The End of Power: An argument concerning the conceptual obsolescence of power in contemporary political science and an introduction to dimensionless power

Ricardo Torres

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Department of Government

University of Essex

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The End of Power

Abstract

      This work will attempt to explain what shall be termed a 'mis-understanding' of power: a 'de-conceptualisation' that is both 'non-dimensional' and 'anarchic'. The main arguments are as follows: 1) power is a superfluous 'concept' that is used to explain phenomena that are best served by other concepts or just left alone; 2) power is an anarchic concept that takes on the characteristics of whatever debate it is situated in and, as such, is only speciously useful; 3) power is, as a topic of science, too protean to have any explanatory power; 4) power has become too complex an idea to be scientifically, politically or sociologically utile, but its disparate elements, i.e. those used to define and explain it, are too scientifically, politically and sociologically necessary to discard; 5) terms like 'oppression', 'exploitation', 'control' and the like are not examples of power, nor of powerlessness, but, rather, scientific, social or political modes (of life); and, finally, 6) power is nowhere to be found, in the metaphysical or ontological sense, but it is too essential an 'idea' to abandon altogether. Power, in other words, as a 'lived' and 'phenomenological' human reality, exists as a sort of 'natural' fact.

      In the end, 'power' becomes a place-holder that needs to be abandoned in order to allow any of its enquiries to progress, but the different disciplines that examine 'power' have become so indebted to different terminologies and conceptualisations of power that they are unable to renounce it. Due to the nature of said 'de-conceptualisation', it is not something that can be 'proven', but only 'arrived at' via an analysis, and de-construction, of different theories of power. Furthermore, the process, of 'conceptualisation' itself, needs to be dealt with, in order to understand the perniciousness of 'the need for theory/concept'.

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I. Introduction

> When it comes to the concept of power, theoretical chaos still reigns. While the existence of the phenomenon itself cannot be doubted, the concept remains altogether ambiguous. For some, it means repression; for others, it is a constructive element in communication. Legal, political and sociological notions of power remain unreconciled. Power is sometimes associated with freedom, sometimes with coercion. For some power is based on common action, for others on struggle. Some draw a sharp line between power and violence. For others, violence is just a more extreme form of power. At one moment power is associated with the law, at another with arbitrariness.[1]

This work takes, as its premise, the idea that, as Byung-Chul Han puts it, "[when] it comes to power, theoretical chaos still reigns".[2] The premise is that contemporary and modern theories of power leave the concept of power in an "altogether ambiguous"[3] place where, in certain situations and under certain conditions, power means one thing and, in other situations and under a different set of conditions, power means something entirely different. These discrepancies, variable interpretations and differentiations in explanatory power are borne from several theoretical dilemmas, but, primarily, three: conceptual polysemy, logical casuistry and, more simply, a general (misguided) reliance on inductive and deductive reasoning, over abductive. These will be explained in more detail, further on, but, in summary, these are: 1) a surfeit of definitions for the concept *power*, throughout the social sciences, which may or may not be justified, but, unquestionably, lead to a problem of explanatory ambiguity; 2) theories, explanations and conclusions are taken from certain examples or instances of what we might call *power relations* or 'examples' of power and applied to others, which are unrelated; 3) and, finally, an overreliance on deductive, and inductive, reasoning gives us false conclusions that would be better explained through abductive reasoning, though it may be that the use of any of these types of reasoning gives rise

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[1]Han, Byung-Chul. *What is Power?*. Polity; 2019. VII.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

to our dangerously specious understandings of power and contributes, most fruitfully, to the more general explicatory impasse concerning *power*. This thesis will survey different contemporary modern theories of power in order to determine how and why this reign of 'theoretical chaos' has come about, as well as what solutions have been proposed by power theorists and critics in helping us come to some understanding of what *power* really is and how it manifests itself in political and sociological contexts. Following this brief introduction, the earlier chapters of the thesis focus on theorists whose work is framed by an analytic approach to theorisation and conceptualisation; this is to show a sort of historical descent in the 'theoretical chaos' of power and to show the limits and deficiencies of analytic, dimensional and violence or sovereignty-orientated conceptualisations of power. The latter chapters of this thesis focus on theorists who conceptualise power in radically different ways, particularly when compared to the analytic theorists. These theories are grounded more in the tradition of continental or structuralist/post-structuralist theory and challenge, specifically, the shortcomings and inconsistencies of the analytic method. Finally, this thesis will also introduce the novel notions of 'non-dimensional power' and 'de-conceptualised power', which, in turn, follow from the more general notions of 'non-dimensional' prehension and the process of 'deconceptualisation'. These critiques of power follow on from the more radical theories presented in the thesis and, in turn, seek to answer their specific failures.

II. The Theoretical Chaos of Power

> There is no attempt here…to unveil some hidden condition' nor…is there a move to privilege or even accept a notion of power *as such*, if by this we mean that 'the real thing' can actually be found. Instead, I want to examine the very nub of the paradox that although power does not exist 'as such', it nevertheless 'makes a difference' – or, perhaps, it *is* difference, *that* which cannot be conceptualized proper.[4]

Many works begin with how important, controversial or debated the concept that they are discussing is, whether within their respective disciplines or in a more general context. Whether it be ideology, hegemony, class, technology or so many others, concepts are aggrandised to the point where they seem to be natural phenomena that are essential to the human experience, which is itself natural in a work that is trying to prove something either about a concept or through the utilisation of said concept. Power, as a look at the literature tells us, is one of the most contested subjects in political theory. There seems to be little consensus, if any, as to what 'power' really means or what shape it takes. Theorists either build upon, and, ultimately, completely transform, previous theories of power, or they contest them and attempt to establish their own conceptualisation. What is it about power that promotes such fierce and interminable debate? Should we heed the words of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and pass over power "in silence", or can it still prove to us to be a useful concept whether in political, social or economic theory?

III. Power Debates

Let us argue, then, that the utility of power as a 'concept', in politics, sociology and science, is up for debate. The myriad arguments that can be found in the literature pull the reader from one conceptualisation to another, leaving one's understanding dependent upon what theorist one read last. Is power a natural phenomenon that

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[4] Dyrberg, Torben Bech. *The Circular Structure of Power*. 9.

exemplifies the 'natural' struggle for supremacy, authority and relevancy that all animals exhibit in their lives, or is power a social phenomenon that is expressed in the relationships between people and groups of people and how these are formed and developed? Can we say that predators battle each other for prey, but humans cooperate in order to avoid conflict and still succeed in acquiring what they need? What is a more 'natural' understanding of power's role: conflict versus cooperation, or nature versus society? Cases can be made for all of these conclusions. Whether humans are 'naturally' social or society is what separates human life from all other forms, and, in turn, is an 'unnatural' phenomenon, affects how one understands the concept of 'power'. This, however, is only one example of a 'power debate'; there are a plethora of discussions of power that range from whether power is mono-dimensional or multi-dimensional, to whether power is primarily a sociological concern, as opposed to a purely political concern, to whether power is, instead, an entirely 'biopoltical' concept that calls for a multi-disciplinary approach in order to grasp how it is expressed in society. Engaging in one of these discussions does not necessarily exclude one from participating in the others, but many of the conclusions found in one are antithetical to the conclusions found in another. For example, if one considers that control and coercion are dimensions, or even a single dimension, of power, then how is one to understand self-control and self-coercion? Must power exist as a relation between two individuals or can power manifest itself solely in the thoughts and actions of a lone intellect? Another example: if power is purely a social phenomenon, how is it possible to distinguish between the social and the political, when the political claims to be above the social, as states typically do, and 'the social' is simply a consequence of political organisation? Debates that, seemingly, have nothing to do with power, in the end, deal entirely in power; while debates that concern

themselves exclusively with power, ultimately depend upon our understanding of other concepts and disciplines.

IV. Non-Dimensional Power

This work will attempt to explain what shall be termed a 'mis-understanding' of power: a 'de-conceptualisation' that is both 'non-dimensional' and 'anarchic'. The main arguments, against the utility of power, are as follows: 1) power is a superfluous 'concept' that is used to explain phenomena that are best served by other concepts or just left alone; 2) power is an anarchic concept that takes on the characteristics of whatever debate it is situated in and, as such, only *appears* to be useful; 3) power, and this is an extension of the previous point, is too protean to have any explanatory power (considering that that is how we wish to measure the utility of any 'scientific concept', which is another matter, altogether); 4) power has become too complex an idea to be scientifically, politically or sociologically useful, but its disparate elements, i.e. those used to define and explain it, are too scientifically, politically and sociologically necessary to discard; 5) terms like 'oppression', 'exploitation', 'control' and the like are not examples of power, nor of powerlessness, but, rather, scientific, social or political modes (of life); and, finally, 6) power is nowhere to be found, in the metaphysical or ontological sense, but, and this is an extension of the fourth point, it is too essential an 'idea' to abandon altogether. In the end, 'power' becomes a place-holder that needs to be abandoned in order to allow any of its enquiries to progress, but the different disciplines that examine 'power' have become so indebted to different terminologies and conceptualisations of power that they are unable to renounce it. Due to the nature of said 'de-conceptualisation', it is not something that can be 'proven', but only 'arrived at' via an analysis of different theories of power. Furthermore, the process, of 'conceptualisation' itself, will have to be dealt with.

V. De-Conceptualised Power

It will be argued that conceptualisation itself should be understood as an example of power and that the very act of definition should be understood as another, though these understandings will, in the end, have to be put aside in favour of 'de-conceptualised power'. Theories of power, in political science, date back as far as the political philosophy of Aristotle and the ethnography of Machiavelli, but it is the logic of the method behind these theories, behind theorisation, more generally, and behind their conclusions that are of interest here. This thesis will argue that any conceptualisation of power is, *per se*, an exercise of power and, perhaps more importantly, that the process of conceptualisation itself and the production/legitimacy of knowledge and of those institutions, individuals or groups that produce it constitute power. In other words, the question of what power is, in terms of who or what possesses it and in both what capacity and quantity they possess it, becomes irrelevant. This is because the possession of a process, of the production of knowledge itself, is, effectively, impossible. It is dependent on both everyone and no one person, which means that it is easily localised, but too generalised to theorise accurately. In order to reach the point where it is possible to 'de-theorise' power, we will start with a general survey of power theories and the 'power debate' within political theory and political science, in order to understand, in this context: 1) whether or not power is truly useful as an analytical concept in political science; and 2) whether or not there are more explanatorily useful concepts available that can help explain social dynamics. This survey will range from the theories of Plato to Lukes's radical view of power and end with a focus on Kenneth Boulding's 'three faces of power', which is used as an example of the theoretical limits of an analytical view of power. We then briefly turn to Haugaard's theory of the four dimensions of power, which serves as a sort of evolution

of Boulding's thought. From this, we will look at Sallie Westwood's book, 'Power and the Social', which makes the claim that power is an immanent 'force' in social relations and that "there is no social without power". Westwood, thus, analyses the way(s) in which different theorists, such as Hobbes, Machiavelli, Locke et al., conceptualise power "in relation to the construction of the social". This analysis affords us a unique perspective on how power develops in relation to the adoption, promotion or development of different societal practices, norms, mores and structures. Westwood points out how different theories of power emerge(d) directly in relation and in correspondence with societal, scientific and political movements and developments of their time. Following this brief analysis, we look at the work of Hannah Arendt and her understanding of the concepts of truth, opinion and power, as put forth in her 1967 essay 'Truth and Politics'. Arendt's views on the antagonism between truth and power can serve as useful tools for making sense of current conceptions and usages of the same. We then move on to Byung-Chul Han's works, 'What Is Power?' and 'Psychopolitics', in which he attempts to formulate "a basic form of power from which we can, by modifying its inner structural elements, derive the different forms in which power may appear". He argues that there is a sort of "theoretical chaos" that characterises contemporary conceptualisations of power and that this has resulted in the concept remaining "altogether ambiguous". Han effectively eschews rationalisations of power that characterise it as a 'three-dimensional' concept, where each 'dimension' describes a different mode of power. After this, the thesis will move on to a critique of method and the development of theory itself, i.e. a critique of science and the scientific method, via an analysis of the work of Karl Popper and Paul Feyerabend in relation to the work of Foucault. While Popper attempted to 'correct' science and make it more precise and reflective of 'reality' and 'the universal',

Feyerabend, on the other hand, criticised the very notion of logic, rationality and scientific discovery and advocated for an anarchic approach towards human knowledge and understanding. Foucault would argue that science itself is a mode of knowledge production; in other words, science does not explain and describe 'reality', but, rather, serves to define it in a recursive fashion. Epistemology, then, should be understood as a sort of self-contained system, rather than as a system that explains things outside of it; it should be understood as a sort of social, even 'natural', phenomenon, instead of as a way to explain natural phenomena. Next, we will turn to Deleuze and Guattari to continue our 'de-theorisation' of power. For Deleuze and Guattari, power is the foundation of the West's structuring of truth and order, but it brings with it a fascist mode of thought and action; from truth and reality, as products of power, emerges fascism and fascist modes of life. It is only through an abandonment of power and a dismissal of the desire for power that a more responsible, freer and expressive mode of politics can emerge. We will then turn to Dyrberg's 'circular structure of power', which develops what he calls a 'non-derivative conception of power'. This conception claims that power is characterised by a circular logic, which means that it cannot be derived nor legitimated by any 'external authority' and must come to legitimate itself *in situ*, i.e. in 'the social'. Furthermore, 'the social' cannot, like power, be understood nor legitimated by anything outside of itself; this means that only social interaction itself can help us understand social relations. Here, power is political because it operates socially, but power and 'the political' can only be expressed in social interaction. Dyrberg states that the way to understand power is to understand 'processes of identification, in the most politically undecidable sense of the term'; knowledge of the self and socio-ontological questions can lead us to understand how social relations work, which can, in turn, lead us to understand how

power works, but the logic here operates in a circular fashion. Power, then, becomes an "irreducible relation or process" that "cannot be derived from any form of social objectivity, such as free will or structural determination"; power "adheres to nothing but itself" and is derived from nothing but itself. This conclusion will allow us to move on to the study of biopolitics, which is, as Thomas Lemke explains it, a sort of 'specific political knowledge' that aims 'at the administration and regulation of life processes on the level of populations'; biopolitics, then, is a science of life that is political in nature: a science that deals with individuals and populations as 'living beings' that are, at the same time, 'legal subjects'. This understanding of biopolitics as a specific type of political knowledge, a 'mode of politics', allows us to see politics, knowledge, law and science as immanently social endeavours and phenomena. Following this we will engage with Jonathan Crary's conceptualisation of what he calls "24/7", a sort of universal state-of-affairs that explains how capitalism, which functions in a seemingly eternal and ever-present fashion, now concerns itself with fashioning individuals and developing subjectivities that are amenable to and, essentially, defined by ceaseless work and consumption. This chapter compares Crary's analysis to the Platonic ideals of society and productivity, as well as to Hobbes's conception of the commonwealth and Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the 'order-word'. Crary explains how contemporary life has degenerated our understanding of concepts such as 'time', 'productivity', 'democracy', 'the social', 'leisure' and the like. Crary's work allows us to go further in our understanding of fundamentally 'asocial' and 'non-social' modes of life, where the self becomes the locus of capital, society and politics. All of this leads into a brief discussion concerning the introduction of non-dimensional power and its implications.

VI. The End Of Power

This survey will allow us to proceed towards, or 'arrive at', a de-conceptualisation of power that is not meant to be understood or apprehended, *per se*, but exists, rather, as a sort of 'pure critique' of the concept. By borrowing from different theories on power, but discarding each *qua* theories and *qua* systems, we arrive at something, though perhaps not satisfactory in the scientific sense of theoretical research, much better equipped to face the lacunae created by theories of power. The logic behind non-dimensional power is not circular, nor is it deductive or derivative. By adopting an anarchic/protean stance towards power, logic does not really play into the equation; it can function at the pure, metaphysical level, or at the applied, empirical level; whichever is contextually appropriate. This anarchy/proteanism, however, strips power of its explanatory power, as it is too fluid to be logically or nomically contained. Furthermore, concepts such as 'oppression', 'exploitation', 'control' and many others typically associated with 'power', are much better served by not invoking 'power', at all, but, rather, by describing them in sociological, political, or even phenomenological, terms. Many forms of control, exploitation and dominance are not properly explained by 'power' and require the development of entirely novel, multi-disciplinary fields of study in order to even begin to unravel their complexity; these fields are still just as concerned with 'power', however, and, as a result, suffer from the same methodological issues that make the concepts under review so difficult to understand, in the first place. Eschewing power altogether, in favour of a more localised and specific mode of understanding these concepts, allows for a greater, and more creative, theoretical freedom, which would, effectively, be independent of *theory*.

A Brief Survey of Power

I. Introduction

      The purpose of the chapter is to survey, analyse and critique contemporary, analytic theories of power in political science. Many of these theories are rooted in traditions and concepts dating as far back as the ethnography of Machiavelli and the political philosophy of Aristotle; it will thus be necessary to visit these theorists, albeit cursorily, in order to trace the evolution of the concept of power in political science and philosophy. Through the work of Michael D. Parsons, Kenneth E. Boulding, Peter Morriss, Daniel Béland, Terry Hathaway and others, we can come to understand the current state of the concept of the power and trace its genealogical course from Aristotle to the present. The main theoretical questions that this work will seek to explore, other than the ontological question surrounding 'power', is whether or not power is actually useful as an analytical concept in political science and, furthermore, whether or not there are concepts that are more explanatorily useful than power in understanding related concepts such as domination, governance, cooperation, exploitation and the like.

II. An Ontology of Power

      As Michael D. Parsons points out in his 1999 article "The Problem of Power", the debate over the meaning of power is "a relatively recent event, with students of power apparently having operated with an implicit understanding of the concept until the post-World War II era".[5] Furthermore, he states that in the social sciences, "the concept of power did not gain currency until the 1930s and 1940s".[6] On account of the

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[5] Parsons, Michael D. "The Problem of Power: Seeking A Methodological Solution". *Policy Studies Review*, Fall/Winter, 1999. 16:3/4, pp. 278-310.
[6] Ibid, 279.

growing use of power as an analytical concept, social scientists "undertook a search for an explicit, universal definition of power"; this quest "touched off a debate that still rages across the social sciences" and, as Parsons claims, "social scientists have been unable to find a methodological solution".[7] This inability to find a 'methodological solution' to the problem of power has caused the concept to lose "considerable appeal as an explanatory concept within academic circles"[8], which seems only to have made the concept of power that much more difficult to define. Parsons argues that the project of conceiving of a universal definition of power "has attracted researched after researcher, but none has been equal to the task" and "[not] even Hans J. Morgenthau…who claimed that "the distinctive, unifying element of politics is the struggle for power"…was able to solve this puzzle."[9] This general failure on the part of the social sciences to effectively theorise power has led to the concept's fall "from a commanding theoretical resource to a very modest abstraction for which an occasional legitimate use can be found in theory and research".[10] Parsons believes that the timing of power's 'entry into the social science lexicon" might explain its "rise and fall as an explanatory concept": when the concept was adopted from the mechanical sciences, "the orientation of the social sciences was firmly positivistic". This adoption of power as a mechanical and positivist concept led, in turn, to the adoption of the language of positivism and the logic of scientific discovery in the social sciences, both of which "required that concepts be operationally defined and objectively measured".[11] One of the first to revive the "Hobbesian concept of power" in the 1950s was Herbert Simon, who found that he was "unable…to arrive at a satisfactory solution" when it came to

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid, 280.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

"giving power an operational definition".[12] Another theorist who "took up the challenge" was Robert Dahl, who, though he "sparked the lively "faces of power" debates", was no more successful than Simon "in producing an uncontested, unproblematic definition of power".[13] As Parsons makes clear, "power could not meet the demands of a positivist social science."[14] Parsons, in his article, claims to offer a methodological approach for "reconstructing and reclaiming the concept of power for use in policy analysis and research."[15] He believes that this reconstruction means understanding power "as the thread that holds collective action together"; this means that the "precise definition or meaning of power emerges from the study of collective action and is potentially different from one social context to the [other]."[16] It is through this reconstruction and reclamation of the concept of power that it can become "an explanatory concept that helps social scientists explicate collective action."[17] The present article will not focus so much on Parson's 'sociology of translation', which he promotes as the methodology that can "solve the problem of power while avoiding the pitfalls of earlier approaches", but will instead focus on how Parsons arrives to said conclusion and methodology. In his article, Parsons states that there are several steps required before being able to, as he claims to have done, reconstruct and reclaim the concept of power. First, he states, "it is necessary to review the work of Thomas Hobbes…and other early political philosophers in order to understand the origin and lineage of the debates on power."[18] Secondly, he considers "the "faces of power" debates that have dominated much of the discourse on power since the 1950s".[19] These two steps are essential to the present article's own understanding, development

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[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid, 280-281.
[17] Ibid, 281.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

and theorisation of the concept of power, which is why we shall now proceed to outline Parsons's analysis.

III. A Genealogy of Power

To begin with, Parsons cites Stewart Clegg, who himself draws on the work of Zygmunt Bauman, and his classification of power theorists as "legislators and interpreters".[20] The role of legislators is to "discuss, debate, theorize, and research the question of "What is power?".[21] Clegg holds that irrespective of what power actually is, "power is always legislated by some sovereignty".[22] The source of said sovereign power, which may be "the people, the consumer, the law, the constitution", etc., "may differ from theorist to theorist", but the focus of the legislator remains on defining power itself and not how and why "the sovereign rules".[23] Interpreters, on the other hand, "focus on the questions of how power is obtained, what power does, and how power is maintained".[24] Parsons suggests that under Clegg's theory, it is Hobbes that "can be seen as the first legislator and as the intellectual fountainhead of legislative theories of power"; what Clegg conceives of as modern legislative theorists' understanding of a "mechanical, causal, and atomistic concept of power" was originally articulated by Hobbes.[25] As Parsons understands it, Hobbes's intent was to "reconstruct political theory as it then existed and to lay the theoretical foundation for modern state power".[26] In order to realise this reconstruction and reconceptualisation of politics, Hobbes had to contend with the work of Aristotle, whose theories were the primary source of influence for political thinkers at the time. Aristotle held that "sovereign power

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[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid, 282.
[26] Ibid.

in any state had to be based on the will of the people and that sovereignty was expressed through the law and the constitution".[27] Hobbes, on the other hand, believed that "the true sovereign…consisted not of words on paper, but of the state backed by the arms and sword of men". Hobbes went as far as to claim that Aristotle's work was 'absurd', 'repugnant' and 'ignorant'. Furthermore, he claimed that a world where the State was not sovereign would essentially result in the collapse and annihilation of human culture and society, and the humans would be doomed to live solitary, nasty and short lives.[28] Hobbes did move, at least somewhat, beyond this nihilistic vision in justifying his theory. He gave his "new conception of sovereignty legitimacy by cloaking it in the language of the new science", which meant that power would cease "to be some religious or metaphysical force that could not be understood, shaped, or controlled by humans".[29] Instead, power would be "a simple matter of mechanics in which one agent pushed (cause) another agent to act (effect)"; this meant that political power was simply a matter of agent interaction in a 'perpetual' and 'restless desire' of 'Power after power' that would terminate only after death.[30] After Hobbes established his "mechanical, causal concept of power", it was taken up, first, by John Locke and, subsequently, by David Hume.[31] Locke employed the same language of cause and effect as Hobbes did, but added the metaphor of billiards in order to illustrate the principles of "active and passive power":

> Active agents on the table, moving balls, strike passive agents, stationary balls, causing them to move. Power is cause and effect with active agents demonstrating their power through effects on passive agents.[32]

Locke took this idea beyond Hobbes and claimed that power "produced observable change and movement among the agents"; this meant that power, like other 'natural

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid, 282-283.
[29] Ibid, 283.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

phenomena', could be "observed and measured" and that this was "the only way that one could scientifically study and prove the existence of power".[33] Hume maintained a nearly identical concept of power as Locke, though he used tennis balls instead of billiards in his illustration of power. He did, however, add scientific rigor to the study of power "by insisting that it should be possible to observe the events producing the cause and effect that constituted power"; thus, "from repeated observations of the events producing cause and effect", he believed that "law-like generalizations about power could be produced".[34] As Parsons explains, the Hobbes, Locke, Hume "discourse on sovereignty and power was so forceful that it virtually eliminated any alternative approaches to the question of power"; said discourse transformed power into a "legitimate, if sometimes arbitrary, force of nature", due to the discourse now being conducted in "the language of science".[35] This shift to a naturalist understanding of power, a shift which was seen throughout the social sciences more generally, forced "rival concepts of power" to either "continue along the same conceptual path of cause and effect, or risk being labeled irrational and unscientific".[36] As Parsons understands it, the "philosophical origins" of power were forgotten and its meaning became "a matter of implicit understanding"; this reconceptualisation explains why political scientists were able to:

> …operate with an implicit understanding of the meaning of power for three centuries after Hobbes first offered his views on the state and power without fully understanding the origin of that meaning or how it shaped the discourse on power.[37]

The result of the social sciences now operating under a naturalist paradigm and power now being conceptualised as an observable phenomenon, was that "the problem of power was removed from the mainstream of intellectual discourse until the 1950s".[38]

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[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid, 284.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.

The debates that began in the 1950s, now known as the "faces of power" debates, represent a "reopening and continuation of legislative theory"; as Parsons charges, however, the faces of power theorists used "many of the same metaphors as the early political philosophers, but without any apparent awareness of their origin".[39] These debates simply advanced the legacy of Hobbesian/Lockean/Humean naturalism and power became "an exercise in cause and effect that in the new language of the behavioral sciences could be observed, measured, and predicted".[40] We shall now take a more in-depth look at the so-called 'faces of power' debates and their impact on political science's understanding of power.

III. The Problem Facing Power

Parsons begins his survey of the 'faces of power' debates with Floyd Hunter's 1953 study of the community power structure of Atlanta, Georgia, which he understands as reopening the "problem of power for discussion and debate in the intellectual community".[41] Hunter was concerned with whether or not "representational democracy was giving way to local community power elites" and what he found, using a "reputational methodology" that he himself developed, was that power was shifting from the people to "an elite heavily weighted towards business".[42] The publication, in 1956, of C. Wright Mills' *The Power Elite*, continued the debate. Mills defined the power elite as those 'whose positions enable them to transcend the ordinary environments of ordinary men and women' because it is they who are 'in command of the major hierarchies and organizations of modern society'.[43] Robert Dahl, in turn, presented the power elite theorists with three primary criticisms: first, he claimed that

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[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid, 284-285.
[43] Ibid, 285.

the nature of the power elite hypothesis made it 'virtually impossible to disprove'; secondly, he claimed that the theory was 'quasi-metaphysical'; and lastly, he claimed that theory could not be qualified as a scientific one because it 'cannot even in principle be controverted by empirical evidence'.[44] The last of Dahl's claims is a glaring example of the naturalisation and positivistic shift of the social sciences mentioned in the previous section; because the ruling elite of Mills and others' theories could not be "observed, measured, and analyzed", then the concept was considered effectively useless on an explanatory and analytic level. Dahl even went so far as to provide his own definition of the ruling elite, based on Mills' work, and presented his own method for testing the theory, which he then used to disprove said theory.[45] As Parsons puts it, Dahl, like Hobbes, knew that he could not simply "discredit and dismiss rival theorists" and that he had to offer an alternative, adequately positivist, theory of power; the new theory "had to make other theories appear irrational, if not unthinkable",[46] which is actually precisely what Hobbes claimed when he presented his own theory of state sovereignty. Dahl, thus, had to ground his definition of power "in the language of mechanics" and within the "positivist paradigm"; he did this by, first, providing a "precise operational definition" of power, as opposed to Mills' "rather vague conception of power".[47] Dahl, continuing on from the mechanical language used by Hobbes, Locke and Hume, defined power as a cause and effect relation between agents; he held, intuitively, that 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do' and that 'power is a relation…a relation among people'.[48] Furthermore, Dahl stated that "questions of the base, means, amount, and scope of power had to be addressed in any comprehensive study of

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[44] Ibid.
[45] ibid, 286.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.

power".[49] Dahl's "pluralist model of power" became, much like the theories of Hobbes, Locke and Hume before the 1950s, the dominant theory in power research and analysis throughout the 1960s; Dahl refined the "criteria and tests that competing theorists had to meet" to such a degree that he fundamentally limited "the range of alternatives…and…refinements" to his model.[50] As Parsons points out, Newton's 1969 critique of Dahl's pluralist model arrived at "quite different conclusions about who held power", but still accepted Dahl's definition of power and it is his methodology that "guides the inquiry"; Parsons argues that it is the use of Dahl's methodology that explains "why Newton and other challengers…could see but one face or dimension of power".[51] On the other hand, Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, as first stated in a 1962 article and in direct antagonism with Dahl's model, held that power has two faces. Bachrach and Baratz did not believe that Dahl was incorrect in defining power using his pluralist model; his overall project was flawed, however, due to his ignorance of what they came to refer as 'nondecision making'. As Bachrach and Baratz put it, this other face of power is the extent to which 'a person or group – consciously or unconsciously – creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts'; two individuals or groups "must have a conflict of interests, B must accept A's position, and A must have some sanction to use against B should B fail to comply".[52] This was, effectively, the nondecision making process. This new process improved upon Dahl's theory in three ways: first, it "allowed researchers to account for power that might be hidden or exercised covertly in ways that could not be directly observed or measured"; secondly, the use of E.E. Schattschneider's concept of the "mobilization of bias", first introduced in 1960, allowed the definition of power to be expanded beyond individuals

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[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid, 286-287.
[51] Ibid, 287.
[52] Ibid.

