison of the French Revolution with the American Revolution ends up with the judgment that the latter was successful in establishing a political order while the second failed and turned out to be a violent spectacle. The mistakes in the initiation and interpretation of the French revolution were the emphasis on rupture and novelty, envisioning politics within the framework of technical knowledge and of biological sustenance. Violence was the result of the functioning of these dynamics not the revolution per se. For her, the meaning of a revolution does not lie in the intent of destruction but in the question of construction. Changes or beginnings should

aim being constructive and politically enabling. In her distinction between liberation and freedom, she passes her judgment on the link between violence and politics. Liberation, freeing oneself from domination may be violent and might be justified as well but it is pre-political. Acts including violent ones when they are bounded with necessities, instrumental reasoning, or reflexive judgments cannot be political actions. In that sense, she argues oppositions, liberation wars, acts of terror can be understood, morally justified yet cannot be legitimized.

I have already argued that for Foucault revolution is a dim possibility if not a futile attempt considering his argument that underlines the intermeshed forms of power relations in modern societies. His ideas on the Iranian Revolution, therefore, are based on the implications of this argument but his motive was again to study the event in its singularity. The emphasis in the analysis was on the presence of a “political spirituality” that has been lacking in the western contexts and on the will to conduct a new form of life with reference to a rationality that radically differs from the one that had been ruling until then. Violence of the revolution was not problematized and may be even preferred by Foucault. This was, however, not in the form of an affirmation of violence either. Rather he expressed his fascination with the fearless confrontation with violence. In contrast to the disciplinary societies of the west, the massive and dramatic acts of the Iranians surprised him for its capability of a radical change. This was unexpected. The unexpectedness of the event is embraced by him with a curiosity and even enthusiasm and found expression in his actual writings. When the Iranian Revolution turned into a repressive regime



in the following years he voiced his concerns yet, I think, still hold on to the idea of being open to the possibility of revolution and of violence.

All in all, the position of ambivalence that suggests a contingent proposition with regards to the relationship between violence and politics proposes us to read violence to be an aspect of politics, as it is part of human life. It also proposes the link to be historical so that throughout the history it can be weakened or strengthened; at times violence becomes manifest, at times latent or even absent in politics. Accepting the historicity of the relationship requires us to study and analyze rationalities, power relations and other dynamics playing role not only in the production and in functioning of the relationship between violence and politics but also in the formation of our knowledges, conceptualizations and judgments. As Foucault has pointed out, definitions and interpretations, including the meaning of violence and politics are constituted in power/knowledge networks, and are, therefore, they are matters of contestation and struggle. Every violent event, therefore, can be seen as an invitation for the critique of its relation to politics. Violence in politics, as a moment of crisis can constitute a ground for critique of the epistemological and political order.

The position of ambivalence may also aim passing a judgment in the face of political violence. This judgment is *a posteriori* and can be either singular or generalizable. One can affirm the relationship between violence and politics at a particular time and reject it at another instance. Foucault's nominalist and historicists account, exemplifies a unique judgment in the face of the Iranian Revolution. The criterion he used was the manifestation of critique in its radical form. Arendt's historical analysis recognizes some forms

of violence as morally justified but she aims at going beyond critique. Therefore, she holds on to the phenomenological approach and judges violence in terms of its impact on politics.

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