"to include structural relationships"; finally, Bachrach and Baratz claimed that power not only had to be observed and measured, but also *interpreted*.[53] Bachrach and Baratz anticipated that their theory would be attacked for going 'beyond an investigation of what is objectively measurable' and this did, in fact, occur; their theory was "vigorously attacked by those who followed Dahl and those who subscribed to the belief that power existed only to the extent that it could be observed and measured".[54]

As Nelson Polsby put it, in his 1980 publication:

> How to study this second face of power? To what manifestations of social reality might the mobilization of bias refer? Are phenomena of this sort amenable to empirical investigation?[55]

Bachrach and Baratz eventually caved to the pressure of these positivist attacks and claimed, in their 1970 publication, that 'although absence of conflict may be a non-event, a decision which results in prevention of conflict is very much an event – and an observable one…'.[56] Bachrach and Baratz could not escape the influence and force of the positivist critiques levelled against them and had to somehow make even the absence of conflict between agents, where, presumably, the parties' interests either align or are universally met, an observable phenomenon; Steven Lukes, on the other hand, "sought to reinforce nondecision making theory as a legitimate dimension of power" and, furthermore, he sought to move beyond nondecision making "to a third face or dimension of power".[57] Lukes, in his work *Power: A Radical View* (1974), directly linked his own theory of power to those of both Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz; he saw all three as 'alternative interpretations and applications of one and the same underlying concept of power, according to which A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests'.[58] Parsons claims that even though

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[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid, 287-288.
[55] Ibid, 288.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

Lukes's definition of power fits into the causal mould first set by Hobbes, he distinguished himself "from his theoretical predecessors" by introducing the "concept of interests"; Lukes claimed, first, that the interests involved in the first two faces of power are subjective and, secondly, that "the concept of interests is not fully developed in either of the faces".[59] The concept of subjective interests that Lukes proposes is similar to Marx's conception of false consciousness; because people are operating "under an illusion of their real interests", then it should be 'objective interests', interests that are presumably not illusory, that should be understood and pursued.[60] These objective interests, as Lukes puts it, give us ' a license for the making of normative judgments of a moral and political character'; he does not, however, reference a model of objective interests.[61] Parsons points out that what Lukes must have in mind is something like Jurgen Habermas's "ideal speech situation, i.e. when people know what their real interests are and are unconstrained in their participation in the discourse over those interests".[62] This understanding of the "concept of interests" allows us to flesh out fully all three faces of power:

> The first face is a primitive face in which A openly forces B to do something against his/her will. The second face is more sophisticated in that B does not act because she/he thinks or knows that A does not want him/her to act, or because A creates barriers that limit B. In the third face of power, A has power over B's formation of interests so that B is unable to act on his/her real interests.[63]

Lukes himself asked, 'is not the supreme exercise of power to avert conflict and grievance by influencing, shaping, and determining the perceptions and preference of others?'; and, thus, took power to the limits of the positivist paradigm without renouncing it completely.[64] Lukes offers an objective truth beyond the merely subjective truth that agents involved in a power relation are able to articulate. Ideally,

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[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid, 288-289.
[61] Ibid, 289.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

"subjects are able to determine their own objective interests", but subjects are not always "fully aware of their own best interests".[65] As Parsons states, Lukes, ultimately, "accepts Hobbes' causal definition of power and safely returns to Locke's view that power must be observable".[66] Though the 'faces of power' were the dominant theories/debates on power from the 1960s on, there were other concurrent attempts made to define power: Nicos Poulantzas, for example, defined power, in a 1986 article, as 'the capacity of a social class to realize its objective interests'; Marxists and Neo-Marxists believed that sovereignty was "exercised by the ruling elite through the class system"; and Talcot Parsons, while approaching power "in a manner similar to Hobbes and Dahl", attempted to fit power "into his general theory of action".[67] Most of these theorists sought a "singular, universal definition of power" and, as Foucault put it, none of them were 'able to eschew the model of Leviathan in the study of power'.[68] This type of search for "universal concepts and theories" was termed by C. Wright Mills as the search for 'Grand Theory', which focuses on 'conceptions intended to be of use in classifying all social relations and providing insight into their supposedly invariant features'.[69] The work of grand theorists is "virtually meaningless for other researchers and for the public" because it deals with "generalities" at such a high level of abstraction; this results in 'an elaborate and arid formalism' that gives these theories no historical or social context.[70] Parsons argues that the Grand Theory search many "useful concepts", but because their insights were limited to "certain settings or contexts", they seemed useless to those looking for "a definition or concept of power that was true at all times and in all places".[71] Furthermore, he argues that interpretivist

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid, 289-290.
[68] Ibid, 290.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.

theorists, "working in a different research tradition", were the ones to finally 'cut off the King's head', as Foucault put it, and "advance the discourse on power beyond cause and effect definitions".[72]

IV. Power: Subject to Interpretation

We have so far discussed the school of power theorists that Stewart Clegg referred to as 'legislators', who are concerned with the question, "what is power?"; legislators, on the other hand, are primarily concerned with "how power is obtained, what power does, and how it is maintained".[73] As Clegg states, these theorists focus on 'strategies, deals, negotiation, fraud and conflict'; while the legislators can be traced back to Hobbes, interpretivist thought originates in the theories of Niccolo Machiavelli.[74] Interpreters are not interested in normatively defining power and identifying relations, agents, causes and actions in power relations; instead, they are interested in "translating the meaning of power as it appears in different social contexts".[75] Like Machiavelli, they employ an 'ethnographic research method for uncovering the rules of the game'; however, it is not simply what questions they are concerned with or what methods they utilise that separates legislators and interpreters.[76] What separates at a theoretical and foundational level, is the "choice of metaphors that Hobbes and Machiavelli originally used to drive their work and which continue to drive the work of their intellectual heirs'"; Hobbes used "the language and metaphors of the mechanical sciences" in his theory of power, while Machiavelli "took the language and metaphors of armies and war".[77] Parsons argues that "the differences in language and metaphors produces entirely different epistemological and

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[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid, 290-291.
[75] Ibid, 291.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.

ontological approaches to the question of power"; for legislators, power is a natural and observable relation, while for legislators, "power is a socially constructed reality".[78] Thus, "there is not a single foundation from which all interpreters build their theories of power" and there is also no single way to define power, which is both a cause and result of interpretivists not being linked by a "common research methodology".[79] This, of course, makes it difficult "to summarize and group interpretivists because different schools and individuals have developed their own distinct approaches" to power, with their only commonality being their interpretivist foundation.[80] Parsons only goes on to survey one interpretive approach to the concept of power, which is known as the 'communications concept'. Parsons claims that 'communications' was, in fact, recognised as an issue "in the early mechanical conceptions of power but was ignored because the mechanical sciences model did not have to deal with the problem of communications between objects" and "political philosophers had no conceptual tools to account for the problem of communications between humans in their definitions of power".[81] John Dewey, in his 1927 work *The Public and Its Problems*, "implies, but does not fully develop, the concept of a communication community" and, as Parsons points out, the details "must be teased out by the reader". Dewey's theory:

> ...starts with, rather than ends it, the process of collective action. The product of collective action, regardless of how well it is conceived and planned, produces unintended or unanticipated consequences for the public. As these consequences become apparent, the institutions responsible for implementing the public will and the public interact to produce a new decision. Of paramount importance in this process is communication between individuals and institutions who are either affected by a decision or are concerned with the consequences of any new decision.[82]

Dewey's philosophy is fundamentally different to that of both Hobbes and Machiavelli; Dewey does not see "a natural antagonism between the public and the state", instead

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[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid, 291-292.
[80] Ibid, 292.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid, 292-293.

he sees a community "bounded together by communication".[83] A "true democratic public" only emerges from "the communication required by group problem solving" and "the same is true of democratic governments which exists as a function of the collective action process"; communication, rather than violence, becomes the "mechanism for social order in the communication community".[84] The communication community is a "lively, free-wheeling society, but one that also places a heavy moral and political responsibility on its citizens"[85]; meaning that:

> …must be aware of community issues, the consequences of collective actions, the needs of society, and must make decisions based on the needs of the community without the possibility of passing the burden for decision making on to some higher authority or outside agent.[86]

In this community, "power as domination is replaced by power as problem solving, thus the public must take responsibility for solving its problems"; thus, if "the public fails to take responsibility, there is no external system of social control, and the internal system of social order begins to unravel".[87] Dewey recognised that "certain prerequisites were necessary for consummation" of the communication community to occur, which entail 'free social inquiry' being 'indissolubly wedded to the art of full and moving communication'.[88] The first prerequisite was "a common language that could be used and understood by all of the community"; language, however, was not itself "enough to foster fully understood communications".[89] The second prerequisite, then, was the identification of "widely understood signs and symbols to convey shared meanings"; furthermore, groups would be required to interact in cooperative activities because 'the pulls and responses of different groups reenforce [sic] one another and

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[83] Ibid, 293.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.

their values accord'.[90] Emotional, intellectual and moral bonds are produced by these "shared activities" and they serve to "bind the community"; when all of these prerequisites are met, then "a community evolves that is capable of transforming the power of domination into the power of problem solving".[91] Dewey was criticised for tending "to present concepts and theories only to leave them underdeveloped as he raced on to new ideas"; thus, it took until the 1960s for the theory of communicative power to be addressed again.[92] The next person to take up the concept of communicative power was Hannah Arendt; who developed her theory "out of her concern with violence".[93] Arendt believed that violence was so accepted in political theory that social scientists simply took it for granted and, thus, neglected the concept; she accused "political theorists of uncritically accepting the wedding of violence and power", which was epitomised by C. Wright Mills's claim that 'all politics is a struggle for power' and 'the ultimate kind of power is violence'.[94] Arendt's project meant to "separate violence and power" and produce "a new concept of power that was not based on domination"; traditional political theory, however, "traces the roots of power back to the absolute power of kings and even back to Greek antiquity in defining power in terms of domination".[95] Arendt, then, meant to borrow from concepts of governance developed by the "Athenian city-states and the Romans" that rested 'on the power of the people', rather than on the coercion and rule of domination and violence.[96] Since sovereignty is meant to rest "on the power of the people", then "the state and all political institutions" decay and petrify 'as soon as the living power of the people ceases to uphold them'; in other words, violence "could hold a government in place,

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[90] Ibid, 293-294.
[91] Ibid, 294.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid, 294-295.
[96] Ibid, 295.

but power could come only from the consent of the governed".[97] In addition to her theory of the sovereignty of the people, Arendt understood "the role of language and the need to create a new vocabulary for her discourse on power".[98] Arendt needed, primarily, to produce "distinct, separate definitions for power, strength, force, authority, and violence", which would avoid reducing 'public affairs to the business of dominion'.[99] Arendt, through a careful definition of the language that she used to discuss power, sought to "give legitimacy to certain types of social behavior while making still other types of behavior socially unacceptable".[100] Parsons points out that Arendt's project is similar to Talcott Parsons' concern "with the legitimacy of the possession and use of power in a social system".[101] Talcott Parsons, taking his cue from economics, argued that power can only be legitimate if it is "accepted by members of a society" and the leaders of said society "had a mandate from the members to act in their behalf"; power, then, functioned as a "circulating medium generated by the political system".[102] Arendt, on the other hand, arrived at the social contract "as the mechanism for giving legitimacy to power" from natural law; thus, power is legitimate "only as long…as it comes from the governed and is expressed in a social contract or agreement".[103] Neither Arendt nor Talcott Parsons's theories allow "a legitimate role for violence", but both do permit "the use of force in fulfilling the goals of society".[104] Jurgen Habermas both praises and criticises Arendt, in turn: he praises her work for moving away from the teleological model proposed by positivist, causal power theorists and conceiving of power as something built, rather, from communicative action; he criticises her work, on the other hand, for being overly

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[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid, 295-296.
[102] Ibid, 296.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.

philosophical and not sufficiently grounded in 'well-balanced investigations', which leads to her theory producing absurdities, 'when applied to modern societies'.[105] More specifically, Habermas claims that the three major flaws in Arendt's theory are: her failure "to account for the strategic competition for political power"; "the employment of power within the political system"; and "her reliance on the contract theory of natural law". Despite this. Habermas felt that Arendt's communicative action concept "was fundamentally sound" and he used it "as the basis for developing his own theory of communicative action".[106] Habermas, in his theory of communicative action, focused on "communicative competence", which:

> ...depends on the ability and willingness of speakers to state propositional sentences in a way that are cognitively true, without intent to deceive the listener, and in a manner consistent with the normative orientation of the speaker and listener.[107]

As an example:

> …communicative competence is reached when participants in discussions recognize the differences between true and false statements and accept as true statements those which would be accepted as true statements in the absence of coercion.[108]

Habermas, as a part of his project to reconstruct rational society, prioritises communicative action "over all other forms of action"; he claims that action either takes the form of "strategic action" or communicative action.[109] Strategic action is seen as "purposive-rational action in which communication is instrumental"; communicative action, on the other hand, is non-instrumental because that which is agreed communicatively 'has a rational basis' and it cannot be 'imposed by either party', neither 'instrumentally through intervention in the situation directly' nor 'strategically through influencing decisions of opponents'.[110] `If we take as fact that 'the use of language with an orientation to reaching an understanding is the original mode of

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[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid, 296-297.
[107] Ibid, 297.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid, 298.

language use', then communicative action "priority over, and cannot be reduced to, strategic action'; thus, communicative action allows for the foundation of a community.[111] Habermas uses these two types of action to construct a two-level concept of society:

> The economic system and political administration are action spheres characterized by strategic action. Rather than responding to normative values, these spheres are coordinated and driven by money, power, and success without regard for communicative competence. Detached from the action system is the life-world. The life-world is characterized by the drive to reach communicative competence and is coordinated through full, open, and truthful communication.[112]

It is this dualism that helps shield communication from "the distortions of power".[113] Habermas has been criticised both for dividing the world into "separate, nonintersecting spheres with different foundations" and for privileging communicative action "over all other forms of action".[114] Axel Honneth suggested that Habermas is "building his project on a theoretical fiction" if he truly believes that the two spheres "can exist independently"; Foucault argued that "communication and knowledge, far from freeing us, have been servants to disciplinary power and subjection": in other words, "the life-world has become the handmaiden of the action system".[115] For Habermas's theory to work, the idea of "uncoerced communication between competent participants"[116] is key; communicative competence itself rests upon "the ability and willingness of participants to speak without the intent to deceive" and a communicative community "rests on a foundation of trust" that is reinforced "by unrestrained communication".[117] Power, specifically the power to dominate, "interferes with and distorts universal communication" and is not conducive to the building of a communicative community; it must thus be "'relegated to a separate sphere".[118]

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[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid, 299.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.

Dewey, Arendt and Habermas all share the foundational link of communicative action, but they are all, at the same time, fundamentally different in the way they employ the concept theoretically. Dewey "bases his communication community on praxis", which means that the community is "never complete", but "constantly evolving, through collective action, in search of a more perfect community".[119] The community is power because it is able to engage in problem solving. Arendt, on the other hand, "envisions a more static community in which agreements are reached within the boundaries of a written social contract rather than through praxis".[120] Habermas, through an explicit definition of what constitutes communicative action, "creates an ideal theory to which a community can aspire and against which it can judge its level of communicative competence". Habermas, contrary to Arendt and Dewey, does not ultimately accept the idea that "power can be transformed into a social good that promotes communicative action"; he sees power as a distorter of communication.[121] Parsons points out that selecting simply one approach or theory "to guide the study of power remains problematic at best"; legislators have given themselves what would seem to be an impossible task, which is to find a definition of power "that applies at all times and in all places".[122] Defining and studying power has become such a difficult project that it has produced "a division among political scientists with some claiming that power is no longer a useful concept and others claiming that it must be *the* guiding concept for political science".[123] Parsons claims that interpreters "have avoided the problem of finding a universal definition of power", but have created an entirely different set of problems in the process; critics claim that instead of interpreting power,

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[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid, 300.
[123] Ibid.

interpreters merely find whatever 'facts' fit their theory.[124] Other critics claims that all theories of power, legislative or interpretive, "tend to coincide with disciplinary perspective and world views": political scientists ask "how the state influences society" and they find that "power is pluralistic"; others see pluralism as too simplistic an answer "and offer non-decision making as an alternative"; sociologists, on the other hand, ask "how society influences the state" and they find "a power elite or ruling class".[125] Thus, the meaning of power "is not a matter of interpretation, but rather a function of the methodology and theory selected to guide the inquiry".[126] Parsons suggests that it is the 'sociology of translation' that offers a way to save "the best of the interpretivist approaches without becoming in tangled [sic] in the methodological problems associated with those approaches".[127]

V. Power in Translation

It would appear, as Parsons claims, that Dahl's concern that power research would turn into a 'bottomless swamp' is now the case. Parsons suggests, then, that said 'swamp' can be avoided "by using an eclectic assortment of research methods to reconstruct and reclaim power for use in policy analysis and research".[128] This suggests, then, "some combination of cultural, historical, political, and sociological methods with the common thread being interpretation".[129] This design begins with Michel Callon and Bruno Latour's sociology of translation, which "presents one with a clearer field of vision unimpeded by a priori interpretations or theories of power"; the true meaning of power can emerge only "from the social and historical context in which it is being studied".[130] Though Callon and Latour were not the first to suggest that

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[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid, 301.

power can only be understood "by interpreting it in the social context in which it is situated", they did develop a fairly novel, "explicitly stated methodological framework" that could be understood and followed by other researchers.[131] The sociology of translation was born out of a concern "with the paradox inherent in the problem of power", which can very roughly be described as: when one has power – 'in potentia' – nothing happens and one is powerless; when one exerts power – 'in actu' – others are acting and not oneself; this paradox presents itself methodologically when social scientists treat power "as both cause and effect".[132] One way out of this paradox, then, is "to think of power as a way to summarize collection action"; the translation model, as Latour argues, allows the social scientist to understand power not as a cause of collective action but 'as a consequence'.[133] The key to understanding power, then, is understanding "what holds…collective action together"; when this is understood, then "power can be named and defined". Research using the sociology of translation is guided by three methodological principles: the first principle is "agnosticism", which means that the researcher "must be an impartial observer who refrains from privileging any one point of view or censoring any respondent".[134] The second methodological principle is "generalized symmetry", which requires that the researcher "use the same vocabulary and terms when describing and explaining the actors in the study".[135] Finally, the third methodological principle is "free association", which means that a researcher "must not impose and a priori grid of analysis on the actors, but must observe the actors to determine how" they themselves 'define and associate the…elements by which they build and explain their world, whether…social or

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[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid, 301-302.
[135] Ibid, 302.

natural'.[136] Callon and Latour use translation to refer to all of the 'negotiations, intrigues, calculations' and 'acts of persuasion and violence' that "actors use to gain the authority to speak for other actors in the political process"; this process allows "micro-actors to become macro-actors with the authority to speak for other actors and to speak with one voice".[137] The translation process "can be divided into four steps or "moments"": problematisation, interessement, enrolment and mobilisation; the process, however, is continuous and "moves forward in a never ending reenactment of the translation steps".[138] Problematisation involves an actor attempting to either convince other actors that their definition of the problem is the correct one or that their solution is the proper one for a given problem definition; the actor gains "the right to speak for other actors" when they accomplish this. Furthermore, the actor gains control "over the range of policy options available for responding to public problems".[139] Interessement follows problematisation because "an actor's definition of the problem and/or solution" is not enough considering that "other actors will attempt to position themselves to control the policy agenda"; an actor, then, must make their position interesting "to actors who have committed to or expressed interest in another problem definition/solution".[140] An actor "must come between two other actors" and persuade them over to their position. Enrolment follows on from interessement, as it seeks to "build stable alliances and coalitions around the problem definition/solution", though these alliances and/or coalitions need not last any longer than the realisation of policy decision.[141] The last step in the process, following on from the first three, is mobilisation, which consists of all of the "steps, actions, strategies, etc. that are

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[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid, 303.
[141] Ibid, 303-304.

employed to maintain the alliance through the policy decision"; if the alliance and/or coalitions can be maintained even after "the policy decision is reached, then the power of the lead actors will be institutionalized".[142] Parsons points out that the question of "how to study power in a policy arena, or in any social context" is "problematic at best"; he believes that, instead of "actually studying power", students are focused, rather, on *how* to study power.[143] Even if one does choose to employ alternative research methods, there is no single method that is entirely devoid of difficulties. Parsons claims that Callon and Latour's sociology of translation "in combination with other methods" is the "most plausible way" to go about studying power. The advantage of using this method is that it does not "ignore the issues and concerns identified" in other approaches, but simply "considers them from a different perspective". Parsons does not pretend that "the debate over power, the meaning of power, operational definitions, and approaches to the study of power" will end any time soon, if ever, but he does believe that the sociology of translation "provides a sturdy framework" for reconstructing and reclaiming power "for use in policy analysis and research".[144] The meaning of power, when one uses the sociology of translation, "emerges from the study of what holds collective action together" and when this is understood, then power is given "meaning and definition".[145] Finally, when this is complete, "power can be reclaimed as an explanatory concept in policy research and analysis".[146]

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[142] Ibid, 304.
[143] Ibid, 305.
[144] Ibid, 306.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.

V. Soft Power

Joseph Nye's work deals with the concept of 'soft power', which is concerned with what he calls the "soft dimensions of power": influence, persuasion, allegiance and propaganda and the spread of information. This type of power is in contrast, relatively, to what is defined as 'hard power', which concerns itself with military and economic strength. An analysis of this apparent dichotomy in the ways in which power takes shape and expresses itself allows us to understand 'the political', particularly 'the geopolitical', in novel and more acute ways. The question, here, is whether or not the concept of 'soft power' still retains its supposed explanatory power in the face of biopolitical theories and understandings of power.

VI. The Changing Nature of Power

> …power depends on context, and the distribution of power differs greatly in different domains. We saw that in the global information age, power is distributed among countries in a pattern that resembles a complex three-dimensional chess game.[147]

Joseph Nye is concerned with the battle for hearts and minds and power of information and technology; more specifically, he is concerned with the changing nature of power, both presently and over the centuries. Nye refers to concepts such as influence, propaganda and the spread of information, persuasion and allegiance as the "soft dimensions" of power; he claims that, more generally, power itself can be understood as "the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes one wants".[148] Power, however, "always depends on the context in which the relationship exists"; this means, though difficult in praxis, somehow knowing the preferences and desires of others in order to accurately gauge whether or not one has really affected their behaviour.[149] If we ask someone to do something, but they either do not mind doing it or they actually enjoy doing it, when we think that they otherwise would not do

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[147] Nye, Jr., Joseph S. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs, 2004., 136-137.
[148] Ibid, 1-2.
[149] Ibid, 2.

it, then the power that we think that we have exercised is illusory. Furthermore, though again difficult, we would have to know how someone would act "in the absence of our commands", in order to accurately gauge whether or not we have exercised power over them.[150] Respect and legitimacy can persuade people to act on behalf of those whom they respect and believe in; this fact has caused some to define power as simply "the possession of capabilities or resources that can influence outcomes" because questions concerning behaviour and motivation can be regarded as "too complicated".[151] These same people consider state power as being measured in "population and territory, extensive natural resources, economic strength, military force, and social stability"; defining power in this way makes it seem "more concrete, measurable, and predictable", but the definition becomes problematic when we try to understand why it is that those who are most affluent and 'strong', both economically and militarily, "do not always get the outcomes they want".[152] According to Nye, the conversion of power resources into power 'realised' requires "well-designed strategies and skilful leadership"; strategies often fail and leaders are often incompetent, however, and this stems both from a misunderstanding of context and from the election of leaders being based on factors that are not necessarily relevant when it comes to actual governance.[153] Power resources, particularly at the international level, have become increasingly difficult to assess over the centuries; this is because the global nature of power does not lend itself well to simple context determination and there are so many dimensions to even the most casual exercise of power.[154] The United States, for example, might be considered by many as the world's "only superpower", but why, then, does it require the consensus of other major powers in

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[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid, 3.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid, 3-4.

matters of "trade, antitrust, or financial regulations" and those same powers' cooperation to tackle issues such as "terrorism, international crime, climate change, and the spread of infectious diseases"?[155] Nye believes that it makes no sense to label the United States a hegemonic or imperial power or to claim that the world is unipolar, if it is effectively incapable of acting unilaterally at the global level. He claims that "many political leaders still focus almost entirely on military assists and classic military solutions" and that these leaders are "one-dimensional players in a three-dimensional game"; this, as he claims, is "the way to lose", since failing to incorporate soft power elements into one's strategy leaves one at a massive disadvantage.[156]

VII. The Nature of Soft Power

'Hard power' is the power afforded by military and economic strength; it can rest on "inducements…or threats"; it is not, however, the only form of power.[157] The type of power that requires neither threats nor other types of coercion, an indirect type of power, is known as "the second face of power"; setting the agenda and attracting others to you "in world politics" can be both more effective and, in a sense, more 'powerful' than simply forcing others to change "by threatening military force or economic sanctions".[158] This is, effectively, soft power, which can be understood as "getting others to want the outcomes that you want" and co-opting people rather than coercing them; soft power is founded on "the ability to shape the preferences of others" and on the use of attraction and seduction.[159] Nye argues that authoritarian states rely on coercion and threat to maintain power and carry out objectives, but democratic states need to rely more "on a combination of inducement and attraction"; soft power,

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[155] Ibid, 4.
[156] Ibid, 4-5.
[157] Ibid, 5.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.

then, is an essential part of "daily democratic politics".[160] He claims that establishing preferences is associated with "intangible assets" like "an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, and policies that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority".[161] It is more economical, then, monetarily and temporally speaking, to lead a group, if a leader "represents values that others want to follow"; Nye goes on to claim that soft power and influence are not equivalent, particularly since influence "can also rest on the hard power of threats or payments".[162] Soft power is more than simply the act of persuasion "or the ability to move people by argument"; it is also "the ability to attract", which can lead to "acquiescence" and obedience and this means that, in terms of behaviour, "soft power is attractive power".[163] The resources that increase soft/attractive power are whatever assets that lead to people being attracted to either leaders or policies and this, according to Nye, is determined through the use of polls and focus groups; whether or not the 'attraction' that is produced ultimately produces "desired policy outcomes" must be judged "in particular cases" and after the fact.[164] Nye suggests that a way to understand the difference between hard and soft power is to take into consideration how we obtain the outcomes that we want: one can use command, threat, force or economic sanctions; one can convince others by using economic power; one can make the desires of others seem unrealistic and impossible to realise; and one can appeal "to a sense of attraction, love, or duty" or to "shared values about the justness of contributing to those shared values and purposes".[165] This means that soft power is involved if one can be persuaded to do or believe something without the need for any "explicit threat or

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[160] Ibid, 6.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid, 6-7.

exchange taking place", or, as Nye explains it, if one's behaviour is determined "by an observable but intangible attraction"; the currency that determines, and is exchanged in, soft power is "an attraction to shared values and the justness and duty of contributing to the achievement of those values".[166] The reason that hard and soft power are related is the fact that they are both essentially tools that one can use to achieve one's objective "by affecting the behavior of others"; Nye distinguishes between the two by claiming that "the nature of the behavior" and "the tangibility of the resources" that each type of power entails are entirely different.[167] As Nye theorises:

> Command power—the ability to change what others do—can rest on coercion or inducement. Co-optive power—the ability to shape what others want—can rest on the attractiveness of one's culture and values or the ability to manipulate the agenda of political choices in a manner that makes others fail to express some preferences because they seem to be too unrealistic.[168]

The behaviours associated with command and co-option can be determined along a spectrum that ranges from "coercion to economic inducement to agenda setting to pure attraction"; the co-optive end of the spectrum is where we tend to find soft-power resources, while the command end tends toward hard-power resources.[169] However, possessing a great deal of hard power and hard-power resources can often be a strategy towards possessing, in turn, soft power and soft-power resources; some countries, for example, are attracted to others that possess command power "by myths of invincibility"[170] and the impression and image of strength and even, presumably, the promise and hope of power and strength by association. Command power can also be used to create institutions "that later become regarded as legitimate"[171], which means that hard power can, essentially, be used as the means to an end, in the way that the violence of war purportedly promises to establish future peace. Furthermore,

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[166] Ibid, 7.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.

a strong economy provides the resources for both "sanctions and payments", but it can also attract and serve as a promise or aspiration to others who may then ally themselves with said power.[172] Soft power, in international politics, originates in the cultural values of an organisation or country, the "internal practices and policies" of said organisation or country and in the way that they associate with other countries and organisations; though it may be difficult to satisfactorily "control and employ" soft power, this does not mean that it is any less important nor does it mean that it should not be sought and worked towards.[173] As far back as 1939, E. H. Carr argued that international power manifested itself in three ways: militarily, economically and as "power over opinion"; Hubert Védrine, a former French minister, claimed that the power of the Americans originates in their capacity to "inspire the dreams and desires of others, thanks to the mastery of global images through film and television and because…large numbers of students…come to the United States to finish their studies".[174] Nye claims that those who do not understand the importance of soft power are similar to those "who do not understand the power of seduction". It is often the case that an increase or decline in either soft-power or hard-power resources can lead to an equivalent effect in the opposite type of power; for example, economic or military decline can lead to a loss of soft power because it is, of course, far more difficult to shape agendas on the international level and project various forms of strength when one lacks the resources to do so. Hard power can be used, as mentioned before, to establish institutions that can later gain the legitimacy they need to create soft power; these institutions can then be used to "set the agenda for smaller states".[175] Soft power, nevertheless, does not depend on hard power; a country, or union, may have

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[172] Ibid, 7-8.
[173] Ibid, 8.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid, 9.

a great deal of economic and military power, but be seen as lacking in soft power because of its position as an aggressor or if it chooses to implement policies, either at home or abroad, that may be considered brutal, inhumane or unjust.[176] Some nations hold a great deal of soft power, not because they are economically or militarily strong or because they are great in size, but because they have chosen to pursue policies, such as "economic aid or peacemaking", that allow them to gain the respect and admiration of other nations and are praised, in turn.[177] Nye points out that Norway has participated in peace talks "in the Philippines, the Balkans, Colombia, Guatemala, Sri Lanka, and the Middle East", which has greatly enhanced its soft power because of its taking on of the role of international peacemaker and facilitator.[178] Michael Ignatieff describes influence as being derived from three "assets": "moral authority as a good citizen…military capacity…and international assistance capability"; he recognises that larger nations, particularly the United States, benefit from associating with nations that are seen as 'more legitimate', which is certainly the case with Canada, and this, in turn, provides smaller nations with bargaining power.[179] The Polish government, for example, decided to send troops to Iraq not only for the benefit of the United States, but also to create "a broader positive image of Poland in world affairs"; the Indian foreign minister, after the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan, decided to welcome the new government not with gifts of arms or food, but rather with "tapes of Bollywood movies and music, which were…distributed across [Kabul]".[180] Institutions are key in enhancing a country's soft power; Britain, in the nineteenth century, and the United States, in the second half of the twentieth century:

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[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid, 10.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid.

> …advanced their values by creating a structure of international rules and institutions that were consistent with the liberal and democratic nature of the British and American economic systems: free trade and the gold standard in the case of Britain; the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, and the United Nations in the case of the United States.

These institutions allow powerful nations to essentially shape the world in their image, though instead of having to deal with the illegitimacy of influence through coercion, force and/or violence, the nations that follow them and incorporate internationally recognised standards and laws domestically do so willingly.[181] Nye argues that a country's soft power comes from three resources: "its culture…its political values…and its foreign policies"; for Nye, culture "is the set of values and practices that create meaning for a society".[182] If a country includes universal values within its culture and if its policies promote "values and interests that others share", then this increases its soft power "because of the relationships of attraction and duty that it creates"; since "narrow values and parochial cultures are less likely to produce soft power", then the more 'universal' a culture, the greater its ability to attract those from other cultures and recruit allies for whatever reason or purpose.[183] Nye claims that some make the mistake of equating soft power with "popular cultural power", which means that they believe that soft power behaviour is the same as "the cultural resources that sometimes help produce it".[184] Niall Ferguson, for example, believes that soft power is simply comprised of "non-traditional forces such as cultural and commercial goods" and that it is just too "soft" to be of any real political consequence.[185] Nye suggests that the problem with these arguments is that popular culture, as a resource, does produce soft power, but, because "the effectiveness of any power resource depends on the context", then it can often seem as if popular culture does not really have a

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[181] Ibid, 11.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid, 11-12.

significant impact on government policy or political thought, in general.[186] The popular culture of a society, like culture itself, can be seen as attractive or repulsive depending on the demographic that is judging said culture; the older generation may generally find new tastes, fashions and trends repulsive, while the younger generation are likely those that generated them in the first place and will, logically, embrace them. It is not, however, always a case of the young against the old; the younger generation may, in many cases, be just as, if not even more, conservative than the older one. This point, in any case, may serve to highlight how important popular culture actually is, as value-driven conflicts serve to create enmity where there might otherwise be none and these divisions can then be exploited politically. Culture and values are not only disseminated commercially; this process also occurs "through personal contacts, visits, and exchanges".[187] Foreign students who study in America, entrepreneurs who become successful investing in or starting up American businesses and expatriates who enjoy a comfortable lifestyle in American cities and suburbs all effectively serve as testaments to those back in their native country to what could be possible if they adopted the American way of life.[188] Soft power can also come from government policies both at home and abroad; policies that are deemed unjust, immoral or illegal under certain international or domestic norms hurt the soft power of the nation that pursues them and the opposite is true of policies that promote universal values, multilateralism, inclusion, democracy and the like.[189] As Nye suggests, "the preferences of others" are affected by "the values a government champions in its behavior at home…in international institutions…and in foreign policy"; governments, then, "can attract or repel others by the influence of their example".[190] Not all assets

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[186] Ibid, 12.
[187] Ibid, 13.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid, 13-14.
[190] Ibid, 14.

can be entirely controlled by the state, however, and this means that soft power, as well as hard power, does not entirely "belong to the government", which means that certain assets that can increase both belong to other organisations, groups and individuals.[191] Popular culture and counter-cultures, generally, can often be at odds with the objectives and policies of the state and liberal cultures will naturally clash with more authoritarian and illiberal states.[192]

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VIII. The Limits of Soft Power

Those who are sceptical of soft power feel this way because they believe that power can only be defined "in terms of commands or active control"; concepts such as "imitation or attraction" are not sources or types of power, but simply social truths and phenomena.[193] It may be the case that imitation and attraction do not always produce "much power over policy outcomes" nor "desirable outcomes", but those that choose such examples as proof that neither of these strategies are actually effective are ignoring the "second, or "structural", face of power", which is "the ability to get the outcomes you want without having to force people to change their behaviour through threats or payments".[194] The success of employing attraction and imitation in producing the outcomes that we desire depends to a great extent on context; all power, in fact "depends on context", which can be understood as "who relates to whom under what circumstances"[195], but the context will always be different depending on both the strategy employed and the objective desired. Attraction, for example, "often has a diffuse effect", which serves to create "general influence rather than producing an easily observable specific action"; politicians, like investors, accumulate [political]

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[191] Ibid, 14-15.
[192] Ibid, 15.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid, 16.

capital "to be drawn on in future circumstances".[196] Soft power is "likely to be more important when…[it] is dispersed in another country rather than concentrated"; furthermore, though it can sometimes have "direct effects on specific goals"…"it is more likely to have an impact on the general goals that a country seeks".[197] Arnold Wolfers, to this point, differentiated between "the specific "possession goals" that countries pursue" and "their broader "milieu goals"", which could include, for example, "shaping an environment conducive to democracy"; and, as Nye suggests, the "successful pursuit of both of these types of goals" is critical to an equally successful foreign policy.[198] Nye points out that soft power may not be as effective as hard power when it comes to issues such as national security, policing and the like, but the opposite is true when it comes to promoting "democracy, human rights, and open markets"[199]; this comes down, in part, to the role of legitimacy in promoting these systems and institutions, i.e. if these institutions are not established and maintained in a legitimate way then their inherent illegitimacy subverts both the ultimate objective of the institutions and their everyday operation. Some sceptics who object to the claim that soft power has any role in international politics and in government policy argue that because governments "are not in full control of the attraction" then soft power is more a product of "civil society" rather than the state.[200] Nye counters this by insisting that liberal societies should, as a rule, not "control the culture" and, in fact, "the absence of policies of control can itself be a source of attraction".[201] Cultural institutions and organisations, e.g. "firms, universities, foundations", etc., are certainly producers of soft power in their own right, and said power can either "reinforce or be

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[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid, 17.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid.

at odds with official foreign policy goals", but this should serve to encourage the state "to make sure that their own actions and policies reinforce rather than undercut their soft power".[202] Sources of soft power that are not associated with the state have become increasingly more important and influential since the power that they produce is so easily disseminated thanks to technological advancements and the evolution of information consumption.[203] The popularity of a policy, government, politician or candidate is typically measured via some form of polling, but many argue that these measurements are, effectively, pseudo-political science and are far too fickle and "ephemeral…to be taken seriously"[204]. Whether or not this is actually true, which is an entirely separate debate altogether, it cannot truly be disputed that polls are, at least, "a good first approximation" of the popularity of whatever it is meant to be measuring.[205] Military power has greatly changed both the production, employment and definition of hard and soft power resources, particularly with the advent of nuclear technologies; advancing our understanding of nuclear physics has led, on the one hand, to the development of the most powerful weapons the world has ever known and, on the other, to new sources of electric power and a myriad of consumer and commercial electronics.[206] Information and communications technologies have changed the nature of agenda and policy promotion, education, warfare, commerce, the creation and preservation of culture, counter- and sub-culture, health, science and virtually anything having to do with life on Earth and even our understanding of the entire universe.[207] Nye argues that the social changes that these technologies have brought about, particularly "inside the large democracies", have "raised the costs of

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[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid, 18.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid, 18-19.
[207] Ibid.

using military power" and that "the use of force requires an elaborate moral justification to ensure popular support, unless actual survival is at stake"; he claims that, for "advanced democracies", war is a possibility, "but it is much less acceptable than it was a century, or even a half century, ago" and that these states "have lost much of the lust to conquer".[208] Furthermore, since effectively all domestic economies rely, in some way or another, on the global economy, each state, whether 'democratic' or 'nondemocratic', must consider how declaring war might deter those investors who control the global flows of capital and how conflict may or may not advance global and domestic economic objectives.[209] Nye recognises, in any case, how the democratisation of technology has made destruction more accessible to more individuals and groups than ever before, privatised war and, in the process, made conflict and the threat of war and terrorism constants in international politics.[210] Terrorism, which Nye defines as a method of conflict that deliberately targets non-combatants "with the objective of spreading fear and intimidation", has, as a result of the evolution of technology and the development of the basic systems that have come to define modern civilisation, become a global phenomenon that can be practised by anyone at any time and is only differentiated by motive and technique. The fact that communications technology has connected the entire world to the internet and other forms of global media means that would-be terrorists can ally themselves with any group around the world whose objectives they sympathise with and, at the same time, that terrorist groups can ally themselves with and recruit individuals who are willing to advance their cause; these groups may also use the same technology to claim responsibility for any terrorist attack that does occur, irrespective of whether or not

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[208] Ibid, 19.
[209] Ibid, 20.
[210] Ibid, 20-21.

they have actually been involved, which may serve to make them look more powerful and influential than they actually are. Nye claims that the effectiveness of terrorism depends, ultimately, on soft power: it depends on "its ability to attract support from the crowd at least as much as its ability to destroy the enemy's will to fight"; most terrorist and splinter cells may be fairly small in number but they represent larger groups and objectives and their size makes them both difficult to infiltrate and extremely difficult to identify.[211] Extremist groups and individuals are able to kill millions without the explicit patronage of governments and without the use of, as Nye puts it, the "instruments" of the state; he refers to this, explicitly, as "the privatization of war", and claims that this brought about a "dramatic change" in international politics.[212]

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[211] Ibid, 23.
[212] Ibid, 24.

Three Faces of Power

I. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the work of Kenneth Boulding and his understanding of power as a social phenomenon and ability. He tackles his thesis via an interdisciplinary (political economy and sociology) analysis of how power, in the context of these disciplines, adapts both to the society where it is observed and to the context that it is observed in. Rather than relying on the concepts of 'force' and 'domination', Boulding explains how desire, interests and potential, as 'possibility', form the definitional foundation of power. He looks at how the distribution, possession, application and failure(s) of power function as explanations of different social systems make use of a variety of different power dynamics in order to achieve desired objectives or ends.

II. Three Faces of Power

Kenneth Boulding argues that the term "power" is used to describe "the ability to achieve common ends for families, groups, organizations of all kinds, churches, corporations, political parties, national states", etc.; power, then, "is a concept without meaning in the absence of human valuations and human decision".[213] Decision, furthermore, is "a choice among a range or set of images of the future that we think are feasible"; power of decision, on the other hand, "relates to the size of this agenda of potential images of the future".[214] Boulding is quick to distance the concept of power from the concepts of "force", "domination" and "victory"; these concepts are all, individually, small parts "of the general nature of power", but none of them could be

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[213] Boulding, Kenneth E. *Three Faces of Power*. (SAGE Publications, 1990). 15
[214] Ibid.

considered as most salient, fully representative of or synonymous with power.[215] Boulding goes as far as comparing the concept of power with the economic concept of a "possibility boundary", which "divides the total set of future possibilities into those that a person can do and those that a person cannot do".[216] Economists, however, typically believe that "what we want most will be" on the boundary of possibility, which implies that we want most "is not within our power" and that it is "beyond the boundary". Furthermore, economists commonly believe, according to Boulding, that "human preferences cannot be analyzed or criticized", but this is contrary to both "human history and experience", as "virtually everyone has experienced changes in their preference structures and their valuations".[217] Defining human power, then, turns out to be a rather complex task, though Boulding seems to understand it as "the ability to get what we want"; it becomes even more complex when we ask, first, how we know what it is that we want and, secondly, who we even are.[218] Boulding notes that although decisions are made by individuals, they are nearly always made on behalf "of a larger entity". Thus, power may be understood as "getting what you want", but this depends entirely on who one is and how one knows what one *really* wants and neither of those things is easily understood.[219] Power is furthered complicated by the fact that, in social systems, the "various possibility boundaries of one person are where they are because of some decisions and some power exercised by another person, persons, or organizations". Power conflict arises, then, when some shift in the "possibility boundary" between two parties "reduces the power of one and increases the power of the other".[220] Conflict, in essence, is the shifting of said boundary toward

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[215] Ibid, 16.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid, 17.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid, 18.
[220] Ibid.

and away from each party and conflict resolution involves "the establishment of property lines agreed upon by both parties, so that neither attempts to increase his or her power…"; third parties, "especially in the form of legal systems and governments", aid in resolving conflicts by "imposing further boundaries in the form of threats on any party who violates the property lines".[221] Boulding argues that the way "in which individuals evaluate the power and well-being of others" is a "significant element in the total structure of power"; this, of course, influences both how one perceives their own level of power and that of others, as well as how one engages with others in terms of respecting, or not, power boundaries.[222] Another important question for Boulding is whether or not power can be measured "in regard to its aggregate in the total world systems" and "in regard to its distribution among individuals, groups, and organizations".[223] Since power is "multidimensional", any attempt to quantify and measure it that focuses on only one standard of measurement would be, effectively, incomplete. The distribution of power in society is also a question that allows us to understand power more generally; as Boulding points out, the human race "tends to divide into a very small group of the powerful and a large group of the relatively indigent and powerless…and a small middle class".[224] The 19th century, however, brought about:

> …the rise of the middle class to a majority of the society, with political power limited by democracy, and economic power by progressive taxation and fluctuating markets, but still leaving a substantial body of the poor, powerless, and impotent, who cannot fit themselves into the society's expanding sectors.[225]

As the powers of production have increased, so have, in turn, the powers of destruction. Humanity now has the power to destroy the entire planet, but, the power of destruction can also be used productively, "as it is in hunting, in the use of

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[221] Ibid, 18-19.
[222] Ibid, 19-20.
[223] Ibid, 20.
[224] Ibid, 21.
[225] Ibid, 22.

explosives in building canals, dams", etc., though "even these structures…can have disastrous, unexpected ecological and social consequences".[226] The "dark side of the power of destruction" is violence and war, though the used of this power has not yet seemed to have prevented "an extraordinary expansion in the overall powers of production"; Boulding estimates that warfare "rarely occupies more than 10 percent of human time and energy", while the other 90 percent goes into productive ventures such as building, agriculture, manufacturing, etc.[227] The irony here is that an increase in the powers of destruction is "in a sense a by-product of the strong tendency for the powers of production to increase":

> [agriculture] produces a storable food surplus, which can feed armies; metallurgy produces weapons as well as plows; craftsmen produce chariots as well as carts, and nuclear fission can produce both electric power and bombs.[228]

The future is uncertain particularly because weapons have become so cataclysmically destructive and the cost to transport them has decreased so drastically; Boulding points out that there have been a number of occasions in human history "when humans have abandoned some destructive power", but one "can only hope" that this may occur in the future, especially "in proportion to the powers of destruction".[229] Boulding continues his analysis by asking how it is that we can identify and categorise different sources of power; he goes about this by dividing power into three major categories from the point of view of their consequences: "destructive power, productive power, and integrative power". Destructive power, first, "is the power to destroy things"; it has "two very different aspects", however, which are reflected in "the means of destruction".[230] The two means of destruction are weapons, "whether directed toward killing people or destroying valued things", and, oddly enough, things

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[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid, 22-23.
[228] Ibid, 23.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid, 24.

that are also part of the productive process, like "bulldozers, plows, furnaces, knives", etc.[231] Productive power, on the other hand, is found:

> …in the fertilized egg, in the blueprint, in the idea, in the tools and machines that make things, in the activity of human brains and muscles that sow and reap, weave and build, construct, paint, and sculpt.[232]

Integrative power, finally, can be thought of as "an aspect of productive power that involves the capacity to build organizations, to create families and groups, to inspire loyalty, to bind people together" and "to develop legitimacy"; it has both a negative and a productive aspect, as integrative power can be used to "create enemies" and to "alienate people".[233] Each type of power corresponds to a certain, characteristic behaviour: the behaviour that is associated with destructive power is threat; the behaviour that is associated with productive power is exchange, which "covers a range of activities, from formal and contractual trade to informal reciprocity"; integrative power is associated with the behaviour "*love*", which, "in spite of its many meanings, and using it in the widest possible sense as an aspect of the integrative structure", describes a type of relationship that explains a great deal of human behaviour, where A does something for B simply because they love, and/or respect, them.[234] The love relationship may also be informed by destructive power, though in a small, but complex, way; the "capacity to create hatred" is related to this destructive power and this is the negative aspect of love.[235] In fact, the "complex dynamics of behavior that underlies the growth of love or of hatred is one of the real puzzles of social systems".[236] Political and military power "are primarily based on threat systems and destructive power", though there is also an element of productive and exchange power

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[231] Ibid.
[232] Ibid, 25.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Ibid, 25-29.
[235] Ibid, 29.
[236] Ibid.

involved.[237] Economic power has "a good deal to do with the distribution of property" and it is "particularly characteristic of institutions such as the household, the firm, the corporation, the business, and the financial institutions…"; its core, however, "is the productive and exchange power systems", as "[productive] power and exchange are the basis of income".[238] There is also a certain element of threat and integrative behaviour in economic power, as economic institutions must generally be accepted as "legitimate" in order to function.[239] Boulding defines social power as "the capacity to make people identify with some organization to which they give loyalty", though he argues that "it is hard to find a general name for those institutions that are based primarily on integrative power"; the family, churches, religious and charitable organisations and international nongovernmental organisations would, however, certainly be consider as such.[240] There are "physical, chemical and material sources of power", as the exercise of power "always involves transformations of some kind, and many of these transformations are either physical or chemical, or both"; furthermore, a condition that underlies "all forms of power" is "vulnerability" in relation to changing environments.[241] Some people, for example, are malleable while others are not and some institutions are malleable, while others are not; adaptability, then, "may lessen vulnerability in all the categories of power": a distinction related to vulnerability "is that between defensive power, which is the capacity to prevent unwanted changed" and "the power to produce wanted change, which might be called "active" power".[242] The general structure of power, then, and the distribution of power

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[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid, 30-31.
[239] Ibid, 31.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid, 32-33.
[242] Ibid, 33.

"often reflect the constantly shifting structures of defensive versus active power"; all forms of power "are subject to this very fundamental, underlying condition".[243]

II. The Constantly Shifting Distribution of Power

Power, as Boulding points out, cannot be thought of as a "stationary structure"; whether we are discussing the power of individuals or the distribution of power "among organizations", power may rise, fall, disappear, and/or shift in "endless, almost kaleidoscopic patterns".[244] The question, then, for Boulding, is this:

> [can] we detect in these whirlwinds of change guiding principles that enable us to understand the processes better, and perhaps even improve our powers of prediction, even though an irreducible element of randomness in the changing patterns of power is likely to remain?[245]

Economic power has, perhaps, "the simplest dynamic"; in order to become rich, "people, or nations, or corporations" must increase their assets "faster than their liabilities" and this happens via a mix of productivity, thrift, inheritance, luck and skill, though some elements will clearly be more important than others depending on the situation. Military and political power, on the other hand, are more difficult to explain, particularly because "threat systems seem to be more complex than exchange systems"; threat and counter-threat can be met with a variety of responses, depending on factors such as population, geography, mobility, technology, persuasion, trade and resources.[246] The dynamics of integrative power are even more difficult to theorise; as Boulding notes, those that established "the great religions had far more power over the future than…the rulers under whom they lived", which is an example of the "virtual impossibility of social prediction, particularly in integrative systems"; furthermore, it is difficult to say what "constitutes the potential for integrative change".[247] The essentially

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[243] Ibid.
[244] Ibid, 45.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Ibid, 45-46.
[247] Ibid, 46-47.

incalculable effect and influence that religious, intellectual and social movements, whether Christianity, human rights, Marxism, etc., have had on the history of the world is an example of what Boulding refers to as the "watershed principle", which is basically the idea that "very small causes can produce enormous effects".[248] Boulding argues that it is the "phenomenon of conversion" that serves "the spread of integrative structures"; said phenomenon represents:

> …in the first place, a change of identity on the part of the converted, and, second, a new identity that is related to an identification with an already existing integrative structure or group.[249]

Boulding relates the phenomenon of conversion to the ecological concept of the "empty niche", which is the theory that there are "species that would be able to persist and have an equilibrium population in the ecosystem" if empty niches that accommodated them existed.[250] Boulding claims that where there are people that are "dissatisfied with their existing niches" and who are "questioning the legitimacy of existing identities and institutions", then there is an opportunity for them to be 'converted' if there is someone available to convert them, though it is unclear why self-conversion is not possible under certain circumstances.

III. Property as Power

The social structure and institution of 'property', as Boulding argues, is relevant to the "maintenance, possible increase, and distribution of all forms of power", particularly, of course, economic power; property itself is defined as the power "to keep other people out of what is defined as the power to keep other people out of what is defined as our property", unless it is permitted by the owner.[251] If we consider, as Boulding does, all crime as "a denial of property rights of some sort", then, first, we

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[248] Ibid, 46.
[249] Ibid, 47.
[250] Ibid.
[251] Ibid, 48.

must recognise that "the main object of legislation and legal decisions", and even "the structure of the law" itself, is "to define what is legitimate in property"; secondly, we must consider that anything that we can 'possess', whether our bodies, freedom, choice, goods, etc., is a type of 'property'.[252] Property, depending on how it is defined, "defines and limits our power"; this simply means that "no property is absolute" and all property "is limited and defined by some sort of laws".[253] Property, because of its relationship to the law and to society, is directly tied to the "political and public sector of society"; this is so, in turn, because property is "the basis of exchange" and property, whether public or private, is regulated by external forces.[254] The distribution of property is an important element "in the distribution of power"; power is typically, though not essentially, proportional to property possession, meaning that those with property have more power than those with none.[255] The distribution of power changes in various ways, sometimes through revolution and other times through a further change in "relative values of different kinds of property".[256] An individual's mind and body become part of an exchange in the employer/employee relationship; an employer exchanges a wage for the 'use' of an employees capacities for a determined period of time.[257] Scarcity, both in terms of talents and abilities and in terms of resources, is "a very important source of the value of property".[258] Property, when concerned with political and military power, "takes the form of sovereignty"; nation states, through an exercise of the sovereignty granted to them on account of agreements established at the international level, subject their population to a "common structure of national law".[259] Nation states, furthermore, determine ways to limit "both people and goods

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[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid.
[255] Ibid, 49.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Ibid.
[258] Ibid.
[259] Ibid.

from crossing their boundaries" and some even try to prevent "the passage of ideas"; international war, in fact, is mainly "over violations of boundaries or attempts to change them".[260] One of the "major conditions of stable peace" is actually that nations no longer dispute national boundaries, unless they mutually agree to; this agreement is "a mutual legitimation of property, which is the underlying essence of law"; taxation is also an exercise of sovereignty.[261] Integrative organisations, e.g. churches, clubs, families, "also have some sense of property in their members", though this need not be strictly defined; things such as "the right of expulsion" and "rites of initiation of membership" can also serve as aspects of property.[262] The power of nation states consists of "a complex mixture of political, military, economic, and integrative power", but the balance of this mix is determined by the analyst; as an example, "realists" tend to emphasise "destructive and military power to the exclusion of the other forms of power".[263] Boulding, however, argues that all forms of power are related and interconnected, so missing this fact greatly impairs any understanding of power that a theorist might claim to reach. Even though Boulding agrees to the above, he does, nevertheless, admit that integrative power is the most important type of power because, without it, "neither military power nor economic power can persist for very long"; he also bemoans the fact that "historians have been very insensitive to the realities of integrative power…hence its history largely remains to be written".[264] He points out that a rise in economic power often leads to an opportunity for military power; a nation, however, has to be able "to devote economic resources to the armed forces", while also being able "to maintain its production of essential commodities in

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[260] Ibid.
[261] Ibid.
[262] Ibid, 50.
[263] Ibid.
[264] Ibid, 50-51.

terms of food, clothing, housing, and so on".[265] Military power may, and often does, also destroy economic power, because "it absorbs resources that otherwise might be devoted to investment in the economy, especially intellectual and research and management resources"; it also relates in a "complex and nonlinear" way to integrative power, as it can both create and destroy "respect and legitimacy".[266]

IV. The Objects of Power

Boulding suggests that it is possible to classify power according "to the objects of power"; power, then, can be classified into "power over material objects, power over animals and other living creatures, and power over persons".[267] Power over physical objects involves "very common experiences", such as "digging with a spade, quarrying and blasting, shooting a gun", etc.; these experiences "always involve the use of energy and the transportation and transformation of materials" and, thus, involve "information and human evaluation". Even this type of power, however, involves "changing the world in directions that we prefer", which means receiving information from the world and then ascertaining whether or not the change that one is realising is "going in the direction that we want"; because most information "comes through the eyes", we are "guided by our own images of the future" and this is true "of all forms of power".[268] Power over objects does seem to follow a sort of hierarchy, where power over inanimate objects is relatively simple, power over non-human living beings is significantly more complex and power over other humans is especially and more generally complex. Human beings, as opposed to objects, but not necessarily other animals, are capable of dissent, argumentation, persuasion and exercising power over

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[265] Ibid, 50.
[266] Ibid.
[267] Ibid, 52.
[268] Ibid.

others; Boulding asks the questions, then, "why should someone else do what I want him or her to do when that "someone else" is also a human being…who may very well want me to do something?"[269] When people try to exercise power over others, they may "refuse and resist" and even counter the attempt. Boulding asks three important questions about this type of power: how do we organise and classify this immense variety of human experience; what kinds of power can we identify; and what situations are somewhat alike and what situations are very different?[270] His answer, to a certain extent, is to analyse the "sources of obedience"; he claims that "situations that look very much alike on the surface…turn out to be very different in terms of the underlying relationships".[271] We are often able to choose what kind of power we will employ to achieve our ends and "this choice often depends on the object over which we are trying to exercise power and that we are trying to change"; the most basic division "is between productive, destructive, and integrative power" and the choice depends partly "on the nature of the object of power and partly on the degree to which a person or an organization is capable of exercising different kinds of power".[272] Boulding points out that destructive power is "partly employed in threat systems, partly in economic systems", while "productive power is virtually all part of economic systems" and "part of economic systems consists of integrative power".[273] Power is often exercised "for its own sake, almost without regard for any object"; this is how destructive power is frequently employed; in fact, "many acts of wanton destruction are the response to a sense of powerlessness in the more productive forms of power, simply because destruction is easier than production…".[274] Another power that is also exercised for its

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[269] Ibid, 53.
[270] Ibid, 54.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Ibid, 54-55.
[273] Ibid, 55.
[274] Ibid, 55-56.

own sake, "without much regard for economic consequences", is productive power, as there are certain forms of productive activity "at virtually all ages" that "give satisfaction simply in the performance".[275] There are "innumerable hobbies" that can all be done "for the sheer pleasure of doing them"; Boulding suggests that there seems to be "something in the human genes that produces an enormous urge to produce artifacts of all kinds, whether physical, mental, or organizational" and "part of the motivation here is the sheer pleasure of production".[276] The "fundamental basis of productive power" is learning and this is something that begins "very early in evolution"; productive power, then, is "likely to increase substantially" when learning is "a pleasure in itself and is done for its own sake".[277] The object of productive power, then, is both "the thing that is made by the act of production—which may also be valued for its own sake" and "the pleasure taken in the productive activity itself".[278] It is also possible to value integrative power "for its own sake"; we often take pleasure in being acknowledged by others, as well "in our own self-image".[279] Economic power is "a combination of productive and exchange power" that is mostly expressed "in power over objects in the form of goods and services", but even this type of power may be enjoyed "for its own sake".[280] Economic power has two objects: capital and income; capital deals with "stocks of useful and desirable objects or promises that the accountant measures in terms of net worth…", while income deals with "the capacity to restore the stocks as they depreciate and are consumed, and also add to them".[281] Capital and income are very closely related, as the more net worth we have, particularly if we include "the value of our bodies and minds", then it is more likely that

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[275] Ibid, 57.
[276] Ibid, 57-58.
[277] Ibid, 58.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid, 59.

we will have a larger income; income, in turn, depends "partly on our capacity to produce an increased amount of assets by activity in the form of work".[282] Exchange power "depends mainly on the exchangeable objects", which are the goods "possessed by an individual in the form of assets, and on how these assets rate in the relative price structure in the market"; every exchange requires a ratio of exchange, which is the "ratio of the quantity of what is given to the quantity of what is received".[283] Assets increase economic power in two ways: first, one adds "more to assets by production than are destroyed by consumption"; second, assets simply rise in relative value, which happens if assets held are wanted by others.[284] Uncertainty and speculation are also factors in determining economic power. Though complicated, the object of one form of power may sometimes be "the ability to exercise other forms"; an example of this is when economic power is used to increase destructive power and, consequently, threat power, though threat power "tends to destroy itself unless it can achieve integrative power…legitimacy, respectability, and so on".[285] Boulding makes the case that integrative power "is the most fundamental and…dominant form of power" because it can "exist in the kin group, for instance, with a bare minimum of threat and economic power involved, whereas unless both threat and economic power can develop integrative power to go along with them, they are very fragile and apt to collapse".[286] However, when integrative power "expands beyond the kin group" the "interactions between integrative, threat, and economic power become extremely complex and very hard to identify"; common language, religion, culture and interests do not necessarily guarantee cooperation or allegiance.[287] Disintegrative power, or the

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[282] Ibid.
[283] Ibid.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Ibid, 60-61.
[286] Ibid, 61.
[287] Ibid, 61-62.

"integration that is achieved through the hatred, fear, and threat of a common enemy", can also be used to unite or convoke disparate elements of society for a common cause.[288] Disintegrative power can lead to a "severe pathology of the integrative system" where a "negative identity", which is an identity derived from what one rejects, rather than who one *is*, can lead to a "pathological situation of internal violence".[289] Suffering and sacrifice play an important role in the "structure of integrative power"; these two acts can both create and destroy "integrative relationships", whether in war, conflict, romantic or familial relationships, or in simple, everyday interactions.[290] Boulding points out, however, that what he calls the "sacrifice trap" can lead to the collapse of a system that demands too many sacrifices, particularly in war and in religion, where those that have sacrificed are at pains to admit that their sacrifice may have been in vain and, essentially, lose faith in the system that demanded said sacrifices to begin with.[291] The object of power, particularly in instances where a system and its adherents have fallen into the "sacrifice trap", can become "lost in the exercise of power itself", which, in turn, can lead to power itself being lost.[292] Even when the "object of power is clear and well justified", it is not necessarily clear what the "appropriate means are"; the claim that "the end justifies the means" has been responsible for "some of the most inhumane acts of the human race and a great deal of human misery". The question that must be asked, then, especially of those that wish to employ military, threat and/or violent power, is "what kinds of power achieve good ends".[293]

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[288] Ibid, 62.
[289] Ibid.
[290] Ibid, 63.
[291] Ibid.
[292] Ibid.
[293] Ibid, 64.

V. The Pathologies of Power

Power, like any other system, can fail: it can lead to disaster, destruction, rebellion, chaos, oppression, tyranny and the like. Boulding quotes Lord Acton as saying that 'power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely', but he adds that "impotence corrupts and absolute impotence leads to death"; he also claims that it is not recognised that it is also influence that corrupts, "for influence is attempting to exercise power without ultimate responsibility". Though the "pathologies of the power structure" are "subtle and complex", they do, at least eventually, "give rise to institutions designed to modify or correct them"; the legal mechanisms put in place by the state, as well as nongovernmental entities, are meant to "check and correct the pathologies of power".[294] The press and the media, though they suffer from their own pathologies, also play a role in checking and calling the powerful to account. When power goes wrong, it is because the exercise of power is considered to do more harm than, "both in regard to the exerciser of power and for the subjects who may all too easily become victims"; the exercise of power, in any case, has "impacts and consequences far beyond" both who or what is exercising power and "the immediate subjects" of said exercise.[295] This is because society, the "whole earth", is an "interactive ecosystem", which, as Boulding pointed out with his concept of the 'watershed principle', means that what one person or entity does, however 'small' the action, affects or can affect what another may do, as well as affecting other events that are beyond human control completely.[296] Power that is primarily illusory, and even power that is not illusory but is not exercised properly or in a timely manner, can lead to disaster, again, both for the exerciser and for those subjected to the exercise of said power. The "illusions of power" have many origins: flattery, pride, lack of opposition

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[294] Ibid, 65-66.
[295] Ibid, 66.
[296] Ibid, 66.

and other factors can create a false sense of legitimacy and power in those that have important positions in both hierarchical and non-hierarchical systems. Another source is what Boulding calls the "dismal theorem of political science", which is the idea that "the skills that lead to the rise to power and to promotion into powerful positions often make people unfit to exercise the power they have achieved": nepotism, charisma, celebrity and other factors that have nothing to do with competence, but everything to do with popularity and electability, contribute to this phenomenon.[297] Boulding also points out that a failure to recognise what he terms as the "unconscious dynamic processes" of the world, as well "the importance of random factors", can create an "incompetence in the exercise of power"; good luck and fortuity can often be confused for skill and success, which can then lead to a false sense of competence.[298] Loyalty and favouritism can lead to those in power surrounding themselves with those who will either simply be obsequious, betray them, give them terrible advice or just, effectively, not fit to serve in their position; again, the skills that help people become powerful are not necessarily those that help them exercise that power to the benefit of others. The desire for "for its own sake", a pathological hatred of certain groups or society and a general perversion of social values, again, for the sake of power, can also lead to grave and catastrophic mistakes on the part of the 'powerful'.[299] Social behaviour can be driven, surprisingly easily, by the "need for an enemy", but this antagonism typically "leads into pathological situations".[300] All of the different categories of power have their own "distinctive pathologies"; from destructive, threat, political and military power to economic and integrative power, all types of power are "subject to pathology", though some pathologies are certainly more devastating and

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[297] Ibid, 67.
[298] Ibid, 67-68.
[299] Ibid, 68.
[300] Ibid.

perduring than others.[301] Boulding argues that "the pathologies of conflict and the pathologies of power are very closely related"; for him, a conflict is a situation where two parties "perceive a change that is the power of somebody…as benefiting or increasing the welfare of one and…diminishing the welfare of the other".[302] Conflict, as Boulding also suggested about power, can be rooted in "illusions about the world, or…on illusory valuations that may change"; conflict, like power, is costly, whether monetarily or otherwise, and often not worth the while of either party.[303] In fact, "one of the great objects of peace research" is finding ways to make conflict as 'inexpensive' as possible, particularly because there are always those, like mercenaries or weapons dealers/manufacturers, that seek to gain from it; there are also "unconscious" social forces that drive and shape conflict.[304] The law, as an institution, benefits greatly from conflict, whether domestic, societal or international, and, in fact, deals primarily in dispute, which easily leads to 'pathologies'; the military functions much in the same way and even peace-making/keeping efforts require some level of 'force', or at least a projection of it. Mechanisms of conflict resolution, as Boulding suggests and as mentioned earlier, tend to develop out of a desire to either reduce or eliminate the cost of conflict; loss of life and unsustainable defence spending are not typically preferred to general social welfare and prosperity, though this is not always the case. The argument here is that social systems, in a similar manner to biological systems, "develop resistances to the pathologies of power and conflict", though they may never be entirely impervious to social ills. Language is very important to how we perceive the pathologies of power; the symbols and metaphors that we employ when we describe and try to identify different types of power are "very suggestive": strong, weak,

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[301] Ibid, 69.
[302] Ibid, 75-76.
[303] Ibid, 76.
[304] Ibid.

hard, soft, etc.[305] However, soft power is often "more powerful and successful" than power that might be labelled as 'hard' and 'strong' forms of power, like threat and military power, often weaken, as well as undermine any good intentions of, those that choose to employ them; thus, the way that we discuss power can "betray us and weaken us", especially when we identify power solely with destructive and threat power.[306]

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[305] Ibid, 77.
[306] Ibid, 77-78.

The Fourth Dimension of Power

I. Introduction

> The fourth dimension of power concerns the creation of the social ontology of social subjects. As social subjects, agents have certain predispositions, which make them more likely to structure and confirm-structure in a felicitous manner than others. Like the other dimensions of power, the fourth dimension is not inherently dominating or conducive to empowerment. Rather, it has elements of both, often as a duality.[307]

Moving on from Boulding's three faces of power, this chapter will briefly deal with, what Mark Haugaard refers to as, *the fourth dimension of power*. We will look at both how Haugaard theorises his four dimensions of power, as well as what this means for the concept, more generally, and what the social and political implications of this understanding are. As 'the three dimensions of power' have been discussed in previous chapters, the focus, here, will be primarily on the fourth dimension, though, for Haugaard, they are all parts of an integral whole.

II. The Four Dimensions of Power

> All four dimensions of power are ideal types. They constitute lenses that render certain perspectives of reality visible. The designation of dimensions of power constitutes a way of understanding particular aspects of power, while momentarily methodologically bracketing the other dimensions.[308]

Haugaard argues that there are four dimensions of power, each of which corresponds to different *real* and particular elements of both power and experience. Speaking in sociological terms, he relates the first dimension to *agency*, the second to *structure*, the third to *system of thought* and the last to *social ontology*.[309] The first dimension of power focuses upon "the momentary exercise of power" and, as Dahl would have it, this exercise involves one actor making another actor "do something that they would not otherwise"; this first dimension is "agent-oriented and posits a direct

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[307]Haugaard, Mark. *The Four Dimensions of Power: Understanding Domination, Empowerment and Democracy.* Manchester University Press; 2020. 155.
[308] Ibid. 10.
[309] Ibid.

causal relationship between two or more social agents", while "the external conditions of possibility are taken as given".[310] Haugaard claims, however, that all four dimensions of power are present in a majority of social interactions, "even if we choose to focus upon them one at a time"; he sees it as a language game, where the word 'dimensions' is used in the way that one might describe the different sides of a cube or "the four perspectives of the plans of a house".[311] Each dimension allows us a perspective that the others do not, but "full understanding comes from first separating and then combining all four aspects or dimensions"[312]; for Haugaard, *agency*, *structure*, *system of thought* and *social ontology* are all present, irrespective of what social interaction we are analysing and irrespective of what particular element of the interaction that we choose to focus on. Haugaard takes Dahl's example of a traffic officer to describe both the first dimension of power and to elucidate Dahl's understanding of the concept:

> …suppose a policeman is standing in the middle of an intersection at which most traffic ordinarily moves ahead; he orders all traffic to turn right or left; the traffic moves as he orders it to do. Then it accords with what I conceive to be the bedrock idea of power…[313]

Now, as mentioned before, this is an example, according to Dahl, of a group of actors (here understood as "traffic") being made to do something that they would not otherwise do, which is to be understood as the first dimension of power. Haugaard, as also mentioned before, believes that, in this interaction, it is in fact the case that all four dimensions of power are present and an analysis of all four provides us a comprehensive look at the power dynamics of the entire situation and even beyond. In this example, the police officer exercises power over the drivers, as they are made to drive right or left, instead of straight ahead, which corresponds to the first dimension of power (1-D); the second dimension of power (2-D) relates to the "social structures" that

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[310] Ibid.
[311] Ibid.
[312] Ibid. 10-11.
[313] Dahl, Robert A. 'The concept of power'. *Behavioural Science*, 2(3); 1957. 202.

make this individual a police officer, "with certain dispositional powers, which are reproduced every time there is compliance, and also to the notion that there would be "2-D structural conflict", if a driver did not comply; the third dimension of power (3-D) relates to the "tacit social knowledge" that the drivers and the police officer share, as the drivers understand what the officer's role is and they confer upon him the authority (and power) to give them commands related to traffic, a system that exists by law; the fourth dimension of power (4-D) relates to what Haugaard understands as the internalised "self-discipline" that is necessary "for drivers routinely to obey the highway code, which includes compliance with the demands of traffic police, even when the driver may not wish to do so".[314] Haugaard goes on to qualify this last point by claiming that "a driver with the temperament of a feudal knight would probably cut the police officer's head off".[315] There are many problems with Dahl's original conceptualisation of this exchange, but also with Haugaard's elucidation of the same. What is important to note, first, is that Dahl claims that notions of command, coercion and obedience are the "bedrock" ideas of power; Dahl's understanding of power is *definitive*, not simply suggestive nor meant to be considered as one aspect of a greater conception. We do not consider whether the traffic officer even wishes to be doing their job, or exercising their 'power', though this would likely be explained away by claiming that someone with greater authority than the officer is simply ordering them to do something that they, in fact, do not wish to be doing and so on (until we reach the highest possible authority, which, again, is very problematic). Haugaard's understanding of the same event makes a point of using different elements of the situation to make claims about and explain the societal implications and realities of such an interaction. Something that is arguably

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[314] Haugaard, Mark. *The Four Dimensions of Power: Understanding Domination, Empowerment and Democracy.* Manchester University Press; 2020. 10.
[315] Ibid.

missing, at least explicitly and possibly unintentionally, is the fact that all of the 'power', *per se*, and especially the conferring of 'authority', is really coming, for the most part, from the drivers. The first claim is that the officer is making the drivers do something that they would not otherwise do, which is true, if you take the example and the claim quite literally; the traffic would normally proceed straight ahead, but is being redirected to the left or to the right. However, if you take it as fact that most drivers, or even just a few drivers, want nothing more than to follow the law and would even go out of their way to do so, then this claim seems mistaken, at best. Yes, the drivers are physically doing something that they would not normally do, but philosophically, or even ideologically, the drivers (or at least some drivers) are doing exactly what they always do, which is to follow and obey the law. This might be explained by the second claim, which, according to Haugaard, is that there are certain social structures that make the police officer who they are and certain powers belong to them and are conferred upon them, as a consequence of this responsibility; this responsibility and these powers (and this understanding) is reproduced every time someone complies with the officer's commands; this reality, as *real* as it may be, goes beyond compliance and immediate social structures, however. The officer enforces the law, which they are neither allowed nor granted the authority to make nor interpret; a driver may choose not to comply with an officer's orders and do so legally and an officer may also choose to exercise an authority that they do not have and said exercise may be illegal in its own right. 'Power', here, if we wish to call it that, is far more complex than the role of either actor and whether one chooses compliance or disobedience in any given social encounter that requires a choice to be made. This may, however, be explained by the third claim: Haugaard claims that there is "tacit social knowledge" that makes it so that the drivers recognise an individual as a 'traffic officer' and that any commands or requests that

said individual may make, with respect to traffic or other legal matters, may reasonably be complied with; Haugaard states that if "the driver think of the police office as having an absolute right to command, there is reification involved".[316] A driver may comply, in this instance, due solely to apathy or convenience, or a driver may choose to disobey because they know, for whatever reason, that this officer is wrong or that they might appeal to a higher authority that would overrule the officer's decision. If a person not dressed as a police officer were directing traffic, in a similar manner, then the idea, here, is that this would be suspect and it would be reasonable to *not* comply with this person's commands, but there could, of course, be a serious accident up ahead or, at the very least, a very good reason for drivers not to proceed in that direction. This point may, nevertheless, be explained by the fourth and final claim, which argues that drivers have an internalised "self-discipline" that is necessary for them to "routinely obey the highway code, which includes compliance with the demands of traffic police, even when the driver may not wish to do so".[317] This claim may be the most important of all, though Haugaard states that all of them are necessary, since it would seem to explain and rebut any counterclaims made above. Drivers have internalised the self-discipline that is required to follow traffic laws and this means listening to traffic officers, who let us know when temporary changes are, by necessity, made; this would suggest that the law itself is internalised, or, at the very least, the will to follow the law is internalised. This will is borne out of culturalisation, habit, fear or some sort of combination of these. It may seem odd to characterise a fear of penalty or death as 'self-discipline', but this fourth claim may boil down to precisely nothing more than that. Traffic cameras, traffic police, signs, obstacles and the like all exist to remind and shape the driver's understanding of the law; it is an understanding of the law, illegality, punishment and

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[316] Ibid.
[317] Ibid.

so on that are internalised by the driver and not necessarily some sort of 'self-discipline', though this may also be the case, certainly. An unwavering respect for traffic laws is not an emergent characteristic, however, and follows from an understanding of law itself and a further understanding, and presumed fear, of illegality and its consequences. Furthermore, a driver may wish to obey traffic laws simply because it is safe for them to do so; they may have no true respect for the law, but a respect for their own life and their own property compels them to act in a certain way, nonetheless. Their ostensible 'self-discipline' may be nothing more than self-interest and convenience, which happens to serve them well. Drivers commit innumerable traffic offences when there are no officers and no cameras around and this is especially true when there are few to no drivers on the road, in the early morning hours. The point here, effectively, is that Dahl's point omits critical elements and points of debate from the 'power' concept and that Haugaard's points, while more complex and more elucidatory, do the same. A 'simple' situation, like a traffic stop, is actually far more complex than Dahl or Haugaard can explain, which, arguably, leaves 'power' in a conceptually nebulous place; a simple explanation does far too little work and a seemingly complex explanation does not do nearly enough work to explain every power dynamic at play in even the most minor of interactions. Moreover, there are a host of (socio-)economic implications and considerations that have yet to be discussed.

III. The Fourth Dimension of Power

> The being-in-the-world of social subjects is not given. Rather, it is constructed through the process of socialization. The being-in-the world of social subjects is inextricably tied to their practical consciousness, which creates second-nature expectations that create security in the social subject. However, when these fundamental ordering expectations are thwarted this causes a flooding through of emotions, including anxiety, shame and anger…[318]

Power, it is argued, does not exist in a vacuum; it is a social activity, process or relation(ship). For Haugaard, there are four dimensions of power, with the fourth concerning "the creation of the social ontology of social subjects"; this dimension considers individuals as "social subjects" and "agents' who have "certain dispositions, which make them more likely to structure and confirm-structure in a felicitous manner than others".[319] He argues that a subject's "being-in-the-world" is determined through a process of socialisation, as well as, presumably, both culturalisation and subjectivisation. This "being-in-the-world" of the subject is defined by their "practical consciousness", which means that there are things, situations and 'truths' that the subject comes to expect, as "second-nature", which, when they hold, produce a feeling of "security" in the subject. When this nature is disturbed, however, it causes a "flooding through of emotions, including anxiety, shame and anger"; this means, then, that order equates to security, while disorder, effectively, equates to a sort of helplessness and, more importantly, a sense of powerlessness. This "ontological security" is founded upon "the establishment of routine", which, according to Haugaard (and Erik Erikson), "begins with the infant's relationship with its primary carer"; an infant "experiences anxiety at letting go of the mother's breast', since they have no idea "if it will return".[320] The infant's first success in their subjectivisation, then, is "the establishment of confidence in the return of the breast, which empowers her to let go of the breast

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[318] Ibid. 155.
[319] Ibid.
[320] Ibid.

without undue anxiety"; Haugaard claims that it is this "confluence between inner

certainty and outer predictability" that is "central to ontological security".[321] The

subject's 'being-in-the-world' is tied to the subject's "capacity to link together

expectation with external occurrence", which is "interpretative" in nature; this is best

expressed in the notion of object permanence:

> [an infant] develops practical knowledge that objects may be out of sight but do not
> vanish into thin air. The foundation of ontological security is an inner certainty
> concerning the continued existence of the world-out-there, both social and material.[322]

Furthermore:

> Our existence relative to the world-out-there entails the continual monitoring and making
> present of reality. This is tied into our capacity to link memory with experience. Learning
> object permanence is both an act of interpretation and memory…This trust in the world-
> out-there is the inner certainty fundamental to ontological security...[323]

Haugaard adds that the "pre-linguistic child does not discursively construct a theory

concerning the absence of presence of her mother's breast, nor about object

permanence", but, rather, that this knowledge "is part of her taken-for-granted reality";

it is this "inner certainty" that is constitutive of a "default natural attitude", which "defines

the ontological predispositions: who we are".[324] This becomes "second-nature", which

is experienced as internal to the self and, thus, "as if it were…first nature".[325] Now,

without entering into arguments over whether concepts are innate to the human mind

and human experience, which Haugaard does, in fact, do in chapter 3, we should first

look at whether or not ontological security is really founded upon the establishment of

routine, which begins with the infant's relationship to the breast. Irrespective of the fact

that infant's milk may come from a variety of sources, it would seem that what is being

described by Haugaard, and Erikson, is an infant's relationship to hunger and to a

source of food, rather than to another 'subject'. The infant's anxiety stems from a

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[321] Ibid. 156.
[322] Ibid.
[323] Ibid.
[324] Ibid. 156-157.
[325] Ibid.

feeling of hunger that can only be sated by some form of nourishment, which the infant *may* associate with a breast or a bottle, but is *certainly* associated with some source of food. Food or, more generally, nourishment may be reified as some object or person, in a primitive sense, but the true source of the infant's anxiety is hunger, which causes them discomfort and, in its most extreme form, ill health. An infant's hunger and thirst, if it can be described as such, are both sated by their mother's milk or by some other form of nourishment, e.g. infant formula or some style of it. The concept of thirst develops later, when solid foods are introduced into the diet and the water that the body needs must come, mainly, from another source. Furthermore, the concepts of object permanence and memory can be observed in many, if not most, non-human animals, which, *arguably*, objectively qualifies the infant at the same cognitive level as a non-human animal. The point, here, is that an infant is made human (is made *subject*), not necessarily because of their actions, but because of society's relationship to infants, more generally. We can observe certain behaviours in children and we qualify them as 'human', specifically because they exist in a human society and are born from humans; we also anthropomorphise the behaviour of non-human animals because 'nature', *per se*, is observed in relation to humans and through human conceptualisation. The concept of 'species' is itself a human conceptualisation, which is meant to reflect and explain a *natural* phenomenon. In any case, we can leave this critique with the idea that the origins of an infant's first anxieties are related to biological needs, as opposed to primarily 'social' needs; these biological needs become social concerns (are *socialised*), naturally, in a society, though this need not necessarily be the case. An infant, for example, who never has contact with another human (outside of the womb), would certainly cry, feel anxious and experience terror, if they were starving, especially if they had no shelter. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that

hunger is not experienced until birth, as all of the nutrients that a foetus needs are provided via the placenta and umbilical cord and it is only the bearer of the child who experiences hunger.[326]

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[326] Cetin, I., Alvino, G., Radaelli, T. and Pardi, G. (2005), Fetal nutrition: A review. Acta Pædiatrica, 94: 7-13.

Power and the Social

I. Introduction

This chapter focuses on Sallie Westwood's book, 'Power and the Social', which makes the claim that power is an immanent 'force' in social relations and that "there is no social without power". Westwood, thus, analyses the way(s) in which different theorists, such as Hobbes, Machiavelli, Locke et al., conceptualise power "in relation to the construction of the social". This analysis affords us a unique perspective on how power develops in relation to the adoption, promotion or development of different societal practices, norms, mores and structures. Westwood points out how different theories of power emerge(d) directly in relation and in correspondence with societal, scientific and political movements and developments of their time. A main point to be made, here, is whether or not there exist, or can exist, any forms of power or control that are strictly 'asocial', i.e. independent of a social relation or, at the very least, contingent solely upon the 'self'.

II. Power and the Social

This chapter focuses on Sallie Westwood's book, 'Power and the Social', which makes the claim that power is an immanent 'force' in social relations and that "there is no social without power". Westwood, thus, analyses the way(s) in which different theorists, such as Hobbes, Machiavelli, Locke et al., conceptualise power "in relation to the construction of the social". This analysis affords us a unique perspective on how power develops in relation to the adoption, promotion or development of different societal practices, norms, mores and structures. Westwood points out how different theories of power emerge(d) directly in relation and in correspondence with societal, scientific and political movements and developments of their time. A main point to be made, here, is whether or not there exist, or can exist, any forms of power or control

that are strictly 'asocial', i.e. independent of a social relation or, at the very least, contingent solely upon the 'self'.

II. The Modernisation of Power

> This book begins with the proposition from the post-structuralist account that power is immanent—there is no social without power. However, in an attempt to pursue this in a sociological discourse, rather than a purely philosophical one, there are ways in which I hope to show it is possible to provide an account of power and the social that is substantively intelligible through the use of examples that demonstrate there is no social without power.[327]

As Sallie Westwood points out in the first chapter of her book *Power and the Social*, "debates on the nature of power in sociological discourses usually turn initially to the work of Hobbes…Locke…and Machiavelli…as precursors to the modern period"; contemporary theorists emphasise "one or other of these": Clegg, for example, "uses the differences between Hobbes and Machiavelli to trace distinctively different accounts of power", while Hindess "uses Hobbes and Locke in relation to a more Parsonian account of power as capacities".[328] Westwood argues that what is important about the different accounts of these three theorists is the way that they each theorise power "in relation to a construction of the social"; this, in fact, is precisely what makes them "precursors of modernity and sociological enquiry". She claims that Hobbes, Locke and Machiavelli did not simply wish to define power, but to address "the issues raised by the exercise of powers, the relations between state and 'people', governance and…the moral questions bound to the exercise of power, responsibility and freedom"[329]; it was Hobbes and Locke, in particular, who struggled with "the relationship between subjectivities and the social…the distinctions between nature and passions, 'man' as social and part of a collectivity or social formation".[330] This is illustrated in Hobbes' writings, where he "directed attention to the problem of order"

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[327] Westwood, Sallie. *Power and the Social*. New York: Routledge, 2002. 23
[328] Ibid, 6.
[329] Ibid, 6-7.
[330] Ibid, 7.

and "suggested that all subjects exchange a degree of personal power for social stability in a social contract with the sovereign"; Macpherson claims that Hobbes' views were very much a product of "the then developing capitalism of Europe" and "a theory of 'possessive individualism', well suited to the specific phase of capitalist development".[331] Hobbes, then, is seen as a social philosopher who was "trying to think through the upheavals, political, economic, social and religious, of his time"; he was, furthermore, a "radical…self-professed atheist, at a time when religious sentiments were not questioned, apart from which camp an individual belonged to".[332] The social, as Hobbes understood it, was not identified "simply with the sovereign and the problem of order but also with the notion of civil society"[333]. Clegg suggests that the Hobbesian thesis, i.e. the idea that "barbarism rules without civil society", "has strong moral overtones, but a mechanistic notion of power" and it is this notion that founds contemporary accounts of "nations, states and institutional frameworks".[334] This idea motivated Durkheim, in the late 19th century, to suggest that the basis of the moral order and "the generation of consensus" could be found in the "division of labour in society", rather than some sort of 'social contract'.[335] Clegg contrasts Hobbes' theories with those of Machiavelli, who saw power as a series of "plays and strategies"; Machiavelli theorises, in *The Prince*, power as being, effectively, a "network of relations".[336] Power, then, is "not an absolute, nor is it vested in…[the] sovereign]"; it is "simply the effectiveness of strategies for generating a wider scope of action"; Machiavelli employs "military metaphors", which suggests "a keen awareness of the role of violence in the exercise of power" and the effectiveness of strategies is judged

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[331] Ibid.
[332] Ibid.
[333] Ibid.
[334] Ibid.
[335] Ibid.
[336] Ibid.

precisely on whether or not they are effective in keeping those in power *in power*, rather than some social sense of morality and a mechanical understanding of the use of power.[337] Hindess, on the other hand, does not see Machiavelli as a "theorist of power" and he focuses, instead, on Hobbes' *Leviathan* and the work of John Locke, which allows him to account for the concepts of "freedom and responsibility" as originating in the "notion of consent" that Hobbes espouses and "the idea of a dispersal of powers as regulatory mechanisms in society"; Foucault, in fact, focuses on this very consensus.[338] Westwood, however, criticises Hindess for not focusing more on how certain discourses of Hobbes, Machiavelli and Locke turned "'natural man' into 'social man'", and it is these discourses that are important to the development "of a sociological space in which the social could be thought and theorised as distinctive".[339] Westwood finds Hobbes' conception of the person as most interesting; he argues that "instrumentalism in human affairs defines 'rational' actors" and, thus, the "strategist and the person are separated from nature by reason, and it is reason that is the invisible thread of the social".[340] Hobbes, as an atheist, theorised an entirely material world that "gave precedence to reason, though he did acknowledge "the power of love"; this materiality, nevertheless, "was also an embodied world in which corporeality was not separated from the social".[341] This world allowed Hobbes, then, to "discuss the strategic deal done between the subjects and the sovereign in which subjects exchanged freedoms for security, but also implicit…was the ever-present threat of violence as both an aspect of the human condition and the state of nature".[342] As Westwood points out, Hobbes, Machiavelli and Locke were crucial to "a conception of

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[337] Ibid.
[338] Ibid, 8.
[339] Ibid.
[340] Ibid.
[341] Ibid.
[342] Ibid.

the social": Hobbes, "with his notion of a social contract, conceived a collectivity that could be thought beyond the individual"; Machiavelli, on the other hand, "with his ethnography of power, placed the individual in relation to others"; Locke, finally, "conceived a notion of laws, rights and responsibilities…that placed a premium on a conception of the social good", which eventually became the "'felicific calculus' of Benthamite social philosophy".[343] The self-proclaimed empiricism of these theorists, combined with their aforementioned concern for the social, was what eventually became the scientifically legitimate study of the social known, of course, as sociology; Hobbes, Machiavelli and Locke could only work and "differentiate forms of power" within the context of their own time, which included the spread of "merchant capitalism and the growing urbanisation of parts of Europe".[344] As, effectively, proto-sociologists, Hobbes, Machiavelli and Locke drew on what they saw as the realities of their time in conceptualise power and, as Westwood argues, power "has been bound to theorisations of the social" from "the earliest attempts to theorise" it.[345] As reason became understood as "a way of being and knowing the world", it became necessary, as Hawthorn understood, to supplement "the much vindicated faculty of reason by experience and experiment"; this understanding, combined with a need to supplement it, "provided the impetus for sociology and a conception of the social as intelligible through laws, measurement and empirical verification".[346] The idea that the social was somehow "distinctive and intelligible" came from Enlightenment thinkers need to differentiate between the natural and the social; Montesquieu, in his *The Spirit of the Laws*, was concerned with how, "and through which mechanisms, the social was to be constituted and man's natural tendencies curbed because of the defects with

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[343] Ibid.
[344] Ibid.
[345] Ibid.
[346] Ibid, 9.

human nature".[347] For Montesquieu, law was the "embodiment of reason", but Hawthorn suggested that, at this time, "the rational was held to be natural and what was natural was held to be rational", which, in turn, suggested both "a notion of natural justice and a universality to the law".[348] Montesquieu, nevertheless, recognised that law "interacted with specific cultures and customs", which made it specific even in its universality; these legal "specificities" were born out of the "somehow innate characteristics or sensibilities of specific groups or nations".[349] He believed that the "*esprit*" in each nation should be honoured and that it was reason that brought stability and relevant laws to it; he did not conceive of any societal continuum because they were all different and "should remain so".[350] Furthermore, human nature, as concept, had to be bound to society "because individuals did not exist outside of the nexus of relations of power within society, whatever the type"; the laws, though "contradictory and conservative", "emphasised the immutability of 'national' characteristics and located politics with ethics and the fit between reason, ethics and cultural specificities".[351] Rousseau, as opposed to Montesquieu, romanticised the "state of nature" and adopted a "more evolutionary view of the development of societies through a conception of stages"; "natural man" is in an ideal situation, but the answer "to the ills of the world lay not in nature but in society".[352] It is only through society that one can enter "the moral universe", which, though it allows one to understand the concepts of good and 'right', "also introduces notions and practices" that are "evil and reprehensible"; the goal, then, is to establish morality in people through a generation of the "best" form of government, which would, naturally, include the best form of order

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[347] Ibid.
[348] Ibid.
[349] Ibid.
[350] Ibid.
[351] Ibid.
[352] Ibid.

and the best laws.[353] Rousseau's solution to this was the introduction of a "social contract", which was "a trade of liberty for the individual against the security of the general will"; it is these conditions that allow for the creation and preservation of "the moral individual".[354] Hawthorn suggests that Rousseau, rather than solve the problem of "the individual versus society", instead simply re-frames "the definitions of individual and society in a modern way". Again, this account was very much a product of its time, as theorists had to contend with the French Revolution "and the growing sense that a social contract had to be sought between governors and governed in the interests of stability and order".[355] The concept of modernity, which was a product of the Enlightenment, prioritised science and rationalisation but also insisted that both concepts were "revolutionary"; this meant that the purpose of science was to scrutinise "social and political beliefs and forms of organisation" and to search for truth, which is what nature ultimately stands for.[356] The way to unite the natural and the social, then, is to employ the tools of science, reason and empirical verifications in the search for truth; Rousseau conceives of this unity as "the general will", "which is both society and those who compose society" and not "one section against another". Touraine suggests that Rousseau's rational society predates "the Durkheimian conception of the collective consciousness"; the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers saw this as "civil society" and, ultimately, even Kant argued for an ethics that was very much in the vein of Rousseau's politics "in which the higher good is duty or a part in the social/universal and the duty is to know".[357] Tourraine concluded that the triumph of modernity:

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[353] Ibid, 9-10.
[354] Ibid, 10.
[355] Ibid.
[356] Ibid.
[357] Ibid.

> …meant the suppression of eternal principles, the elimination of all essences and of artificial entities such as the Ego and cultures in favour of a scientific understanding of biopsychological mechanisms and of the unwritten and impersonal rules that govern the exchange of commodities, words and women…[it] paved the way for the invasion of the classical order of modernity by the violence of power and the diversity of needs…[358]

Tourraine did not ultimately believe in the success of the creation of a "rational society", because he believed that social life, rather than being "transparent and governed by rational choices", was "full of powers and conflicts"; modernity, nevertheless, is a liberating force, as understood by Berman, since it promises us "adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world…and, at the same time, threatens to destroy everything we have…we know…we are".[359] It is this "contradictory" and "paradoxical" legacy that now "fuels the preoccupations of our times and our futures"; Westwood herself focuses on issues central to these concerns: "the relationship between the social and powers, the individual and society" and "the relationship between the natural, the virtual and the social".[360]

II. The Legacy of Marx

Marx, as well as early and later sociologists, struggled with the issues raised in the previous section, but, like the Enlightenment philosophers, they had to contend with the developing movements of their time, e.g. modern capitalism, imperialism and nationalisms. Marx, as influenced by Hegel and "the political economists", endeavoured to understand, on a scientific level, "the laws of motion of capitalism, including an understanding of the mechanisms of accumulation and…the role the commodity"; he was, nonetheless, a "philosopher, economist and inspiration to revolutionary movements" and these movements took from him "conceptions of power that led to revolutionary programmes".[361] While Marx did write a great deal on

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[358] Ibid.
[359] Ibid, 11.
[360] Ibid.
[361] Ibid.

economic power, he also understood the "power of ideologies and of collective subjects to act on the world"; he emphasised "the revolutionary nature of capitalism itself and the ability of the powerful, the bourgeoisie, to act on the world in their own interests with initiative and a power base to enable transformations".[362] Capitalism, while creating a form of systematic oppression, also "held within itself the revolutionary potential of the growing proletariat"; the system "contained its own critique and modes of organisation that turn critique into action in specific circumstances".[363] Marx understood the power of both coercion and of the state, and "the ways in which violence is part of ever nation-state, available to those in power through the military"; violence and coercion, however, are not the only operational forms of power, also at work are: "the necessities of life, the organisation of capitalist production, the power of poverty and the power of ideas and representations expressed in the language of ideologies".[364] Lefebvre argues that Marx's "early period" produced a primarily, "but not exclusively", political concept of modernity; yet, all of the nuances of Marx's thesis were lost in the development of the authoritarian regimes "dedicated to statist versions of the socialist future".[365] Westwood argues that the history of the development of sociology is often framed as a debate with Marx, and this is because Marx expresses his concept of "the social" "within the frame of capitalist development in which social, economic and political elements are constantly articulated", which, effectively, allowed for a "re-reading of Marx away from the economic determinism of earlier understandings".[366] These articulations between "the political, economic and ideological spheres", instead, created "the space of the social in which collectivities could secure gains"; this reading, which was inspired by structuralism, was, for the

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[362] Ibid.
[363] Ibid.
[364] Ibid.
[365] Ibid.
[366] ibid.

most part, a result of the work of Antonio Gramsci.[367] Gramsci argued that "the crude economism of the developing communist parties" was misguided, and that "the state and civil society" are, in fact, "separate but interacting" realms, with the civil realm also being "a space of political action".[368] The "ideological sphere" is equally as important as the civil realm in determining "the fate of political action and programmes"; Gramsci understood culture as a 'lived practice' and that "power blocs from the ruling classes could generate a consensus in society through the processes of ideological hegemony".[369] This consensus means that people are not simply coerced into believing something, but that "ideological spaces" are both "actively embraced and resisted by people in relation to a vast array of messages and signs mediated by the life circumstances of individuals"[370], which means hat even those who recognise that they are being subjugated or manipulated in one way or another may choose to accept the situation for a variety of seemingly positive reasons. Gramsci's work has inspired a move away from early Marxist understandings of ideologies, which focused on the concept of 'false consciousness' and the "all-embracing power of the media", and towards a more "nuanced account of the role of the media in the seductions of capitalism"; these new theories introduce the concept of desire, as well as "the investments that subjects have in consumption", as being "a crucial part of global modernities".[371] Gramsci's theories have also allowed sociologists and political scientists to develop new understandings of the way that the state and civil society interact; contemporary studies on social movements have drawn on "the importance of civil society, the modes of representation of politics and the development of

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[367] Ibid, 12.
[368] Ibid.
[369] Ibid.
[370] Ibid.
[371] Ibid.

collective subjects".[372] Skocpol's work, for example, analyses different "revolutionary moments" and how they relate to the role of the state; she sees the state not as "an analytical category or absence", but as "an organisational structure responsible for policing, the military, and securing the conditions for economic development".[373] Her work, then, focuses on "the historical development and geo-political place of different states within global political and economic structures", rather than simply placing the state "in relation to economic and political forms", as "more thoroughly Marxist accounts" do; Westwood argues that this places Skocpol's work more in line with Weber's work in sociology than with Marx's analysis.[374] Weber developed an account "of the rationalisation and bureaucratisation of modern societies", which was itself, essentially, a continuation of the concerns of "the Enlightenment project"; he focused on the prevailing "sense of disenchantment" that accompanied "the distinctive development of Western modernity" and he touched on everything "from religion to music".[375] As far as power was concerned, he distinguished "legal-rational power from traditional and charismatic forms of authority in relation to the presence or absence of the state"; these "forms of authority were separate from the issue of individual power", which he understood as "the will to effect changes in another actor's behaviour, context or view of the world".[376] Power, then, "was central to Weber's understanding of the processes of rationalisation"; Beetham noted that Weber's concern for bureaucracy was not so much about how well bureaucratic forms functioned, but rather how power is "exercised and developed" *through* them.[377] Power, both institutional and individual, was theorised by Weber "in a negative sense and as a

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[372] Ibid.
[373] Ibid.
[374] Ibid.
[375] Ibid, 13.
[376] Ibid.
[377] Ibid.

capacity"; he recognised the importance of "economic factors", but he understood these factors only in relation to "ideas and ideologies", which he conceived of as social phenomena.[378] Weber did not understood exploitation "in relation to class", but, instead, "sought to understand class forms through the notion of status and market situation"; many of his conclusions, in fact, "have been incorporated into the main body of both empirical and theoretical sociology".[379] Weber's sociology, unlike Durkheim's, which sought the elaboration of "social facts" and the creation of an object of study for sociology through said elaboration, was centred around "a theory of social action and the power of…understanding"; the social, then, was not "external to the subject, but the two are one and the same".[380] Weber's subjects, nevertheless, were "rational actors", which meant that the social had to be "constituted within the realm of reason and morality"; this clearly follows on from the tradition of "the French rationalists and Hobbes and Locke".[381] Weber, then, did not posit "social facts…collective consciousness…[nor the] re-building of solidaristic ties through a re-figured division of labour that would allow for a moral social space"; instead, Weber's vision was based on

> the rise and rise of bureaucratic forms of power that stretched out as a vast network through society, generating forms of individuation and alienation not located, as they were for Marx, with capitalist production but with, what Foucault later termed, governmentality and the management of populations.[382]

Furthermore,

> …these forms were a special form of power tied to rationalisation and bureaucratic procedures, and separated from charismatic power, which was secured through the person.[383]

Simmel, on the other hand, embraced modernity and became, as Frisby suggested, "the true sociologist of modernity", as he forged a link "between the developing forms

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[378] Ibid.
[379] Ibid.
[380] Ibid.
[381] Ibid.
[382] Ibid.
[383] Ibid.

of urbanisation, city life, the role of intellectuals and artists, and the importance of money"; he believed that the cultural and the social, "and the practices of everyday life", were "bound into each other and not separated" as Weber separated science and culture, "locating the former with progress and the latter with a life of its own".[384] In fact, it was precisely this relatively autonomous cultural realm that interested Simmel the most; he did not believe in historical analysis, but rather the attempt to understand "the new mentalities of urban life" that brought together "the subjective and the social" in what he termed "the dissolution of fixed contents in the fluid element of the soul".[385] Simmel tried to make sense of, "and elucidate", the "transience of life in the cities and the shake out it implied for ties of kin and culture"; this 'shake out' was understood as the result of how commodification was forging "an increasing separation between the subjective and objective realms expressed through the power of money, so central to capitalist forms and relations".[386] Simmel believed that money, "as a medium of exchange", "was separated from the social actors in the transactions"; commodities, at the same time, are "everywhere", but the realm of commodities is "not encompassed only by the economic".[387] The realm of commodities is a realm of "social spaces, alive with social relations and pleasures, in contradiction to the stultifying production relations that had produced the commodities"; this understanding turned Simmel into "the sociologist of consumption and metropolitan life, and a forerunner of much that came to be understood as cultural studies and the cultural turn in sociology".[388] Simmel did not see a separation between the social and "the realm of the individual psyche or the economic"; he determined that "for modern living, the world of capitalism,

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[384] Ibid, 13-14.
[385] Ibid, 14.
[386] Ibid.
[387] Ibid.
[388] Ibid.

consumption and production was deep in the psyche and part of the times".[389] Simmel understood power as a very "nebulous notion", as something "implicit in the economic relations of capitalism, in the capitalist labour process and in the power of consumption"; he understood "the seductions of capitalism and the ways in which power does not stand above or outside individuals" and that power "requires an active engagement".[390] This allowed Simmel, like Gramsci, to "articulate the ideological hegemonies bound to consumption as much as the imperatives of production relations".[391] Sociology in Britain did not develop in the same way as it did in Continental Europe; instead of the development of a "sociological imagination", sociology in Britain developed by importing its founding fathers: Marx, Weber and Durkheim, and by following Charles Booth, "a social reformer", "into a form of social research and a passion for class studies and class analysis"; these importations continue to this day because of, as Westwood points out, "the different status and role that intellectuals are accorded in France and Germany compared with the UK".[392] The development of "contemporary accounts of the social and the theorisation of power", thus, has come via the work of Habermas, "the tradition of critical theory and the Althusserians", the work of Ulrich Beck and Michel Foucault, the work of Touraine and, in the UK, the work of Anthony Giddens and Zygmunt Bauman, though they are both "deeply influenced by writers from beyond the UK".[393] Habermas describes himself as a Marxist, but his 'Marxism' is informed by Weber and the Frankfurt, which morphs it into a "critical theory that takes its departure from Simmel"; Habermas' project is "to understand modernity in relation to the limitations of rational scientism within a

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[389] Ibid.
[390] Ibid.
[391] Ibid.
[392] Ibid.
[393] Ibid, 14-15.

grounding of philosophy".[394] Though he remains a "political writer", he sees the social and the political as being more distinct than a fundamental Marxist would; Outhwaite, in fact, refers to Habermas as a "Weberian Marxist", one who agrees fundamentally with Weber while "maintaining a constructively critical relationship with Marxism".[395] Habermas views "the modern project" as one that has yet to be complete, rather than one that should be supplanted by another worldview; Habermas' theory of action "in relation to rationality" distinguishes between "instrumental and strategic action" and critiques the idea that emancipation comes from rationality.[396] He does not believe that the account of the social sciences provided by scientism offers "the discourses necessary for a critical sociology"; because he is concerned with developing "an account of the public sphere", then "issues of power and the ways in which power is transformed in modern societies" become crucial.[397] Habermas looks at the ways that "the growth of specific regulatory discourses" affect "citizens in modern societies", but he focuses more on "the role of law in democratic societies" and this results in his maintaining "the importance of the state" and "distinguishing between two types of power": "the administrative power of the state" and, following on from Hannah Arendt, the "communicative power located with collective action", which is often, in fact, "against the state".[398] Habermas criticises Foucault because he does not include "collectivites in struggle" in his analysis; he does, however, see communicative power in "less literal ways" in the "subject-less communication circuits of forums and associations", particularly because it is only in this "anonymous form" that "communicatively fluid power" can bind "the administrative power of the state

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[394] Ibid, 15.
[395] Ibid.
[396] Ibid.
[397] Ibid.
[398] Ibid.

apparatus to the will of the citizens".[399] The concern here is how consent, in liberal democracy, is generated and sustained, as well as how civil society and the state are related and how said relationship "can be more emancipatory and participatory"; communicative action allows Habermas to partly theorise the relationship "between the subject and the social", to overcome the "structure/action dichotomy" and to locate "the social with communicative acts within a frame that encompasses the rational, the political and the ethical".[400] Habermas' work returns us to themes that were important for Hobbes, Locke and the Enlightenment philosophers: "issues of morality and state power" and "the role of civil society and citizen"; but he consistently radicalises "this vision" by introducing "Marxist categories and the role of collective subjects".[401] Giddens, like Habermas, through his "theories of structuration" sought ways to "delineate the social" and to "overcome the division between structure and action"; this corresponds to Giddens' conception of 'modernity' and his views on "power, authority, domination and violence".[402] Giddens holds that agency and power are directly related, since agency is defined by the capability to "make a difference", which, in turn, is the capability to "exercise some sort of power"; all social relations involve power, particularly because power "defines the actor and agency".[403] Giddens understands, however, that power is multifarious and that can be found anywhere from the "transactional level wherein power is constituted as transformative capacity" to the "state and institutional level wherein domination is inscribed in institutions and the state"; in fact, the theory of structuration claims that power "is intrinsic to all interactions".[404] This means, then, that emancipatory projects are flawed, at best,

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[399] Ibid.
[400] Ibid.
[401] Ibid.
[402] Ibid, 16.
[403] Ibid.
[404] Ibid.

since there is "no social space beyond authority"; the most that one can hope for is "the achievement of rationally defensible forms of authority".[405] Giddens also understands the role of violence and surveillance in maintaining the nation-state and global order; in fact, is is these "extremes of totalitarianism that deny the reflexivity of individuals", which can be seen as "the marker of liberal democracy".[406] Giddens suggests that the way to oppose "the enormity of state power" to have "control over the means of violence" is a "life-world where actors have choices and possibilities to act on their own worlds and effect their biographies"; however, as critics have pointed out,

> the possibility of exercising choice and securing outcomes is still bound in capitalism to the refractions of class, gender and racism, which are also crucially bound to the issue of violence and the nation-state.[407]

Giddens, as Westwood points out, reminds us of "the saliency of context and the ethnographies of power that permeate the social structure"; he, like Beck, is concerned with "process and the role of agency within the developing forms of late modernity", though Beck focuses on the concepts of risk and safety as being "a major preoccupation for the middle classes in Western societies (and globally)".[408] The middle, and upper, classes, then, take advantage of their "cultural capital and competence" to 'insure' themselves "against the risk-laden world they inhabit"; those who have "obtained secure jobs, high levels of education and income" feel that they must "struggle constantly with securing [them]".[409] Individuals come to see the world as "risky and without safety", which causes them to accept living under conditions like "endless surveillance" and to emphasise the management of all forms of risk; things like "insurance policies" and "home security" create "a binary between the world out

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[405] Ibid.
[406] Ibid.
[407] Ibid.
[408] Ibid.
[409] Ibid, 17.

there and the subject", which de-centres the social and enfeebles "the lived experience of the social within the individual".[410] Beck, thus, recognises this and "the costs of all this security in our lives and how imaginary it can be".[411]

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[410] Ibid.
[411] Ibid.

Truth, Opinion and Power

I. Introduction

> The chances of factual truth surviving the onslaught of power are very slim indeed; it is always in danger of being maneuvered out of the world not only for a time but, potentially, forever. Facts and events are infinitely more fragile things than axioms, discoveries, theories…Once they are lost, no rational effort will ever bring them back.[412]

This chapter deals with Hannah Arendt's understanding of the concepts of truth, opinion and power, as put forth in her 1967 essay 'Truth and Politics'. Arendt's views on the antagonism between truth and power can serve as useful tools for making sense of current conceptions and usages of the same. Her comparisons of the discursive defence of a 'fact' and the discursive defence of an 'opinion' work well to describe how these two concepts are elucidated in modern political discourse, particularly in the fields of 'punditry' and what we might qualify as political journalism. Here, we will define each concept in turn, as Arendt understands them, and briefly sketch a picture of Arendt's epistemological (and ontological) claims and position. Having done this, we can begin to analyse Arendt's conception of political power *contra* truth as a precursor to the debates on 'post-truth', 'alternative facts', etc. that we see today. This understanding of power also serves to explain what we might call 'non-dimensional' or 'dimensionless' power, which will be discussed in our conclusion.

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[412] Arendt, Hannah. "Truth and Politics." *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions*, edited by José Medina and David Wood. Blackwell Publishing; 2005. 297

II. Power over Truth

> Lies have always been regarded as necessary and justifiable tools not only of the politician's or the demagogue's but also of the statesman's trade. Why is that so? And what does it mean for the nature and the dignity of the political realm, on one side, and for the nature and the dignity of truth and truthfulness, on the other? Is it of the very essence of truth to be impotent and of the very essence of power to be deceitful? And what kind of reality does truth possess if it is powerless in the public realm…[413]

Politics, insofar as it concerns campaigns, the electoral process, diplomacy, policy drafting, statecraft and the like, is notorious for, at the very least, a perceived culture of mendacity. George Orwell, perhaps the most quoted (in English) novelist of this decade, wrote:

> Political language – and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists – is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.[414]

Robert M. Gates, former U.S. secretary of defence (2006-2011), once said, "[m]ost governments lie to each other…[t]hat's the way business gets done".[415] This *modus operandi*, this way of 'getting business done', is precisely what Hannah Arendt is concerned with in her 1967 essay 'Truth and Politics'. Arendt begins by claiming that no one "has ever doubted that truth and politics are on rather bad terms with each other, and no one…has ever counted truthfulness among the political virtues".[416] She goes on to trace the development of the relationship between truth and politics from Parmenides to the works of Plato and Herodotus, further on to the works of Hobbes, Leibniz, Lessing, Kant, Spinoza, James Madison and her contemporaries. Arendt, in this essay, takes for granted the precise meaning of 'truth' in order to find out "what injury political power is capable of inflicting upon truth" and in order to "look into these matters for political rather than philosophical reasons".[417] She does, however, distinguish between 'rational truths', which are "mathematical, scientific, and

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[413] Ibid. 295
[414] Orwell, George. *Politics and the English Language*. 592
[415] Gates, Robert M. (2011, June). Talban-U.S. Talks 'Very Preliminary,' Defense Chief Says. *Bloomberg*. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2011-06-19/taliban-u-s-talks-very-preliminary-defense-chief-gates-says
[416] Arendt, Hannah. "Truth and Politics." *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions*, edited by José Medina and David Wood. Blackwell Publishing; 2005. 295
[417] Ibid. 297.

philosophical truths", and 'factual truth'. A 'rational truth' might be an axiomatic expression or a physical law, while a 'factual truth' might be anything that we could describe as an actual occurrence or event. Arendt claims that merely making this distinction and cursorily analysing historical events and how important or not they seem to be (to historians and to the public) makes us aware of "how much more vulnerable" factual truths are "than all the kinds of rational truth taken together".[418] She argues, furthermore, that facts and events, which are "the invariable outcome of men living and acting together", "constitute the very texture of the political realm"[419]; in this sense, the 'political realm' is the real of the social, while the realm of reason exists beyond, though not independently of, the social. Political power, then, is out of its depth when it attempts to deal with 'rational truths', but is entirely in its element when it "falsifies or lies away facts". Arendt even states that "[t]he chances of factual truth surviving the onslaught of power are very slim indeed"; furthermore:

> [factual truth] is always in danger of being maneuvered out of the world not only for a time but, potentially, forever. Facts and events are infinitely more fragile things than axioms, discoveries, theories…produced by the human mind; they occur in the field of the ever-changing affairs of men, in whose flux there is nothing more permanent than the admittedly relative permanence of the human mind's structure. Once they are lost, no rational effort will ever bring them back.[420]

The argument, then, is that a factual truth might be lost to time or to a concerted effort to suppress it or 'revise' it, while rational truths, even if they are lost, forgotten or attacked, may be rediscovered or reproduced at some point in the future. The same, of course, is true of factual truth, but the point would be that even the 'rediscovery' of a fact can be politically challenged and argued against. Truths themselves are dangerous because they claim a finality, a sort of limit point that either impedes or denies transgression. The idea that a truth, whether 'rational' or 'factual', might be

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[418] Ibid.
[419] Ibid.
[420] Ibid.

inconvenient may seem like anathema to a philosopher or an ethical scientist, but a politician or revolutionary can find that certain truths do not advance their cause or that those truths could cause their followers to question the legitimacy of their beliefs. The truth, then, becomes a deontological struggle between political convenience and fact *per se*. We can think of, for example, the Katyń massacres of April and May 1940, which were initially blamed on the Germany army (it was even claimed that they occurred in August 1941), but were later found to have been perpetrated by Soviet forces and the Soviet secret police; the truth was not officially revealed until 1992.[421] The facts of the matter were, of course, always true, but what was presented as true was always entirely dependent on the government in charge, at whatever respective time, in Poland. This one truth shaped Polish-Soviet relations for decades (up to the present) and even Poland's relationship with the international community. Even the official revelation of these facts by the Russian government, and subsequent events, memorials and admissions, thereafter, could be seen as politically motivated or expedient. Other examples of this sort of suppression of the truth by the state are: the Khaibakh massacre of 1944, the Holodomor, the Armenian genocide, widespread sexual slavery in countries occupied by Japanese forces during WWII, the My Lai massacre of 1968, the 1986 disaster in Chernobyl, Abu Ghraib and U.S. extraordinary renditions and so many other similar events, some of which remain topics of contention and debate to this day.

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[421] Polish History [1940]. Katyn Massacre. In *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/event/Katyn-Massacre

III. Opinion over Fact

> For, seen from the viewpoint of the truthteller, the tendency to transform fact into opinion, to blur the dividing line between them, is no less perplexing than the truthteller's older predicament, so vividly expressed in the cave allegory, in which the philosopher, upon his return from his solitary journey to the sky of everlasting ideas, tries to communicate his truth to the multitude, with the result that it disappears in the diversity of views, which to him are illusions, and is brought down to the uncertain level of opinion…[422]

Though Arendt states very clearly that she is not dealing with the meaning of 'truth' and, for the purposes of her essay, insists on being "content to take the word in the sense in which men commonly understand it"[423], she, nevertheless, does ultimately make several claims about its meaning and value. Arendt argues that, in her time (1960s), there were more "diverse opinions on religious or philosophical matters" tolerated than at any other time, but that 'factual truth' had never before been met with "greater hostility" if it happened to "oppose a given group's profit or pleasure"[424]; putting aside the argument that religious, philosophical and so-called 'rational truths' are unquestionably 'political', even in the sense that Arendt takes them, Arendt claims that almost all truths that could be described as 'factual' have been subsumed into the political realm or, at the very least, are subject to political judgement and scrutiny. In terms of the relationship between politics and fact, she argues that the state, and even the community, treats inconvenient facts (facts that are "publicly known" and can be verified as facts) as if they were state secrets; discussing certain facts, then, becomes as dangerous as discussing classified information and information whose confidentiality is vital to the survival of the state apparatus. Arendt finds it a "curious phenomenon" that these inconvenient facts should prove "as dangerous as…preaching atheism or some other heresy proved in former times" and she finds it curious that this practice is also found "in countries that

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[422] Arendt, Hannah. "Truth and Politics." *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions*, edited by José Medina and David Wood. Blackwell Publishing; 2005. 300-301.
[423] Ibid. 297
[424] Ibid. 300

are ruled tyrannically by an ideological government"; what she finds most disturbing, however, is that even "free countries" tolerate "unwelcome factual truths" by transforming them into opinions and that this is because certain factual truths "concern issues of immediate political relevance" and "there is more at stake here than the perhaps inevitable tension between two ways of life within the framework of a common and commonly recognized reality".[425] Furthermore, she states that what is at stake here "is this common factual reality itself" and that "this is indeed a political problem of the first order"; factual truth, "though it is so much less open to argument than philosophical truth, and so obviously within the grasp of everybody", seems to be "countered not by lies and deliberate falsehoods but by opinion" when it is "exposed in the market place".[426] Factual truth, for Arendt, is "always related to other people"; it "concerns events and circumstances in which many are involved" and "exists only to the extent that it is spoke about, even if it occurs in the domain of privacy".[427] Factual truth, then, is "political by nature" and facts and opinions, "though they must be kept apart, are not antagonistic to each other…they belong to the same realm".[428] The social nature of human existence, of human being, creates a situation where everything that is, effectively, 'human' is subject to public scrutiny, interpretation and approval or rejection. This seems anathema, of course, to claims of universal truth or of an objective, even *a priori*, reality that would hold (and does hold) independently of human apperception or existence. The world is as it is, whether we like it or not, and there is nothing to be done; we cannot change what has come to pass and we cannot deny that there was always something *before*. Is this the case, however? Is it not the case that everything that we take as 'fact' is subject to our

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[425] Ibid.
[426] Ibid.
[427] Ibid. 301.
[428] Ibid.

various opinions and interpretations; subject to the meaning, relevance and value that we care to ascribe to it? Arendt states that, though there are certainly many real perplexities "inherent in the historical sciences", they are certainly "no argument against the existence of factual matter, nor can they serve as a justification for blurring the dividing lines between fact, opinion, and interpretation, or as an excuse for the historian to manipulate the facts as he pleases".[429] She goes on:

> Even if we admit that every generation has the right to write its own history, we admit no more than that it has the right to rearrange facts in accordance with its own perspective; we don't admit the right to touch the factual matter itself…We are concerned here with brutally elementary data…whose indestructibility has been take for granted even by the most extreme and most sophisticated believers in historicism.[430]

Arendt argues that the only state of affairs that would grant a meaningful and perdurable change in what she calls "brutally elementary data" would be nothing less than "a power monopoly over the entire civilized world"; she claims, however, that such a world is "far from being inconceivable" and that "it is not difficult to imagine what the fate of factual truth would be if power interests, national or social, had the last say".[431] It is not inconceivable, then, to suspect that "it may be in the nature of the political realm to be at war with truth in all its forms" and to feel that "a commitment even to factual truth" may, in fact, be "an anti-political attitude". If we were to accept this as the case, that politics *qua* power is, by its very nature, against all forms of truth, then we would have to accept that truth, whether in its 'rational' or 'factual' form, must exist outside of, or *without*, politics. The other, perhaps less radical, conclusion would be that rather than truth exist as the antithesis of politics, it functions more as a check, or a limit point, on the political; the truth, thus, would exist both at the periphery and outside of the political, delimiting its dominion and challenging, or corroborating, its claims. It is, however, this finality, this *terminus*, that threatens the

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[429] Ibid.
[430] Ibid. 301-302
[431] Ibid. 302

legitimacy and the authority of the political. A political project may pretend to great and just aims, but end up encountering a great deal of ethical dilemmas in its realisation; these dilemmas can sometimes be ignored, be recontextualised or reinterpreted or simply be accepted and perpetuated. An example of this might be the altruistic claims of the politico-economic project of industrialisation, with its promise of raising standards of living, ease of life, automating work, providing labour, purpose and income to communities and more, all while destroying the environment, exploiting workers and communities, actually lowering quality of life (pollution, waste, etc.) and influencing and manipulating the state to serve the ends of the industrialists. We see this evidenced very clearly in the water crisis of Flint, Michigan, where the public drinking water became so toxic that it poisoned thousands of children and citizens were told to either boil their water or purchase bottled water. Though the local government was to blame, since they switched the source of Flint's drinking water to deal with a budget crisis and reduce costs, government officials initially denied claims that the water was not potable and even went so far as to give televised conferences where they supposedly drank the town's water in order to prove that it was safe. Though independent sources and various organisations identified the problem from the beginning, the crisis has taken years and hundreds of millions of dollars to resolve and is, in fact, still ongoing.[432] [433] In this vital sense, situations such as these go beyond 'abuses of power'; whether deliberate or not, these sorts of actions constitute crimes against citizens perpetrated by the state and the fact that the state typically finds it more convenient to lie or shift the blame onto another entity is proof that these are, truly, crimes. Budget crises, the selling off of vital infrastructure, the choice of

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[432] EPA. Flint Drinking Water Response. https://www.epa.gov/flint
[433] Hughes, S. (2020). Flint, Michigan, and the Politics of Safe Drinking Water in the United States. *Perspectives on Politics,* 1-14.

what sort of service to provide to citizens and customers and, most importantly, the laws and decisions made by the state, do not exist and are not entertained in a vacuum. Decisions concerning infrastructure and public services are biopolitical decisions; they can determine whether or not people, entire communities, live or die and what sort of quality of life they are subjected to. From the Flint water crisis to the Grenfell Tower disaster to Chernobyl and Fukushima, decisions made by the state can negatively impact hundreds of thousands of lives for decades and these impacts may or may lead to change or consequences. What all of these disasters have in common, other than their origins in government policy, behaviour and inaction, is that victims, witnesses, activists and concerned citizens were, at least initially, painted as liars or dismissed as sensationalists.[434] [435] [436]

III. Truth as the Limit of Politics

> …factual truth is no more self-evident than opinion…opinion-holders find it relatively easy to discredit factual truth as just another opinion. Factual evidence…is established through testimony by eyewitnesses…by records, documents, and monuments, all of which can be suspected as forgeries. In the event of a dispute, only other witnesses but no third and higher instance can be invoked…there is nothing to prevent a majority of witnesses from being false witnesses…under certain circumstances the feeling of belonging to a majority may even encourage false testimony…to the extent that factual truth is exposed to the hostility of opinion-holders, it is at least a vulnerable as rational philosophical truth.[437]

Arendt claims that seen "from the viewpoint of politics, truth has a despotic character" that puts it in direct competition with tyrants and leaves it in a precarious position with "governments that rest on consent and abhor coercion"; facts are "beyond agreement and consent" and no discussion of them can change "their

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[434] Knapton, Sarah and Hayley Dixon 2017, 'Eight failures that left people of Grenfeel Tower at mercy of the inferno', *The Telegraph*, 17 June, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/15/eight-failures-left-people-grenfell-tower-mercy-inferno/

[435] International Nuclear Safety Advisory Group. INSAG-7 The Chernobyl Accident: Updating of INSAG-1. Safety Series No. 75-INSAG-7. 1992.

[436] Fackler, Martin 2011, 'Japan Plans to Unlink Nuclear Agency From Government', *The New York Times*, 21 June, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/22/world/asia/22japan.html

[437] Arendt, Hannah. "Truth and Politics." *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions*, edited by José Medina and David Wood. Blackwell Publishing; 2005. 304

establishment".[438] Opinions can be "argued with, rejected, or compromised upon", but facts can only be countered with "plain lies"; factual truth, like all other forms of truth, "precludes debate", but debate "constitutes the very essence of political life".[439] Arendt states that the "modes of thought and communication that deal with truth", when seen "from the political perspective", are "necessarily domineering" in that they do not take into account "other people's opinions, and taking these into account is the hallmark of all strictly political thinking"[440]; when one forms or argues in favour of an opinion, a plurality and myriad of information and perspectives works in one's favour and allows one to approach a more persuasive and general argument. Fact, however, does not necessarily benefit from a variety of perspectives nor from vociferous advocacy in its favour; a fact simply is, or was, irrespective of whether anyone favours it or not. As Arendt says, "facts have no conclusive reason whatever for being what they are; they could always have been otherwise, and this annoying contingency is literally unlimited"; nothing, however, "could ever happen if reality did not kill, by definition, all the other potentialities originally inherent in any given situation".[441] Arendt claims that the biggest problem with factual truth *contra* rational truth, or at least one of the biggest problems for those who labour towards knowledge of rational truth, is that philosophers, scientists, theologians and the like struggle to account for the inherent randomness of events, causality, probability, the future, free will and the like; in other words, so many things *could* happen until something actually *does* happen. One thing that Arendt fails to mention, at least in this essay, is the influence of value and ethical judgements on what we define as criminal or illegal. We can take, for example, the case of Roman Ostriakov, who was determined by Italy's highest

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[438] Ibid. 303
[439] Ibid.
[440] Ibid.
[441] Ibid. 304

court not to have committed a crime when he walked out of a supermarket with €4.70 worth of food; the court determined that this act was not a crime because Ostriakov was in "desperate need of nourishment".[442] Ostriakov was, however, found guilty by two separate courts, before he was acquitted, and did spend some time in jail; the crime happened in 2011, he was convicted in 2015 and then exonerated in 2016.[443] The whole saga is, of course, reminiscent of one of the plots of Alexandre Dumas's *Les Misérables*, in which one of the protagonists, Jean Valjean, is imprisoned for 19 years for the crimes of having stolen bread for the family of his starving sister and then for attempting to escape from jail several times. Now, not taking Ostriakov's ruling into consideration, most countries outlaw theft without exception and without consideration for how small the theft may have been; property rights being one of the cornerstones of a capitalist system, naturally. It could certainly be argued that Ostriakov's case is the exception that proved the Italian rule, but the 'problem', here, is that this ruling makes *any* instance, past, present and future, of taking food when in "desperate need of nourishment" *not* an illegal act. Furthermore, in theory, this ruling transcends borders and could be cited in other cases across Europe and beyond. Beyond even that, this challenges the very definitions of 'theft', 'property' and 'need' and it marks a change in policy towards the indigent and how a society should, and should not, treat those in need. The reason that this is so important to this discussion is that it is certainly a fact that Ostriakov took something that did not belong to him, which was described, at the time, as 'theft', and it is certainly a fact that this was illegal under Italian law, but his ruling, ultimately, made two of those things false. Ostriakov still took something that, at the time, did not belong to him, but we can no

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[442] Kirchgaessner, Stephanie 2016, 'Theft of sausage and cheese by hungry homeless man 'not a crime', *The Guardian*, 3 May, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/03/theft-sausage-cheese-hungry-homeless-man-not-crime-italy
[443] Wrongly Convicted Database Record. Roman Ostriakov. http://forejustice.org/db/Ostriakov--Roman-.html

longer (legally) consider the act as theft and we can no longer consider the act as having been illegal, though both of these things were true *at the time*. If we were to take facts in a dispassionate, deontologically-informed way, then we would be forced to interpret laws *as written* and we would be forced to punish the transgression of said laws *as written*, no more and no less. Ethical and moral truths should, at the very least, prevent us from doing this, however. Now, do we consider ethical and moral truths as belonging to the realm of 'rational truths', to the realm of 'factual truths' or to the political realm? This is not immediately clear; a case could be made for any of these being true and it has been a topic of contention for at least a couple of millenia, to say the least. It could be argued that we have an ethical duty to compassion and to meet the basic needs of everyone, but what would this duty rest upon: a deity, a higher purpose, a society? Human beings, *qua* homo sapiens, are a relatively young species, so we could only really argue that either certain ethical principles were in place even before our existence *or* these principles somehow evolved along with us, over the course of hundreds of thousands or years. It would seem absurd to anthropomorphically attribute ethics and morals to non-human animals, especially *before* the arrival of homo sapiens and particularly *after* our arrival, but a sort of natural(-ist) stance towards ethics would seem to do just that, i.e. an argument for the existence of natural rights, truths, laws, etc. In any case, the question of what information or 'data' counts as a fact and what does not, even at the most 'elementary' level, seems to be less clear than Arendt wants to make it; and this is precisely because we are social beings who are actively engaged in scientific discovery. If we are operating at the level of a statement like 'that person picked something up', then, yes, this could be taken an indisputable fact, but a statement like 'that person stole something' is no longer so simple, even though Arendt seems to argue that it is.

IV. Conclusion: Technologies of Power

What does Arendt's essay ultimately tell us, then, about power? Is truth now destined to be forever at the mercy of 'the political' and of popular opinion? Is it enough to say that all of 'the good' that happens within the 'political realm' forgives its base desires to fight for "pleasure…profit, partisanship, and…dominion"?[444] Today's political discourse and landscape certainly argues for the claim that opinion, belief and emotion have completely trumped fact, truth and evidence in terms of being the driving factors behind much of government policy and public sentiment (both at the local, national and supranational level). Cicero, for example, says this of "eloquence" and of the role of discourse and of the orator:

> …what other power could have been strong enough either to gather scattered humanity into one place, or to lead it out of its brutish existence in the wilderness up to our present condition of civilization as men and as citizens, or, after the establishment of social communities, to give shape to laws, tribunals, and civic rights?[445]

He goes on to claim that:

> the wise control of the complete orator is that which chiefly upholds not only his own dignity, but the safety of countless individuals and of the entire State. Go forward therefore, my young friends, in your present course, and bend your energies to that study which engages you, that so it may be in your power to become a glory to yourselves, a source of service to your friends, and profitable members of the Republic".[446]

In a very twisted way, this does, in fact, describe a great deal of modern political activity, particularly over the course of the past year: the pursuit of power, glory, profit and the enrichment of one's friends.[447] [448] [449] [450] This is not, of course, what Cicero had in mind, though these sorts of activities, as well as corruption more generally, are

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[444] Arendt, Hannah. "Truth and Politics." *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions*, edited by José Medina and David Wood. Blackwell Publishing; 2005. 313

[445] Cicero. *De Oratore*. Harvard University Press. 1967. 25

[446] Ibid. 27

[447] Dyer, Clare. Covid-19: Leaked documents suggest that VIPs and government contacts won PPE deals after special treatment *BMJ* 2020; 371:m4180.

[448] Dyer, Clare. Covid-19: Hancock's failure to publish contracts was unlawful *BMJ* 2021; 372:n511.

[449] Iacobucci, Gareth. Covid-19. One in five government contracts had signs of possible corruption, report finds *BMJ* 2021; 373:n1072.

[450] Conn, David 2021, 'Covid contract for firm run by Cummins' friends unlawful, finds judge', *The* Guardian, 9 Jun, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/09/covid-contract-for-firm-run-by-cummings-friends-was-unlawful-judge-rules

certainly discussed in his writings, speeches and dialogues. Arendt, like Cicero, is certainly arguing that there is a right and a wrong way to engage in politics; a right and a wrong way to conduct oneself *politically*. She claims that the "actual content of political life", which might be lost in the assumption that "all public affairs" are "ruled by interest and power" is

> the joy and the gratification that arise out of being in company with our peers, out of acting together and appearing in public, out of inserting ourselves into the world by word and deed, thus acquiring and sustaining our personal identity and beginning something entirely new.[451]

We have already pointed that Arendt argues that it is not inconceivable that some sort of "power monopoly over the entire civilized world" could come about and that "it is not difficult to imagine what the fate of factual truth would be if power interests, national or social, had the last say in these matters".[452] Now, it could certainly be argued that something like this monopoly may be, at least, nascent in global society, particularly considering the ubiquity of social media, 'smart' devices, internet culture and remote and digital labour. Direct and instantaneous access to 'facts' and information is a reality in today's society, as is direct and instantaneous access to misinformation, lies, conspiracies, propaganda, doctored media and the like; and the proliferation of the first is certainly not commensurate with the second. Statista claims that, in early 2019, at least 50% of adults *worldwide* had witnessed fakes news on television[453]; they also determined that most U.S. consumers source their information about news and current affairs from television, social media and online newspapers, websites or apps.[454] Datareportal claims that, worldwide, there are 5.27 billion unique mobile phone users, 4.72 billion internet users and 4.33 billion active

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[451] Arendt, Hannah. Truth and Politics. 313
[452] Ibid. 302
[453] https://www.statista.com/statistics/1017760/fake-news-television-worldwide
[454] https://www.statista.com/statistics/198765/main-source-of-international-news-in-selected-countries

social media users, which means that over half of the world's population is active on social media and at least 60% of the world's population is connected to the internet.[455] It is certainly true that Arthur C. Clarke, in addition to so many other science fiction writers and artists, predicted internet networks, internet culture and remote work[456], as well as the personal computer and mobile devices[457], but the true scale of how things have come to pass would likely have been laughed at even just a few decades ago. Certainly, in Hannah Arendt's lifetime, and particularly at the time of writing 'Truth and Politics', such things were wholly within the realm of science fiction and fantasy. Now that all of these things are scientific realities, we can more easily imagine this "power monopoly over the entire civilized world" coming into being, if it is not, at least in part, already there. The general functions of social media, news outlets and internet advertising are perfect examples of what Arendt was discussing with regards the relationship between factual truth, rational truth and politics. This is particularly true because social media, other forms of media and the internet do not necessarily have an inherent goal nor do they have an inherent purpose, *per se*; at most, it could be argued that, particularly at their inception, the fundamental purpose of social media, news media and the internet is to communicate something to someone. In fact, the definition of 'social media' is given as such: "forms of media that allow people to communicate and share information using the internet or mobile phones".[458] Nowhere, other than the inherent limitations of the form, does it say how, when, why this communication takes place, but simply that that is the purpose of said technology. That social media and the internet have become so

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[455] https://datareportal.com/global-digital-overview
[456] "Arthur C Clarke predicts the internet in 1964". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wC3E2qTCIY8
[457] "One day, a computer will fit on a desk (1974) | RetroFocus". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTdWQAKzESA
[458] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/social-media

omnipresent and have also become the preeminent tools for the dissemination of propaganda, misinformation and conspiracy, around the world, is taken more to be a reflection of our modern society, rather than as an indictment of these media. It is no accident that the first book to be printed after the invention Gutenberg's printing press, *circa* 1439, was the bible and the second was the Book of Psalms. The use of technologies, particularly new technologies, will naturally reflect the interests, beliefs, practices, desires and hopes of the societies into which they are introduced. Their use will also reflect, as a matter of course, what the ruling classes, institutions of power and government need for the lower classes and citizens to know and obey. Access to new technologies will always be determined financially and in terms of social status or rank and the use of these technologies will always be informed by this access hierarchy. As new technologies and techniques become more affordable and more widely available, so too does our access to new perspectives, voices, opinion and the like increase. The wealthy and influential, however, will always have first access and greater control over their use, even if access is, effectively, universal. It could be argued, then, that power monopolies will rest in the hands of those with greatest access and control of technologies. According to Statista, the Android operating system, which is commercially sponsored by Google, controls around 71% of the global mobile operating system market, while iOS, which was created and is developed by Apple, controls around 27%[459]; the top mobile phone vendors, worldwide, are Samsung, Apple, Xiaomi, OPPO, vivo and Huawei.[460] The markets for the most widely sold and most widely used mobile

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[459] https://www.statista.com/statistics/272698/global-market-share-held-by-mobile-operating-systems-since-2009/
[460] https://www.statista.com/statistics/271496/global-market-share-held-by-smartphone-vendors-since-4th-quarter-2009/

devices are truly monopolised and this is, of course, relevant in terms of how different forms of information, news, communications and the like are circulated. Governments (whether at the local, national or supranational level), news sources, all forms of media, individuals, artists and all manner of people *must* deal with one or more of these companies at least several times per day, if not the entire day, in order to do business, accomplish certain tasks, promote themselves, advertise and, in extreme cases, to simply function. If this is not a form of 'power monopoly', then it would be difficult to imagine what else would be.

Understanding Power

I. Introduction

> When it comes to the concept of power, theoretical chaos still reigns. While the existence of the phenomenon itself cannot be doubted, the concept remains altogether ambiguous. For some, it means repression; for others, it is a constructive element in communication. Legal, political and sociological notions of power remain unreconciled. Power is sometimes associated with freedom, sometimes with coercion. For some power is based on common action, for others on struggle. Some draw a sharp line between power and violence. For others, violence is just a more extreme form of power. At one moment power is associated with the law, at another with arbitrariness.[461]

This chapter explains and engages with Byung-Chul Han's work, *What Is Power?*, in which he attempts to formulate "a basic form of power from which we can, by modifying its inner structural elements, derive the different forms in which power may appear".[462] This "flexible concept of power" seeks to synthesise the different, and often conflicting, definitions and understandings of power, that we find throughout the social sciences. Han argues that fundamentally antithetical formulations of power are currently vying for theoretical legitimacy, in the realms of law, politics and sociology; these formulations conceive of power as everything from being rooted in repression, coercion, conflict, violence and/or order to, conversely, being representative of non-violence, cooperation, arbitrariness, and/or freedom. Han argues that "[l]egal, political and sociological notions of power remain unreconciled", which means that cross-disciplinary analyses of power are sure to fall prey to the "theoretical chaos" that this produces. Furthermore, Han claims that it is precisely this fact that "we do not fully understand what [power] actually is" that gives power its 'power': the power of ambiguity and theoretical chaos. Han effectively eschews rationalisations of power that characterise it as a 'three-dimensional' concept, where each 'dimension' describes a different mode of power. Different theories of power, effectively, fall under the weight of their own logic(s), which contradict, confuse and weaken the very

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[461] Han, Byung-Chul. *What is Power?*. Polity; 2019. VII-VIII.
[462] Ibid.

definitions that each dimension of power gives us to understand how relations work, in the first place. Han seeks to move beyond this to a more fundamental and explanatorily valuable conception of power.

II. The Logic of Power

> Power is usually defined as a causal relation: the power of the *ego* is the cause which effects a particular behaviour in an *alter* against the latter's will. It enables the *ego* to impose *his or her* decisions without having to show any consideration for the *alter*. Thus the *ego*'s power limits the *alter*'s freedom. The *alter* suffers the will of the *ego* as something alien. This common idea of power does not do justice to its complexity.[463]

Han argues that 'common' conceptions of power ignore the complexity of the various processes of power; in seeking to look for different characteristics of displays/relations of power and attempting to demarcate and define said characteristics in a nomic and negative fashion, power theorists, by nature of their very methodology, arrive at conceptual impasses. Again, these impasses are not only results of the paradigmatic methodologies of political science (and the social sciences, more generally), but they are also due to the delimiting, conceptualising and nomological objectives, at hand. In other words, the fact that, as Byung-Chul Han puts it, the "common idea of power does not do justice to its complexity" is due to the very nature of how political theorists might arrive at such a 'common idea'.

III. The Power of Coercion

Han challenges what has come to be known as the 'first dimension of power', introduced by Dahl in the mid-20th Century, which claims that A has power over B when A can coerce B into doing something that B would not otherwise do in absence of that coercion. Han claims that process of power "are not exhausted by attempts to break resistance or to compel obedience" and that power "does not have to take the

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[463] Ibid, 2.

form of coercion".[464] Furthermore, the fact that B is able to form a will "that opposes the holder of power actually bears witness to the weakness of that power"; how powerful a form of power is proportionate to how "*silent*…its efficacy" is.[465] Finally, if power "needs to draw special attention to itself, it is already weakened".[466] Han's critique of the first dimension of power, at best, qualifies as a very weak form of power, as it becomes rather clear that coercion cannot exist without the presence, or at least the threat or possibility of, resistance. Necessitating the existence of two wills that must contend with one another, irrespective of how onerous or undemanding that contention is, effectively makes coercion or control a very inefficient and demanding form of power and one that is very open to subversion and defiance. Han's claims, nevertheless, are not necessarily true when it comes to instances or modes of coercion. It may very well be the case that A makes it very well known that B is being coerced, controlled and/or made to obey A's will, but B is very happy, or at least content with, obedience to A. This may be due to what B perceives as a mutual, or symbiotic, advantage resulting from compliance; A may or may not be aware of B's understanding of this advantage, but it would make no difference to A, as long as A's objective is met. B, in this situation, may actually have the upper hand, as far as this arrangement goes, but whether or not this makes this form of power 'weak' or 'inefficient' is not immediately apparent. The causal relation, i.e. the direction, placement or order of causal links, is not clear, when we take all of this into account. The biggest problem with the first dimension of power, which is implied in Han's analysis, is that it assumes a very strict and almost comical logic; a logic that does not take into account anything beyond the relationship between A and B, with respect

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[464] Ibid, 1.
[465] Ibid.
[466] Ibid.

to the making of one or more decisions, through coercion. This brings us, then, to Han's critique of the 'second dimension of power'.

IV. Neutralising the Will

> Neither does power consist in 'neutralizing the will'. The claim here is that the existing power imbalance impedes the formation of a will on the side of the subordinated party, for this party will in any case have to succumb to the will of the holder of power. Hence, the holder of power directs the subordinated party regarding the latter's choices of action. But there are forms of power that exceed such a 'neutralization of the will'.[467]

The 'second dimension of power', as theorised by Bachrach and Baratz in the early 60's, concerns a move beyond the immediate 'causal relation' between A and B, to the social and political realities that make A '*A*' and B '*B*'; in other words, we must first understand the societal and political factors that come into play when a decision is made and *then* we can understand, or at least properly analyse, who made a particular decision and why that particular decision was made. In order to gauge and understand how A coerces B, we must understand how A has come to be in a position of initiating this coercion and why B must obey A. We come to understand, then, that it is A who sets 'the agenda' in this 'relationship' and not only makes decisions, but is allowed to decide what decisions are worth making and vice versa. Han argues, however, that what is understand as this 'second dimension of power' is not power; there are "forms of power" that go beyond this agenda-setting dimension of power and, thus, come to make this power claim, effectively, superfluous. It is one thing to be able to decide what is important, what is up for discussion and what is worth the effort, so to speak, in terms of the social and political issues that define and comprise the quotidian life of a nation's citizens, but it is another thing, entirely, to make said decisions feel or appear to have been made by those very same citizens. A hardly needs to coerce B to do C, if B believes that C was, in truth, their idea to begin with. A

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[467] Ibid, 1-2.

can give B *no other choice but* C and claim victory when B chooses C, but to deliver a plethora of options to B and still have B choose C because they truly want C is a far superior utilisation of power, as such. As Han explains it, it is "the sign of a superior power that those subjected to it explicitly *want* what the holder of power wants, that those subjected to power follow the will of its holder *as if it were their own*, or even *anticipate* that will".[468] Furthermore, the one "who is subjected to power may glorify what [they] would have, *in any event*, wanted to do, by declaring it to be in accordance with the will of the superior power, and executing it with…an emphatic affirmation of that power"; B's action "takes on a different form in the medium of power because the action of [A] is affirmed or internalized by [B] as his or her *own* action".[469] This would clearly suggest that, for Han, power presents itself in *degrees* and *hierarchies* and that these different instantiations of power make many accepted understandings of power obsolete. Coercion is, without a doubt, a form of control, which should be understood as 'powerful'; it does not, however, exhaust our understanding of how control and power might manifest themselves. Manipulation and subordination are also certainly useful methods of control, but their effectiveness and *power* pale in comparison to self-motivation and affirmative conformity. For Han, then, power is a "*phenomenon pertaining to form"* and how "an action is motivated is crucial"; it is not "I have to anyhow' but 'I want to' [that] expresses the presence of a superior power".[470] This cannot be described in causal terms, as "in this case power does not operate like a mechanical push that simply moves a body out of its original trajectory"; rather, "its effect is like that of a field in which the body moves *out of its own accord*".[471] Superior power might be explained, effectively, as a hijacking of the autonomy of one or more

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[468] Ibid, 2.
[469] Ibid.
[470] Ibid.
[471] Ibid.

subjects by one or another subjects, for their own ends, but how necessary is this hijacking? How much effort is really required for power to move from *within* B towards the intended goal of A? As Han contends, power does not operate mechanically, but, rather, in a holistic and mediative fashion. We might say that Han's initial conclusions have more in common with the 'third dimension of power', which we turn to, next.

V. Organic Power

> The causal model is incapable of describing complex relations. Even organic life as such cannot be understood in terms of causal relations. As opposed to a lifeless and passive thing, an organism does not allow an external cause to have an effect on it without the organism contributing to it. Rather, it reacts *independently* to the cause. This capacity to give an independent response to an external trigger is characteristic of the organic. A lifeless thing, by contrast, does not *respond*.[472]

The 'third dimension of power', as proposed by Lukes, is described as power that is characterised by domination, where those who are dominated acquiesce in their own domination.[473] Those who dominate may or not know that they are doing so, just as those who acquiesce in said domination may or may not know that they are doing so and how it is that they are doing so[474]; though it will not be taken up in greay detail, here, we may call this form of power *ideological power*. By examining and understanding several factors concerning different modes and methods of domination, we can come to understand why and to what purpose an individual acts and, because we understand the nature of domination, we do not give privileged status to any reasons or motivations that an actor may give, as it may be the case that an actor is not entirely aware of their motives and circumstance.[475] Now, we can see more clearly how Han's arguments play against the three dimensions of power. The first dimension, he argues, does not "do justice to the complexity of power"; coercion requires one to

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[472] Ibid, 3.
[473] Dowding, K. (2006), Three-Dimensional Power: A Discussion of Steven Lukes' *Power: A Radical View* . Political Studies Review, 4: 136-145.
[474] Ibid.
[475] Ibid.

enforce one's will "*against* the will of the other", which means that there is but a "very low degree of mediation between *ego* and *alter*, as these only relate antagonistically.[476] Han claims that, in this case, the "*ego* is not received in the *soul of the alter*" and, thus, it is that form of power that does not "exercise its effects *against* the intended actions of the other but *from within* these" that "contains more meditation"; a superior power "forms the future of the other", rather than blocking it.[477] It is here where we truly begin to see some similarities between Han's thesis and Lukes's third dimension of power. Han argues that a superior power does not proceed "against a particular action of the *alter*", but, rather, "influences or works on the environment of the *alter*'s actions even before they take place, so that the *alter voluntarily* decides in favour of the *ego*'s will, even without the threat of any sanctions"; thus, with the use of violence, "the holder of power takes his place in the *soul* of the other".[478] What Han describes as 'superior power' seems to be far more benign than Lukes's third dimension of power, but this is only because of the choice of terms employed. For Han, power does not end with B acquiescing in A's domination of them nor in creating the conditions for acquiescence nor in understanding how different forms of domination manifest. Power, as Han understands it, is as unpredictable and mutable as thought and as organic as biology itself. He explains this by pointing out that "organic life as such cannot be understood in terms of causal relations"; unlike "a lifeless and passive thing, an organism does not allow an external cause to have an effect on it without the organism contributing to it…it reacts *independently* to the cause".[479] It is this capacity "to give an independent response to an external trigger [that] is characteristic of the organic"[480]; it is precisely because power deals with

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[476] Han, Byung-Chul. *What is Power?*. Polity; 2019. 2.
[477] Ibid.
[478] Ibid, 2-3.
[479] Ibid, 3.
[480] Ibid.

biological organisms, rather than inorganic matter, for example, that the first two dimensions of power do not adequately account for human behaviour. Even the third is already put into question, at this stage. Han claims that the "specificity of life is that is cuts short the external cause, transforms it and lets it begin something new in itself"; life "may be dependent on food, but food is not the cause of life" and it is "life itself which has the *power* to *turn* what is external to it *into* a cause of specific organic purposes."[481] This means that these processes are not simply "repetitions of the external cause on the inside", but, rather, "they are independent achievements, independent decisions of life"; an external cause, then, "is but one of many possible triggers that life itself turns into a cause…[an] external cause never achieves an effect without a contribution of decision of the inner".[482] Finally, we can observe "no immediate continuation of the outer into the inner, as in the case of the transmission of kinetic energy from one body to another"[483]; this means, both, that it is impossible to always be able to predict how anyone will react to a certain stimulus, situation or event and, also, that not all stimuli or 'causes' are necessarily external, as they may originate internally. Han argues, however, that causality "is even less suitable for a description of *mental life*" and that the complexity "of mental life determines the complexity of power processes which cannot be translated into linear relations between cause and effect"; it is precisely this complexity that distinguishes power, in its superior form, at least, "from violence, where a simple causality between force, or strength, and effect can be given" and it is this simplicity that "probably constitutes the advantage of physical violence".[484] Now, it is not immediately clear why violence would be a more advantageous and simpler form of power than the 'power' of thought, but

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[481] Ibid.
[482] Ibid.
[483] Ibid.
[484] Ibid, 3-4.

what is most striking, here, in relation to the three dimensions of power, is how active a process 'power' is and how reliant power is on the individual and/or the group. Power, as Han claimed, is a "*phenomenon pertaining to form*" and its forms seem to be so multifarious that it is not difficult to see how one ascribe the wrong characteristics, behaviours, explanations, motivations and 'causes' to the actions of another or even of oneself. Lukes may have been right to believe that one does not necessarily have privileged access to one's own motives in action, but it does not follow, logically, that anyone else would be able to understand said motives, either. One must also reckon with reciprocity of power and asymmetrical power processes and dynamics; as Han states: the "complex processes of power cannot be adequately described with simple arithmetic" and a "slight countervailing power may inflict severe damage on a power of superior strength".[485] Perceived weakness can function as a strength, particularly if specific "political constellations" and "complex interdependencies" come into play[486]; logically, if A requires the cooperation of B, for whatever reason, then A has become dependent upon B and on their cooperation. This means that B must figure into the life A and must be taken into consideration, as it is up to B to choose whether or not to cooperate with A, unless A wants to be "into a difficult situation"; it can be said, then, that this dependence, naturally, can be exploited by B and used "as a source of power".[487] By "making skilful use of cultural norms", then even "the very weakest can turn their powerlessness into power"[488]; what this means, then, is that power may be reciprocal, but not directly so. A potentially incalculable and unquantifiable number of factors come into play when considering different forms and processes of power that are completely alien, theoretically, to what

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[485] Ibid, 4.
[486] Ibid.
[487] Ibid.
[488] Ibid.

we have come to understand as the 'three dimensions of power'. This makes it, logically, confusing, as we seek to understand the rationale behind actions that are the result(s) of power dynamics, but can seemingly be explained in various different ways. The elucidations meant to be provided to us by the various dimensions of power ring hollow when they begin to conflict and invalidate each other; one action seems to be motivated by one thing under the paradigm of a certain power dimension, while being motivated by something else entirely, under another. This is what Han refers to as the theoretical chaos of power.

Psychopolitics:
New Technologies of Power

I. Introduction

> Today, we do not deem ourselves subjugated *subjects*, but rather *projects*: always refashioning and reinventing ourselves. A sense of freedom attends passing from the state of subject to that of project...this projection amounts to a form of compulsion and constraint...to a *more efficient kind of subjectivation and subjugation*. As a project deeming itself free of external and alien limitations, the *I* is now subjugating itself to internal limitations and self-constraints, which are taking the form of compulsive achievement and optimization.[489]

Questions on power tend to focus on 'power relations' or the way that power manifests itself *between* individuals or in groups. Power typically involves an exchange or an ability of some sort; an ability to effect change, to engage in some activity or to influence some outcome. Our interactions with others, whether local or remote, shape our understanding of what we might consider 'reality', 'truth', 'knowledge' and the like. Language itself does not come to us from our own imagination, but, rather, from our introduction into one or more groups that communicate in a way that they too inherited from those before them. What, however, of self-control? What of our relationship with our own *self*? Is self-scrutiny something that also comes from without or can the *ego* claim it for itself, as something that is not informed by interaction, but, rather, solely by introspection? This seems unlikely, as even our thoughts seem to be governed by the rules of our language, our general epistemology and ontology. Our monologues may or may not contain grammatically correct sentences and logical phrases, but they certainly contain concepts, visions and abstractions that, as nebulous as they may be, do, ultimately, relate something to us. Our language, concepts and senses allow us to know and experience not only what is around us, but within us, as well. We may just as well as well say that our psyche defines our 'self' and our individuality. Byung-Chul Han, in his work *Psychopolitics*, looks at how the psyche has become the terrain of

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[489] Han, Byung-Chul. *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power*. Verso; 2017. 1.

neoliberalism; a terrain that has brought about the mutation of capitalism and the introduction of auto-exploitation. Han argues that it is neither biopolitics nor biopower that is the predominant 'technology of power' of our times, but, rather, 'psychopolitics'. The psyche, essentially, allows for infinite possibilities of subjugation, control, manipulation, cooperation and the like. In the ultimate triumph of capitalism, neoliberalism, and psychopolitics, more specifically, have allowed for the development of 'auto-exploitation', where the improvement and enterprise of the self is the premier means and mode of production. Han's analysis allows us to understand how fundamentally 'asocial' forms of power can be understood, conceptualised and developed.

II. The Crisis of Freedom

> Neoliberalism represents a highly efficient, indeed an intelligent, system for exploiting freedom. Everything that belongs to practices and expressive forms of liberty – emotion, play and communication – comes to be exploited. It is inefficient to exploit people against their will. Allo-exploitation yields scant returns. Only when freedom is exploited are returns maximized.[490]

Han, in a work that moves deftly between Marx, Foucault, Deleuze, Hegel, Bentham, Kant and others, argues that biopolitics, and biopower, in particular, is not the predominant 'technology of power' of our times. In a search for ever greater freedom, we have moved away from the *subject* and become *projects*, "always refashioning and reinventing ourselves". The body is physical and limited; it must interact with, and is constrained by, that which is outside it. The mind, on the other hand, is, effectively, only bound by the imagination and by the creativity of concepts and thoughts. That is not to say that these cannot translate into something physical and 'material', but it is the immaterial realm that, seemingly, brings novelty forth. Han argues, nevertheless, that it is actually this assumed limitlessness that is, politically

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[490] Ibid, 3.

and socially, more deleterious that an assumed material 'freedom'. Whereas the body, the 'subject', might subjugate itself to external limits, imposed upon it by the world or by others, this new mode of life, the 'project', subjugates itself "to internal limitations and self-constraints, which are taking the form of compulsive achievement and optimization". The move from 'subject' to 'project' signals, for Han, a move from freedom to *compulsion*; he cites such "psychic maladies" as "depression and burnout" as examples of this. The only master that lords over the *project* is his or her own desire to achieve and optimise the 'self'; the "achievement-subject...exploits itself without a master...it is an *absolute slave*". Han refers to said "achievement-subject" as the "neoliberal subject" and this subject, "as the entrepreneur of its own self", has "no capacity for relationships with others that might be *free of purpose*".[491] Han goes so far as to say that the neoliberal subject cannot even conceive of a "purpose-free friendship"; the "neoliberal regime", thus, only "leads to utter isolation", as opposed to happiness and "fruitful" relationships. Neoliberalism is conceived of, here, as a "highly efficient...intelligent...system for exploiting freedom"; what have traditionally been known as modes of free expression – "emotion, play and communication" – are now modes of exploitation. As Han states: it "is inefficient to exploit people against their will. Allo-exploitation yields scant return. Only when freedom is exploited are returns maximized". Neoliberal has produced an evolved form of capitalism, thought it could also be said that it is the other way around and that it is capitalism that allows for the evolution of the structures into which it is placed. Han argues that neoliberal is a *mutant* form of capitalism; one that "transforms workers into *entrepreneurs*".

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[491] Ibid, 2.

III. The Neoliberal Regime

> The neoliberal regime transforms allo-exploitation into auto-exploitation; this process affects all 'classes'. Such classless self-exploitation...something utterly unknown to Marx...renders impossible any social revolution based on the difference between the exploiters...and the exploited...Indeed, given the auto-exploiting achievement-subject's isolation, no *political We* is even possible that could rise up and undertake collective action.[492]

It is capitalism that is destroying the working class, but not in the way that Marx theorised. Neoliberalism has turned everyone into "an *auto-exploiting labourer in his or her own enterprise*", though no one is "master and slave in one"; class struggle, itself, is nothing more than an "*inner struggle against oneself*". The 'master', here, is Capital, alone, as labour, struggle and exploitation take place on the terrain of the psyche. Contemporary 'labour' conditions "are defined by the *solitude* of an entrepreneur who is isolated and self-combating and practises auto-exploitation voluntarily". Since production is 'immaterial', everyone already owns the means of production; there is no longer a proletariat nor a bourgeoisie, in the classic sense. Han claims that this accounts for stability of the neoliberal system; there exist no classes "that display mutual antagonism". He points out that a 'proletarian' is someone "whose sole possessions are his or her children", "self-production is", here, "restricted to biological reproduction". Now, however, everyone is under the illusion that they are "capable of *unlimited self-production*", as "a project free to fashion him- or herself at will". This annihilation, of sorts, of the proletariat (and of the bourgeoisie), leaves only capital as the sole ruler of all, "the Dictatorship of Capital". This may be, for many Marxists, both too generalising and too cutting a view, as it would be easy to point out innumerable instances and examples of class-division and even warfare. Hardt and Negri claimed that the modern, or post-modern, "successor to the 'proletariat'" is the 'Multitude', which is based on Spinozist ethics and in globalist cooperation, but Han

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[492] Ibid, 6.

claims that it is erroneous to believe that said 'Multitude' will ever be able to overthrow 'Empire' (Hardt and Negri's post-modern, global hegemony) and be able to create some new order. Han would consider these debates or struggles as only superficially, or illusorily, about class, while the 'real' struggle is taking place elsewhere: within.

IV. Neoliberal Shame

> ...we no longer work in order to satisfy our own needs...we work for Capital. Capital generates needs of its own; mistakenly, we perceive these needs as if they belonged to us. Capital therefore represents a new kind of *transcendence*, which entails a new form of subjectivation. We are being expelled from the sphere of lived immanence – where life relates to life instead of subjugating itself to external ends.[493]

The neoliberal society revolves around 'achievement' and those who 'fail' believe that they are responsible for said failure and, ultimately, "feel shame instead of questioning society or the system". This accounts, to some extent, for psychological pathologies like depression, suicidal thoughts, anxiety and the like. Shame is an incredibly powerful emotion/feeling/sentiment and there is extensive work on the subject, though there is not enough space to go into it, here. Nevertheless, Han claims that this is the foundation of the 'particular intelligence' that defines the neoliberal regime; the fact that "no resistance to the system can emerge in the first place". Under 'Marxism', those that are exploited "are still able to show solidarity and unite against those who exploit them", but the neoliberal system is one of auto-exploitation and any antagonisms are aimed towards the self. This is more likely to give rise to psychological pathologies than to stir revolt. Capital has taken on the role of being the basis for a new transcendent order, an order that determines how politics should and does express itself and, consequently, how the neoliberal should and can express his or her own self. Han asks the question if it is really even the case that we *want* to be free; does guilt, shame and a lack of freedom not 'liberate' us in other ways? Freedom

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[493] Ibid, 7.

(from debt, shame and the like) would require a pure sort of action and, deontologically (perhaps), entail accountability and responsibility for whatever results from said 'pure' ability. Han suggests that it may be the case that we perpetually enter into debt so that we do not *have* to act, "so we won't need to be *free*, or *responsible*". Han points out that Walter Benjamin considered capitalism to be a religion, except that instead of providing the means for atonement, whether spiritual or otherwise, it only creates more guilt. Guilt and debt become the two pillars of the cult of capitalism and there is no way to relieve either of the two; capitalism, instead of providing the means to atone for guilt and to liquidate one's debt, makes both universal.

V. Digital Panoptica

> Secrets, foreignness and otherness represent impediments to unbounded communication. In the name of transparency, they are to be eliminated. Communication goes faster when it is smoothed out...when thresholds, walls and gaps are removed. This also means stripping people of interiority, which blocks and slows down communication...such emptying out of persons does not occur by violent means...it occurs as voluntary self-exposure.[494]

The role of the internet in every aspect of modern life is not to be ignored. Its ubiquity is indicative of a myriad of social, scientific, economic, biological and psychological paradigmatic shifts. Its introduction, at least into popular society, promised a world of "boundless liberty...unlimited freedom and mobility". Today, however, it is a world of "total control and surveillance", where social media function as sorts of "digital panoptica" that keep watch "over the social realm and [exploit] it mercilessly". Han claims that freedom from the disciplinary panopticon, which, presumably, came via the internet, has only resulted into our throwing ourselves, headfirst, into a "new...even more efficient" panopticon. Bentham's panopticon isolated, prevented, prescribed and functioned insidiously. Today's panoptica exist as

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[494] Ibid, 9.

conspicuously as possible; its "occupants" "actively communicate with each other and willingly expose themselves". Occupants "*collaborate*" and corroborate the panoptica's "operations", as it were; they work for "Digital Big Brother", free of charge and hoping only for rewards. Data does not need to be taken or stolen; it is, rather, "offered out of an inner need". Such is the efficiency of the digital panopticon. The concept of "freedom of information" plays a role, here, as it relates to transparency. Since information is now valuable in the same way as currency, its proliferation and valorisation are now fought for. Under "the immaterial mode of production that now prevails", this proliferation leads to more "productivity, acceleration and growth"; this proliferation, however, is so accelerated that it results in a context-free dissemination of data: independent and arbitrary. This dissemination, free of reflection, deliberation and analysis, results in an unhinged "diversity" of views, opinions and references, though they are only superficially so. Information, thought and communication are exteriorised, *totally*, and this results from an absolute erasure of (informational) difference, introspection and interiorisation. The need for 'transparency', as such, promotes "total conformity"; this is the result of "total networking": everyone accessible, at almost any time, with "*everyone...watching over everyone else*". Though we are wary of agencies and secret services listening in on our conversations or using our own devices to watch and track us, it is moderation and curation in *real-time* that should concern us most. The 'conversation', in the most general sense of the term, is being guided and censored as it is happening; even those involved in the conservation participate in its censorship: they criticise, hector or praise whomever takes a side and has the nerve to speak up, though silence results in a complete erasure of one's own identity and, in turn, self-worth. These are, certainly, extreme ways of understanding the quotidian workings of social media, but a quick analysis of *actual* exchanges do

not seem to indicate that this characterisation is untrue. This 'transparency', the need for a totalisation of information, is affecting representative democracy. Politicians are scrutinised, thanks to these panoptica, in a thoroughly *apolitical* fashion. It is more important to try to scandalise a politician, or aspiring politician, than to judge them by the merit of their policies. What Han terms the "*spectator democracy*" is more concerned with "grievance and complaint" than with action and policy. What goes on behind the scenes in the capitols of the world is not so important as what goes on in the personal lives of those involved in these scenes; such is the politics of today.

VI. Digital Psychopolitics

> Today, we are entering the age of digital psychopolitics. It means passing from passive surveillance to active steering...it is precipitating a further crisis of freedom...free will itself is at stake. Big Data is a highly efficient psychopolitical instrument that makes it possible to achieve comprehensive knowledge of the dynamics of social communication. This knowledge is knowledge for the sake of domination and control...it facilitates intervention in the psyche and enables influence to take place on a pre-reflexive level.[495]

'Transparency', in the case of the digital realm, really only works one way. The data that its users voluntarily offer over to data companies for the use of their, seemingly, vital services is then utilised and seen by those that they do not know and for purposes that they, generally, ignore. Considering this, the very idea of privacy, or at least the desire for privacy, becomes "obsolete"; if "an essential component of freedom is informational self-determination", then freedom is, effectively, a thing of the past. Han argues that freedom, free action, more precisely, requires an "open" future. "Big Data", however, has allowed self-determination to, much like privacy, pass into obsolescence by "making it possible to predict human behaviour". As human behaviour becomes "calculable and controllable", so, too, does the future; "digital psychopolitics transforms the negativity of freely made decisions into the *positivity of*

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[495] Ibid, 11.

factual states". As data becomes even more valuable than currency, it results in the objectification of those that exist in the digital realm. "*Persons* are being positivized into *things*" and this means that they can be "quantified, measured and steered"; *things* can neither be free nor self-determined and, as a result, *things* are far more transparent than persons. Accordingly, "Big Data has announce the end of the *person* who possesses free will." Han refers to technologies or techniques "of domination" as 'dispositives' and he claims that every dispositive "brings forth characteristic devotional objects that are employed in order to subjugate". The devotional object of "the Digital", in this case, is the smartphone; the smartphone materialises and stabilises "devotion" to the digital regime; Han equates the smartphone to the rosary, as a "subjectivation-apparatus", both are handheld 'devices' and both "serve the purpose of self-monitoring and control". The smartphone serves not only as an "effective surveillance apparatus", but also as a "mobile confessional", which actually goes back to Benjamin's declaration of capitalism as a religion. Han declares that Facebook is "the church", or the "global synagogue", of "the Digital", but the same could actually be said about all social media. Economic debt, 'guilt', has been extended to the digital realm, particularly with the digitalisation of money. We could go so far as to extend this church 'analogy' to the entirety of the Digital: social media may be used for some purposes, but banks, online retailers, online services, entertainment and the rest serve as further devotional centres. Just as Schmitt wrote of 'political theology', we might, here, declare that the psychopolitics of the Digital has ushered in a new sort of 'digital theology'.

VII. The Inefficiency of Disciplinary Power

> Disciplinary power is still commanded by negativity. Its mode of articulation is *inhibitive*, not *permissive*. Because it is negative, it does not describe the neoliberal regime...which beams forth in positivity. The neoliberal regime's technology of power takes on subtle, supple and smart forms...it escapes all visibility...the subjugated subject is not even aware of its own subjugation. The whole context of domination...remains entirely hidden...the subject thinks itself free.[496]

Power does not express itself uniformly, according to Han. One expression of power, which goes back to political scientists of the mid-20th century, is manipulation and coercion. If one can force or convince another to do something that they do not wish to do, then this is a form of power; violence may enter into the equation, but not, of course, necessarily. That violence, however, need not be physical; it can manifest itself as a psychological or emotional type of violence. Han claims, however, that power, which "relies on violence", is not "power of the highest order". Power "of the highest order" is that power that "does not come into view at all" and "exists without question", as the greater that power is, "the *more quietly* it works"...it "just *happens* [and] has no need to draw attention to itself". Han distinguishes the different expressions of power from power itself; power, *per se*, is not "*based* on force" and does not need to "exclude, prohibit or censor", nor is it against freedom. In fact, "power can...use freedom to its own ends". The type of power that needs to employ methods like violence or coercion is a "negative" form of power; today, however, power has assumed a "*permissive*" form. Power, today, is 'friendly' and in its "permissivity...[it] is shedding its negativity and presenting itself as freedom". If a machine requires more energy to operate than the work, or energy, that it creates, then it is highly inefficient; the same is true of disciplinary power. As Han puts it, it "expends a great deal of energy to force people into the straightjacket of commandments and prohibitions". A more efficient sort of power would operate differently; it would make sure that "people

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[496] Ibid, 14.

subordinate themselves to power relations *on their own*". This sort of power promotes activation, motivation and optimisation, as opposed to inhibition and repression; it neither forbids nor deprives, but pleases and fulfils: "instead of making people *compliant*, it seeks to make them *dependent*". This sort of hedonistic expression of power is not alien to capitalism nor, even, to Marxism. Happiness, joy, pleasure, or analogue sentiments, are all promised, to one degree or another, by most socio-politico-economic systems, particularly in the case of capitalism. The difference, here, is not only the means of the production, but new modes of life, more generally. The Digital presents something It is immediately accessible, yet wholly out of one's grasp and, worse yet, infinite in its scope. The Digital can promise everything, while, in return, giving nothing. We saw the advent of this sort of limitless, infinite potential, that can simultaneously present itself as an immediate and accessible reality, though entirely illusory, when photography was introduced in the late 19th Century. Mythology, literature and the like existed far, far earlier, of course, but photography was meant to show us, quite physically, an element of reality, not to mention how it affected our perception of time. Cinema, of course, took everything that much further; and television brought the same, but even more immediately and with no physical displacement necessary. The illusion is *real*, in almost the strictest sense, but it is never *ours*, also in the strictest sense. One may possess a television, but never anything that it presents or offers. The spectacle is as hollow, or as empty, as the television, cinema screen or computer monitor. It presents infinity, but, in return, offers nothing.

VIII. Smart Power

> Smart power reads and appraises our conscious and unconscious thoughts. It places its stock in voluntary self-organization and self-optimization. As such, it has no need to overcome resistance. Mastery of this sort requires no great expenditure of energy or violence. It simply *happens.* The capitalism of *Like* should come with a warning label: *Protect me from what I want.*[497]

‘Smart’ devices represent a complete turn away from the analogue towards the digital. Though these days it simply means that a device can connect to the internet, a ‘smart’ device means, essentially, perpetual and limitless access to the world-at-large, but, more importantly, to whatever ‘world’ we deem most important to us. Even though, in theory, we have access to anything and everything, we still choose to limit ourselves to what we find most comforting, agreeable, manageable or pleasant. We, voluntarily and of our accord, curate our ‘realities’ and determine or automate what we are exposed to. One could even argue that the concept of ‘censorship’ has become obsolete and that a more appropriate term would be ‘curation’. Of course, a journalist being silenced, incarcerated or murdered for revealing a state secret or some other sort of ‘sensitive’ information, or a non-fiction book being banned for questioning a practice that the author finds immoral, is certainly censorship, but what about the active choice to avoid, erase or protect oneself from such information? Internet access allows for access to all sorts of information concerning human rights abuses, state-sponsored violence and innumerable injustices, but it is a choice whether or not one wishes to explore these facts or not. Access to such a vast, practically infinite, amount of information was hitherto unimaginable, but, it is, for a number of reasons, intentionally limited and curated to (try to) meet our emotional, psychological and economic means. This is representative of a power that does not "operate frontally", but, rather, in a friendly and guiding way. Wills are bent to the benefit of this power; as Han explains: it "*leads astray* instead of erecting obstacles". This is *smart power*; a

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[497] Ibid, 15.

power that promotes positivity and positive emotions, but only to, in turn, exploit them. Smart power promotes not only transparency, but friendship, confidence, participation and relation; it wants us to express all of our "opinions, needs, wishes and preferences" and everything about our lives. Smart power wants to be our best friend, our confidante and our partner, but is, of course, none of these. This type of power is "*more powerful*" than "purely repressive power"; it is not seen, at all, but it is felt. The crisis, here, rests in the fact that freedom, rather than being limited, is amplified and exploited: free choice, free will, even, "is eliminated to make way for a free selection...from among the items on offer". For Han, the symbol, or signet, of smart power is the *Like* button; he claims that people "subjugate themselves to domination by consuming and communicating" and "click *Like* all the while". Neoliberalism is, thus, the "*capitalism of 'Like'*. This capitalism is "fundamentally different from nineteenth-century capitalism, which operated by means of disciplinary constraints and prohibitions". What is, perhaps, most interesting about neoliberalism, *qua* capitalism, is the idea of 'currency'. Besides the fact that, yes, many different national currencies exist, there seem to be a myriad of currencies out there, some of which are more valuable, others less so, than national currencies. Data, *Likes*, views, hits, reactions and the like, have become, to a certain extent, more valuable than money. Certainly, money can be exchanged for any of these, and most of these originated out of monetary desire, but, in that sense, life today resembles a virtual game more than anything else. The conversation, perhaps, wanders too far out into politico-economic theory to be useful enough, here, but the concept of value is critical to the development, or 'understanding', of any form of power. In a virtual game, one spends 'real' money in order to advance or to entertain the fantasies that said game promises. Some mobile games allow one to pay money in order to acquire powers or benefits,

and even virtual currency, that allow one to become superior to other players. Neoliberalism seems to be doing the same, but in the Digital. In exchange for national currencies, participants, i.e. *everyone*, can become as 'powerful', or 'influential', as they can afford. This only holds, however, if we value data, *Likes* and views *more than* money, which, as Han would seem to argue, and has become quite clear, we do.

IX. Panoptica

> A new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example: and that, to a degree equally without example, secured by whoever chooses to have it so, against abuse. – Such is the engine: such the work that may be done with it. How far the expectations thus held out have been fulfilled, the reader will decide.[498]

Jeremy Bentham describes, in his letter entitled 'Panopticon, or, Inspection House, &C.', an architectural development that will reform morals, preserve health, invigorate industry, diffuse instruction and lighten public "burthens". This architectural development, "contrived" by his brother, which he refers to as the "*Inspection House*" or "*Elaboratory*", could be, as he claimed, applied to any establishment that sought to keep "a number of persons...under inspection". No matter what the purpose of the establishment, whether it was to punish, guard, reform, confine, employ, maintain, cure, instruct, train or educate, it would, Bentham claimed, function to a degree that had never before been seen. His brother's design could be applied to prisons of all sorts, houses of correction, work-houses, factories, asylums, hospitals and schools, and it would function just as well in any of them. A place of inspection, of course, is more effective the more that it can actually inspect that which it needs to inspect. The issue, here, as Bentham saw it, was the unfortunate fact that a person cannot be inspected without limits. As he puts its: "ideal perfection...would require that that each person should actually be in that predicament, during every instant of time". His

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[498] Bentham, Jeremy. *The Panopticon Writings*. 31.

solution was, then, to at least make it *seem* to the person being inspected that they were, *in fact*, being observed constantly and to make it so that that person would be unable to prove otherwise. The panopticon's design, of course, would see that this became the case. The reason that it is useful to turn to Bentham's original proposal for an "Inspection House", is the fact that the digital realm would have been inconceivable, at that point in time. Oddly enough, the closest thing to it, at that time, would have been the panopticon. This is not just a simple case of technological knowledge, but also one of epistemology. Bentham could not conceive of, as he stated so himself, a reality where a person could be inspected without cessation. It had to be made to appear so and the person had to come to *believe* that it was so. In today's world, not only do we *believe*, and *know*, that this is the case, but we are voluntarily complicit in it. As Han puts it, disciplinary society, a 'panoptical society', "consists of settings and institutions of confinement"; the "family, schools, prisons, barracks, hospitals and factories all represent disciplinary spaces that confine". This is exactly as Bentham envisaged and as Han describes: the "disciplinary subject changes from milieu of confinement to the next...it moves within a *closes system*" and the "inhabitants of milieus of confinement can be ordered in space and time". This is the result of the proliferation of panoptical architecture in society, which was Bentham's vision, from the beginning. Deleuze, as Han explains, diagnosed "a general crisis affecting all milieus of confinement": they "are no longer suited to post-industrial, immaterial and networked forms of production". These forms of production do not tolerate limits or "borders" and they work to destroy or, at least, mutate them, with the purpose of exploitation, which can take many forms. Han describes the inhabitant of a disciplinary society as a *mole*, who is forced to move "through predetermined spaces" and "subordinates itself to spatial restrictions". The inhabitant of the neoliberal

society is a *snake*, who "*makes space by means of its own movement*" and "does not move in closed spaces"; the mole "is a *labourer*", but the snake "is an *entrepreneur*". Neoliberal society has, according to Han, usurped disciplinary society, and the mole, a "subjugated subject", has passed to become the snake, a "*project*". This passage, however, does not imply that *projects* are any freer than *subjects*; it does not represent a move to "an entirely new way of life". What has occurred is simply a "mutation" and "an intensification" of capitalism, which has not changed. In terms of productivity, the mole is restricted in its abilities by its very 'nature'; the snake, however, moves and produces freely, almost limitlessly. Capitalism, according to Han, has switched from the former model to the latter. As Deleuze sees it, the disciplinary society, the society of the 'mole', is organised like a 'body': it is a "biopolitical regime". Neoliberalism, however, organises itself as a 'soul': it is a psychopolitical regime and *psychopolitics* "is its form of government". The "psychopolitical technology of domination" is represented by "motivation, projects, competition, optimization and initiative"; the snake is an embodiment of "the guilt and debts...that the neoliberal regime employs as instruments of domination". Bentham could not envisage a digital society and even those who could, be they scientists, artists, authors, philosophers, etc., could not predict the, seemingly, sudden and epochal shift that digital technologies have introduced to human life, in nearly every aspect. The most important change, arguably, has occurred psychologically. It is not enough to say that we have become like the machines that are so ubiquitous in our lives, or even that we have become humanoids or sorts of androbots; digital technology has fundamentally changed the way that we speak, think, act and function. This is, no doubt, true of all technological developments, from gunpowder, to the telescope, to the printing press, but the technological

'advancements' of the last few decades have brought about a change that is not only *still* occurring, but was *not* predicted, at least in this fashion.

X. Biopolitics

> Since the seventeenth century, Foucault claims, power has ceased to manifest itself as the godlike sovereign's capacity to deal death and instead taken the form of discipline. The power of sovereignty is the might of the sword. It threatens with death and exploits the 'privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it'...disciplinary power is not a power to deal death, but a power over life: its function is no longer to kill but to 'invest life through and through'...the 'old power of death' yields to the careful 'administration of bodies' and 'the calculated management of life'.[499]

The shift from sovereignty to discipline was not precipitous, but was, rather, the result of "changes in forms of production", in particular, the shift from "agrarian to industrial production". An industrial society requires its member to function in an 'industrial' fashion; it requires that the body be disciplined, in order to "fit it machinic production". Disciplinary power does not torture the body, but, rather, "yokes it into a system of norms". The means of production serve to shape and develop the person as they deem necessary and, in an industrial society. "calculated coercion pervades each...limb and comes to be inscribed even in the automatism of habits...the body is calibrated to be a production unit". Disciplines make the body useful and functional; industry requires machines and machines require operators, but these operators cannot be *entirely* human; they must develop into the machine. If one operates a machine for nine hours a day, what happens to one's body and mind during those nine hours and in what sense, and for whom, is one being 'productive'? It can be said that the most important science for the disciplinary society is *ergonomics*, as a primary concern of the disciplinarian subject is how he or she can most effectively and efficiently interact with some machine or series of machines. More will be said about this later, however, as neoliberal society has exactly the same concern. Disciplinary

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[499] Ibid, 19.

power is a normative type of power; it "subjects the subject to a set of rules...and eliminates deviations and anomalies". This power concerns itself with exploitation from 'without'; it trains and drills one into obedience: it creates "the obedience-subject". Han concedes that technologies of discipline do reach into "the mental sphere", "beyond the physical real", because obedience-subjects must be morally instructed and reassured; they must be convinced, to a certain extent, that their work is 'right' and/or 'good'. The nature of disciplinary technology, however, its primarily "*orthopaedic*" concern, does not allow it to "penetrate into the deeper layers of the soul...and take it over". Bentham's panopticon, Han claims, is "bound to the *optical medium*"; it only observes from without and has "*no access to inner thoughts or needs*". Biopolitics devotes itself to the administration of 'populations', as said populations are considered "productive and reproductive" masses. It is the "governmental technology of disciplinary power" and seeks to regulate such things as "reproductive cycles, birth and death rates, levels of general health...and life expectancy". Neoliberalism, on the other hand, is principally concerned with the psyche and not the body. Biopolitics is not granted "access to the psychic realm" and it cannot provide any material "for drawing up a *psychogram* of the population". Han wants to distinguish between statistics, on the one hand, and Big Data, on the other; statistics being the tool that allows for the regulation of populations and Big Data being what allows us "to tap into or disclose the psyche". Big Data gives us the means to establish "not just an individual but a *collective psychogram*" and, potentially, "even the *psychogram of the unconscious itself*". Big Data may even allow us to "shine a light into the depths of the psyche and exploit the unconscious entirely". Let us return, then, to the concept of ergonomics. Digital ergonomics would concern itself with how, specifically, we interact with the Digital; the *Like* phenomenon, which Han confers religious status upon, would,

here, be an object of study. Swiping, clicking, scrolling, typing and the like would all be objects of digital ergonomic study. This would require a more nuanced approach and analysis in understanding how 'individuals' interact with new technologies. The problem here, however, is that neoliberalism, in Han's view, de-individualises the person; in fact, it de-humanises the person and converts him or her into data. Digital ergonomics, however, does not disappear. The interaction between the neoliberalist *project* and neoliberalist technologies must never end; this is assured, in any case, by the dependency that said technologies develop in the *project*. These media become like sources of nourishment and, in many cases, their consumption is more important than the consumption of food. There is nothing particularly novel in this arrangement: Plato famously elevated concern for the soul over concern for the body, as did Descartes, Kant and innumerable other philosophers. The difference here is that media provides no *real* sustenance or nourishment for neither the soul *nor* the body. It is empty and pretentious and exists solely to exploit those who depend upon it, i.e. *everyone*. One might argue that a turn away from Big Data and the Digital may provide relief from this condition; it may be an answer and solution to the totalised and overwhelming exploitation of the soul and psyche that are the hallmarks of neoliberalism. This is proving more and more impossible, however, as the world is flooded, almost literally, with smartphones and internet access. If access to the internet is considered a 'human right', then there is no stopping its spread to all corners of the globe. Access to the Digital promises improvements in all aspects of our lives; it is simply just the way that world works, now. The problem, here, is that it is not just the internet providers that are fighting for everyone to access to the Digital, but the impoverished and those that fight on their behalf. Those that would only look to help inevitably invite new forms of exploitation upon those that they wish could be free. The

problem, as Han would put it, is that no one is free; it is simply another neoliberalist illusion.

XI. Body and Soul

> The body no longer represents a central force of production, as it formerly did in biopolitical, disciplinary society. Now, productivity is not to be enhanced by *overcoming* physical resistance so much as by *optimizing* psychic or mental processes. Physical discipline has given way to mental optimization. And neuro-enhancement differs from the disciplinary techniques of psychiatry fundamentally.[500]

The primary productive force behind neoliberalism is the psyche. This is the Archimedean discovery of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism, as such, is "a further development...indeed, a mutated form" of capitalism and the course of contemporary capitalism is determined by "immaterial and non-physical forms of production". This is evidenced in the fact that, though material objects are being produced, logically, at a rate never before seen in history, immaterial 'objects', like "information and programs", are being produced at a much faster and more voluminous rate. Optimisation is now trumping discipline, regulation and habit; even when these things do present themselves, it is in the name of optimisation, particularly the *mental* kind. Han claims that the body is being "released from the immediate process of production and turning in to the object optimization, whether along aesthetic lines or in terms of health technology". It is important to recognise that the factories *do* still exist and that farms, of course, are still maintained, but the point, here, is that even the labourer and the farmer are prey to neoliberal technologies. Han points out that "optimisation means more than *aesthetic* practice alone: sexiness and fitness represent new economic resources to be increase, marketed and exploited". Again, there is nothing novel here, on the surface. Sex, health and the like have always been up for sale and marketed, even before marketing and advertising were considered, as they seem to be now,

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[500] Ibid, 25.

branches of sociology. Ancient civilisations were equally fascinated and concerned with the power of fertility, beauty and living 'better' lives, as the people shopping along Rodeo Drive in Los Angeles. The distinction, here, is that neoliberalism has transformed these conceptions not simply into commodities, but also needs. The more we are exposed to these ideas, which is, now, incessantly, the more we begin to see them not as things that *can* or *should* be attained, but, rather, as basic human needs. As Bernard Stiegler argues, biopower "has been replaced by 'psychotechnological psychopower'" and neoliberal psychopolitics "employs digital technology on a massive scale". Han argues, unlike Stiegler, that "truly digital technology" like social media, the internet and computer hard- and software "prove fundamentally different from the mass media of the past"; it is important to recognise, in this respect, the "panoptic structure of digital networks". One important distinction between the media 'of the past' and the digital technology of today is what we might call *cessation* or *shutdown*. If we argue, like Stiegler, that television "represents the psychotechnical apparatus *tout court*", then he would have to explain how this is so when a television can, quite simply, be turned off. Its programming certainly continues, but one can choose *not* to watch it. The same holds true of the cinema and of the theatre, not to mention the fact that these forms of media are being made less and less accessible due to price increases. *Truly* digital technology, as Han calls it, cannot be turned off. In fact, these technologies *will not* be turned off; they simply refuse. A social media post lives on well after anyone reads it and may not even be read for years before someone picks it up, again. The same holds true for literature, certainly, but the immediacy of social media communication distinguishes it *severely* from more deliberate and considered literary works. Stiegler points this out; he argues that the "programming industry" reduces us to "impulsive...creatures of consumption", which induces "mass

regression". He juxtaposes these "psychotechnics" with the "technology of reading and writing"; literacy means "enlightenment". He points out that Kant's "thought of maturity as humanity's sovereignty" was based on "the apparatus of reading and writing". A social media post, in this case, is neither an 'enlightened', nor a 'mature', method of communication. This may be an unfair critique of the power and purpose of social media, in many instances, but, perhaps, not in a more general sense. The argument, here, is that social media democratises discourse, while print media and television, and even film and theatre, *can* also do that, to a certain extent, but the extent to which social does so makes it truly unparalleled. It would be nonsense, in any case, to argue that a social media post, however brief, that attempts to raise awareness about an injustice occurring somewhere in the world is less 'enlightened' or 'mature' than a novel about an adolescent wizard, for example. Nevertheless, the majority of social media posts or communications do not highlight government abuses or civil rights struggles; they frequently do not move beyond the *self*. Even if one does comment on social struggle of some sort, it is often to show how it concerns one's own *self* and in the pursuit of *Likes* or some sort of personal attention. Neoliberalism has managed to universalise *egotism* and claim the *self*, particularly the *inner self*, as the one universal truth. Foucault, in the early 1980s, conceded that his work may have focused "too much on the technology of domination and power", as he became "more interested in the interaction between oneself and others" and "in the technologies of individual domination, the history of how an individual acts upon himself" and "in the technology of the self". Han argues that the "blind spot" in Foucault's oeuvre is "the technology of power under the neoliberal regime"; Foucault did not recognise that "*the neoliberal regime utterly claims the technology of the self for its own purposes*". He states that:

> perpetual self-optimization...as the exemplary neoliberal technology of the self...represents nothing so much as a highly efficient mode of domination and exploitation. As an 'entrepreneur of himself', the neoliberal achievement-subject engages in auto-exploitation willingly...even passionately. The self-as-a-work-of-art amounts to a beautiful but deceptive illusion that the neoliberal regime maintains in order to exhaust its resources entirely.[501]

Neoliberal power does act "directly" on the individual; it makes the individual act. It makes sure that this action is directed towards the self and that power relations become "interiorized...and then interpreted as freedom"; self-optimisation "and submission, freedom and exploitation", all of these become one. This "engineering of freedom of exploitation", effected by neoliberalism with the aim of "self-exploitation", is what Han claims that Foucault ignored. It is difficult, here, to claim whether or not these ideas "escaped" Foucault, or if it is simply the case that it is really digital technology that has allowed the neoliberal regime to develop as it has and, consequently, for us to develop an understanding of neoliberalism and psychopolitcs, such as Han has. It does seem to be clear, however, that the type of 'power' that Han is theorising, *psychopolitical power*, is not simply another form of 'biopower', nor of biopolitical power. The type of neoliberal power than Han outlines is so ubiquitous, insidious and all-consuming, that it allows for *nothing else* but what it provokes in the self, which it then exploits.

XII. The Age of Exhaustion

> ...the violence of positivity is just as destructive as the violence of negativity. Neoliberal psychopolitics, with the consciousness industry it promotes, is destroying the human soul, which is anything but a machine of positivity...The neoliberal subject is running aground on the imperative of self-optimization...on the compulsion always to achieve more and more. Healing, it turns out, means killing.[502]

Neoliberal psychopolitics does not, in a sense, conform to any mode of exploitation. It always seeks new modes and "refined forms of exploitation". "Self-

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[501] Ibid, 28.
[502] Ibid, 32.

management workshops, motivational retreats and seminars on personality or mental training" claim that they will help one self-optimise and heighten efficiency, but these goals do not, in fact, serve the *self*, but, rather, the system. The object of psychopolitical exploitation is the *whole* of the human being: the entirety of his or her life. The "neoliberal imperative" to self-optimise only works to effect "perfect functioning within the system"; whatever might affect the system's efficiency and performance, e.g. "inhibitions, points of weakness and mistakes", is eliminated in the quest for self-perfection, but not, as it may seem, in the service of "the good life". Han distinguishes between "the age of sovereignty", the age of "active and industrial added-value" and, now, "the age of exhaustion". The age of sovereignty "expressed itself as the right to seize and dispose at will"; the age of active and industrial added-value, a product of the disciplinary society, expressed itself as the creation of new value that could be considered 'real'; now, the age of exhaustion, a product of the neoliberal regime, expresses itself as the exploitation of the psyche and is defined by "psychic maladies such as depression and burnout". Since self-optimisation is meant to "*therapeutically*" expunge whatever functional weaknesses or mental obstacles that one may be suffering from, for the sake of "efficiency performance", and this is, effectively (and humanly), impossible, it is "leading to *mental collapse*". It is "destructive", particularly because it is "perpetual"; the *system* is optimising incessantly and so too must the *self*. The irony, here, is that the *self*, in the very quest of auto-perfection, destroys it*self*; this is the act of "total self-exploitation". Self-optimisation, as *the* neoliberal ideology, "displays religious...indeed, fanatical...traits"; its method of subjectivation is novel, though. It "resembles...Protestantism" in that self-optimisation works to constantly self-examine and self-monitor; the difference, here, is that sins have been replaced with "negative thoughts" and the ego is, in a sense, its own worst

enemy. A further irony is that *negativity*, in life, is actually a positive ontological force; as Han puts it, the "human soul owes its defining tautness and depth precisely to negativity". He argues that pain, and its sensation, is "constitutive for *experience*" and that a life that is "wholly...positive emotions and the sensation of 'flow' is not human...". Pain has not been eradicated, certainly, but the only pain that is allowed is the kind of pain that "can be exploited for the purposes of optimization". *Positivity*, in the neoliberal, psychopolitical sense, is a negative ontological force; it is a violent and destructive force. The only 'real' product of the neoliberal regime, as Han would have it, is the destruction of the human soul.

XIII. Creatures of Sentiment

> Consumer capitalism enlists emotion in order to generate more desires and needs. *Emotional Design* moulds emotions and shapes emotional patterns for the sake of maximizing consumption. All in all, today we do not consume things so much as emotions. The former cannot be consumed without end – but the latter can. Emotions assume dimensions beyond the scope of use value. In so doing, they open up a field of consumption that is new and knows no limit.[503]

Philosophy has always dealt with emotion, but not, typically, in a very positive way. From Seneca, to Descartes, to Plato, philosophers have not theorised the emotions positively, but, rather, as obstacles, impediments and nuisances that obstruct our path to pure and logical reasoning and its employment. Han claims that, today, emotion has overtaken reason as the defining human characteristic. He declares that suddenly, "the human being no longer counts as an *animal rationale*...[but as a] creature of sentiment" and that this "emotion 'boom' stems from an economic process, above all". Furthermore, he criticises researchers apparent "conceptual confusion" and their inability to distinguish between "'emotion', 'feeling' and 'affect'. Han contends that this sudden interest in 'emotion' is not borne out of a genuine conceptual or scientific curiosity, but, rather, out of a desire, on the part of the

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[503] Ibid, 46.

neoliberal regime, to deploy "emotions as resources in order to bring out heightened productivity and achievement". *Rationality* has a limit, which may express itself as 'logic' or as 'the objective world' or something along these lines. Thus, rationality, as "the medium of disciplinary society", clashes with the neoliberal project and is "experienced as a constraint...an inhibition"; neoliberalism, thus, is unable to tolerate it and has replace it with "*emotionality*". This 'release' from rationality presents itself as a liberation of sorts, especially if we take it as fact that "being free means giving free rein to emotions". "Emotional capitalism", i.e. neoliberalism, succeeds in hailing emotion "as the expression of unbridled subjectivity"; this "unbridled subjectivity" is then "mercilessly" exploited by neoliberal technologies of power. *Rationality*, on the one hand, concerns "objectivity, generality and steadiness", while *emotionality*, on the other, is "subjective, situative and volatile"; the latter is, in a sense, reactionary, while the former is pre-emptive and calculated. Rationality moves toward stability and emotionality craves flux. Han argues that the neoliberal economy has pushed the emotionalisation "of the productive process forward", in order to dismantle continuity and integrate instability as another way of enhancing productivity; "accelerated communication", as facilitated by the Digital, "also promotes emotionalization", but it is this acceleration, and the pressure that it produces, that "is leading to a *dictatorship of emotion*". There is a tension, in *emotionality*, between generation and consumption; as Han puts it, consumer capitalism "enlists emotion in order to generate more desire and needs", while *emotional design* "moulds emotions and shapes emotional patterns for the sake of maximizing consumption". Today's consumption revolves more around emotions than things; things, as such, are finite, while emotions can be "consumed without end". Emotions are able to "assume dimensions beyond the scope of use value" and, in the process, "they open up a field of consumption that is new and knows

no limit". Furthermore, the shift to *emotionality* is the result of a "new, immaterial mode of production in which communicative interaction plays an ever-greater role"; this mode of production requires not only "cognitive competence, but also...emotional competence". Employees are now judged not only on cognitive and manual skills, but also on their behaviour and their social skills; this new mode of production exploits "sociality, communication and even individual conduct". "Corporate communication" is now optimised via the "raw material" that emotions provide; managerial strategies that once focused on "the principle of rational action", now focus on "*emotional management*", instead. Emotions can express themselves as either "performative" or as "*inclinations*"; they express themselves as the former when they "call forth certain actions", but as the latter when they "represent the energetic...the sensory, or even sensuous...basis for actions". Han considers that emotions are "steered by the limbic system, which is...where the drives are seated"; these "form the pre-reflexive, half-conscious, physico-instinctual level of action that escapes full awareness". It is on this level that neoliberal psychopolitics "seizes on emotion *in order to influence actions*...". It is able to "cut and operate deep inside", via the emotions; thus, emotion functions as the medium that allows for "psychopolitically steering the integral person...the person as a whole". Neoliberalism, then, takes what is typically considered a 'natural', human phenomenon, *emotion*, and exploits it, to its own end. When it comes to consumption, impulse is often a key factor in the decision-making process, especially if the decision involves only very similar choices. Hume's passions and sentiments were the basis for his ethics and even, to a certain extent, for his ontology and epistemology. Here, emotion is, effectively, completely devoid of any moral responsibility; neoliberalism takes emotion and reduces, or elevates (depending on the perspective), it to a near-primal level. A person acts not because they *know*

something, but because they *feel* it and it is this sentiment that neoliberalism takes hold on and exploits to the point of saturation. Though the 'logic' behind this proliferation of *emotionality* and emotions, *per se*, is the generation of needs and desires and merciless exploitation of the same, what we really end up with is a situation where the more 'valuable' emotions become, the less that they actually *mean* anything. As Han pointed out, the turn *to* emotionality results from a turn *away* from rationality, which prevents anyone from being able to explain the 'logic' behind their emotions and allows them only to emote in an effectively meaning-*less* way.

XIV. The Art of Living

> Neoliberal psychopolitics is a technology of domination that stabilizes and perpetuates the prevailing system by means of psychological programming and steering...the art of living, as the praxis of freedom, must proceed by way of de-psychologization. This serves to disarm psychopolitics, which is a means of effecting submission. When the subject is de-psychologized...*de-voided*...it opens onto a mode of existence that still has no name: an unwritten future.[504]

Is there any response or answer to the neoliberal condition or is it one that, thanks to the inexorable proliferation of our digital technologies, we can never escape? Han, following on from Nietzsche, references what is know as "the *event*", which signals, in an "incalculable and abrupt" manner, the beginning of "an *entirely new state of affairs*". An *event* introduces "an *outside*" and this introduction "breaks the subject open and wrests it from subjection"; *events* "represent breaks and discontinuities...they open up *new spaces for action*". The glory of neoliberalism is its interminable quest for ever greater efficiency and performance, which it does *always* find or create. There is no *break* to psychopolitical power; it is incessant and everchanging. Han distinguishes between "*experiencing*" and "*experience*", with the latter being "founded on discontinuity"; while existing as a subject "means being subjected...cast under, by a higher instance", experience "means transformation...[it]

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[504] Ibid, 79.

tears the subject out from subjection...out of its downcast state". *Experience*, for Han, "signifies the opposite of the neoliberal psychopolitics of *experiencing* or *emotion*, which only ensnares the subject deeper and deeper in the state of subjection and subjugation". What might be understood as "the art of living", following on from Foucault, is the practice of a 'real' sort of freedom, "bringing forth an entirely different mode of existence". This requires, however, a "de-psychologization"; it is "the art of killing of psychology [and] of creating within oneself and with others unname individualities, beings, relations [and] qualities". Neoliberal psychopolitics produces a sort of "psychological terror" that facilitates the subjugation of "subjectivation" and the "art of living" must be directly opposed to that. It is not terribly clear what "*event*" or how exactly this "art of living" can save us from psychopolitical power. Digital technologies and neoliberal capitalism seem too pervasive, too powerful and necessary, currently, to even imagine that things could one day be any different. Instead of social media becoming less popular or less ubiquitous, over time, it continues to change and find new ways of becoming ever more 'social' and integrated into quotidian life. Technology, more generally, is more present than ever; not only has it entered the home and all 'traditionally' private spaces, but it has also *literally* entered the body and the mind with the slow acceptance of bio-technologies. Resistance to power would only be able occur progressively and at the level of the individual; this resistance, however, would not only go unnoticed, but would also quickly grow irrelevant, as it would more likely be integrated into the neoliberal regime. Removing oneself "from the grid" is becoming an ever more popular choice among those who wish to free themselves from the stresses and social requirements of digital life. This 'choice', too, has become a sort of faddish and only temporary 'therapy'; it has quickly been commodified and exploited just like everything else under psychopolitics.

Homes, technologies, spaces and facilities that are all 'off grid' and free of digital technology are all up for sale and advertised, ironically, all over the internet. Even life 'off grid' is generated digitally. There are certainly a variety of modes of resistance and resistance strategies against psychopolitcal power, which may or may incorporate some sort of 'off grid' logic, but it is not as simple as shunning technology altogether. Ignoring technology will not make it disappear; in fact, it will likely only make it appear more powerful as you experience the social and economic alienation that results from such a rupture. As the Digital becomes a source of 'life', as artificial and vacuous as it may be, its opposite is, in fact, a sort of 'death'. The *event*, or *events*, that Han refers to would have to be so cataclysmic that they rid people of the 'need' for technology and did, truly, allow for the introduction of new modes of life. Again, this seems unlikely and an incredibly complicated problem, but it is perhaps possible, at some point in the undetermined future.

The Power of Truth:
The Scientific Production of Epistemologies

I. Introduction

This chapter will look at the ways that the concepts of 'science' and 'method' have changed over the past century by focusing on the work of Karl Popper, Paul Feyerabend and Michel Foucault. It will show how the logical positivist movement, and those who criticised it, like Popper, attempted to 'correct' science and make it more precise and reflective of 'reality' and 'the universal'. Feyerabend, on the other hand, criticised the very notion of logic, rationality and scientific discovery and advocated for an anarchic approach towards human knowledge and understanding. Foucault would argue that science itself is a mode of knowledge production; science gives us knowledge about the world because it delimits and defines: first, what is 'true' and what is 'false' in terms of our own experience and understanding of 'reality' and, second, what can even validly be considered as 'reality', 'experience', 'knowledge', 'understanding', 'science' and the like. The dialogue/debates between these theorists serve as a way to explain why so many different conceptions of 'truth', 'reality' and 'knowledge' seem equally valid depending on their contextualisation; if we understand epistemology as being a sort of self-contained system, rather than as a system that works to explain things outside of it, i.e. 'natural phenomena', then we see how it is epistemology itself that should be understood as a social, even 'natural', phenomenon.

II. The Power of Truth

> What one is seeing…is the emergence of a whole field of question…by which [a] new form of history is trying to develop its own theory: how is one to specify the different concepts that enable us to conceive of discontinuity…By what criteria is one to isolate the unities with which one is dealing: what is *a* science? What is an *oeuvre*? What is *a* theory? What is *a* concept? What is *a* text?[505]

Applied science, by its very nature, does not concern itself very much with methodology, primarily because the proper method for practising science has been established for centuries. In the early 11th century, the physicist Al-Haytham pioneered what is now known as 'the scientific method', which is essentially a reliance on evidence that is experimental in origin, with said experiments being "systematic and repeatable", as opposed to a reliance on theories in the abstract that cannot be tested and are not observable in nature.[506] This 'scientific method', if valid and effective, would, then, "be routinely found in everyday contexts as well", since we are constantly and routinely observing the world around us and reach conclusions based on these repeated observations.[507] This is the nature of empiricism and empirical thought: first, that there is a world independent of our own existence and, secondly, that our only knowledge of it comes through experience. The relation between empiricism and science, then, is that science is a particularly successful practice of empiricism because it is "organized, systematic, and especially responsive to experience".[508] This essay will look at the ways that the concepts of *science* and *method* have changed over the past century by focusing on the work of Karl Popper, Paul Feyerabend and Michel Foucault. We will see how the logical positivist movement and those who criticised it, like Popper, attempted to 'correct' science and make it more precise and reflective of *reality* and *the universal*. Feyerabend, on the other hand, criticised the very notion of logic, rationality and scientific discovery and advocated for an anarchic

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[505] Foucault, Michel. *Archaeology of Knowledge*. 6.
[506] Gorini, Rosanna. 'Al-Haytham the Man of Experience'. *JISHIM*. 55.
[507] Godfrey-Smith, Peter. *Theory and Reality*. 9.
[508] Ibid, 8.

approach towards human knowledge and understanding, which he believed is reflected in the development of the scientific 'facts' that comprise the history of science. Foucault would argue that science itself is simply, though in a very complex fashion, a mode of knowledge production; science gives us knowledge about the world because it delimits and defines: first, what is true and what is false in terms of our experience and understanding of 'reality' and, second, what can even validly be considered as experience, reality, understanding, knowledge, science, etc.

II. Epistemology of Science

Foucault's concepts break with the more traditional, naturalist view that knowledge, *per se*, is, in effect, our understanding of the *external* world; a world that would exist without us and a world that has laws, principles and truths that are also independent of our existence. His views contrast starkly with those of someone like Karl Popper who, as a 'realist', believed that "the aim of science is to find true, or increasingly truthlike, theories"; this is done, however, through falsification, which is, effectively, the exclusion of theories that have been proven to be "false".[509] Feyerabend, on the other hand, understands 'knowledge' not as a "gradual approach to the truth", nor as "a series of self-consistent theories that converges towards an ideal view", but as an "ever increasing ocean of mutually incompatible alternatives" where every theory "that is part of the collection" forces the other theories "into greater articulation" and all of them contribute, "via this process of competition" to "the development of our consciousness".[510] Furthermore, "nothing is ever settled, no view can ever be omitted from a comprehensive account".[511] This is a kind of knowledge "in which the history of a science becomes an inseparable part of the science itself", which

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[509] Rowbottom, Darrell P. *Popper's Critical Rationalism*, 124.
[510] Feyerabend, Paul. *Against Method*. 14.
[511] Ibid.

means that "it is essential for its further development as well as for giving content to the theories it contains at any particular moment".[512] Anyone from "experts and laymen" to "professionals and dilettanti" to "truth-freaks and liars" are "invited to participate in the contest and to make their contribution to the enrichment of our culture".[513] Scientists, then, are not, in fact, tasked with searching for "the truth", but, rather, with making "the weaker case the stronger…and thereby [sustaining] the motion of the whole".[514] Feyerabend argues that ideas that today

> …form the very basis of science exist only because there were such things as prejudice, conceit, passion; because these things *opposed reason*; and because they *were permitted to have their way*. We have to conclude, then, that *even within* science reason cannot and should not be allowed to be comprehensive…that it must often be overruled, or eliminated, in favour of other agencies.[515]

He contends that science is much more "'sloppy' and 'irrational' than its methodological image" and that "the attempt to make science more 'rational' and more precise is bound to wipe it out"; methodology and even, perhaps, the 'laws of reason', are weak when contrasted with the apparent "'sloppiness', 'chaos' or 'opportunism'" of science, as it is these apparent 'deficiencies' that serve "a most important function in the development of those very theories which we today regard as essential parts of our knowledge of nature".[516] It is these deficiencies, or "deviations" and "errors", as Feyerabend calls them, that exist as "preconditions of progress"; it is they that "permit knowledge to survive in the complex and difficult world which we inhabit" and "they permit *us* to remain free and happy agents".[517] He makes the aphoristic claims that "[w]ithout 'chaos', no knowledge" and "[w]ithout a frequent dismissal of reason, no progress".[518]

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[512] Ibid.
[513] Ibid.
[514] Ibid.
[515] Ibid, 158.
[516] Ibid.
[517] Ibid.
[518] Ibid.

We can, though there are several theoretical similarities, juxtapose this with Popper's 1939 work *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*.

III. *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*

Popper distinguishes between what he calls the *psychology of knowledge* and the *logic of knowledge*: the former "deals with empirical facts", while the latter deals only with "logical relations".[519] He claimed that *the problem of induction*, or, rather, the "belief in inductive logic", is "largely due to a confusion of psychological problems with epistemological ones", with 'inductive logic' being the move of an inference from 'singular statements', e.g. "accounts of the results of observations or experiments", to 'universal statements', e.g. "hypotheses or theories".[520] *The problem of induction*, then, is the question of whether or not "inductive inferences are justified" and "under what conditions"; the problem can also be understood as the question of whether or not "universal statements which are based on experience, such as the hypotheses and theoretical systems of the empirical sciences", are true or valid.[521] Now, the reason Popper wants to distinguish *psychology* from *epistemology* is because he wants, ultimately, to distinguish between "the process of conceiving of an idea" and "the methods and results of examining it logically".[522] This develops, effectively, into the distinction between *the logic of knowledge* and *the psychology of knowledge*, with Popper claiming that

> …the task of the logic of knowledge—in contradistinction to the psychology of knowledge…consists solely in investigating the method employed in those systematic tests to which every idea must be subjected if it is to be seriously entertained.[523]

For him, there can be no "logical method of having new ideas" nor a "logical reconstruction" of said process and every scientific discovery contains "an irrational

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[519] Popper, Karl. *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 7.
[520] Ibid, 3-4.
[521] Ibid, 4.
[522] Ibid, 8.
[523] Ibid.

element" or "a creative intuition".[524] In other words, a hypothesis, theory or prediction

is not necessarily 'illogical' or 'absurd' *a priori*; it is only when said 'intuition' is tested

under certain conditions and criteria. As he says:

> …[from] a new idea, put up tentatively, and not yet justified in any way…conclusions are drawn by means of logical deduction. These conclusions are then compared with one another and with other relevant statements, so as to find what logical relations…exist between them.[525]

Induction logic brings us to the universal via the particular, whereas deductive logic

leads us from the universal to the particular, or, rather, from a set of truths to another

truth. However, even those conclusions that support 'a new idea' do so only

temporarily, as "subsequent negative" conclusions may always subvert them and the

same can happen to these subsequent conclusions.[526] The only quasi-certainty that

Popper allows for, which is hardly certainty, at all, is 'corroboration', which is the idea

that a theory is 'corroborated' if it "withstands detailed and severe tests and is not

superseded by another theory in the course of scientific progress".[527] An idea or theory

becomes epistemically relevant when it is tested and supported, but it becomes

knowledge when it is tested severely and fails to be supplanted by a 'better' theory,

which is corroboration. Theories, then, can never be 'verified', because a truth that is

ultimate or incontestable is not "empirically verifiable"; thus, Popper only considers a

'system' as "empirical or scientific only if it is capable of being *tested* by experience".[528]

He takes as his "criterion of demarcation", or the criterion that allows statements to be

admitted "to the domain of empirical science", not the *verifiability* "of a system" but its

falsifiability; as Popper states:

> …I shall not require of a scientific system that is shall be capable of being singled out, once and for all, in a positive sense; but I shall require that its logical form shall be such that it can be singled out, by means of empirical tests, in a negative sense: *it must be possible for an empirical scientific system to be refuted by experience*.[529]

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[524] Ibid.
[525] Ibid, 9.
[526] Ibid, 10.
[527] Ibid.
[528] Ibid, 18.
[529] Ibid.

Popper has an understanding of the 'subjective' and the 'objective' that is "not unlike Kant's".[530] He describes Kant's use of the word 'objective' to mean that "scientific knowledge should be justifiable, independently of anybody's whim"; a justification, then is 'objective' if it can, in principle, "be tested and understood by anybody".[531] Popper, though, does not believe that scientific theories can ever be "fully justifiable or verifiable", but "they are nevertheless testable"; for Popper, then, the 'objectivity' of a scientific statement "lies in the fact that [it] can be inter-subjectively tested".[532] Inter-subjective testing, however, is only one aspect of what Popper refers to as "inter-subjective criticism" or "the idea of mutual rational control by critical discussion".[533] Popper's thesis can be summarised as such:

> …a subjective experience, or a feeling of conviction, can never justify a scientific statement, and…within science it can play no part except that of an object of an empirical (a psychological) inquiry. No matter how intense a feeling of conviction it may be, it can never justify a statement.

Furthermore:

> …I may be utterly convinced of the truth of a statement; certain of the evidence of my perception; overwhelmed by the intensity of my experience: every doubt may seem to me absurd. But does this afford the slightest reason for science to accept my statement? The answer is, 'No'; and any other answer would be incompatible with the idea of scientific objectivity".[534]

Thus, Popper concludes that if all statements that can be scientifically entertained must be 'objective', then all statements "which belong to an empirical basis of science" also have to be 'objective', or "inter-subjectively testable"; but this means, as Popper has argued, that any statements that are meant to be tested will deductively produce other testable statements.[535] If even those statements that are meant to be taken as "basic statements' must, perforce, be inter-subjectively testable, then "there can be no

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[530] Ibid, 22.
[531] Ibid.
[532] Ibid.
[533] Ibid.
[534] Ibid, 24.
[535] Ibid, 25.

ultimate statements in science"; all scientifically valid statements must be testable and they must all, in principle, be refutable "by falsifying some of the conclusions which can be deduced from them". Popper summarises:

> …[systems] of theories are tested by deducing from them statements of a lesser level of universality. These statements in their turn, since they are to be inter-subjectively testable, must be testable in like manner—and so *ad infinitum*.[536]

He does recognise, however, that "testability *ad infinitum* and the absence of ultimate statements which are not in need of tests" is problematic, as, for the sake of practicality, 'testing' must be a temporally limited endeavour; he responds to this by arguing that not every statement has to have been tested "before it is accepted", but "every such statement must be *capable* of being tested".[537] Popper believes that certainty, "the idol of certainty", is the enemy of scientific advancement; hypotheses and new ideas should be as bold as possible and their testing as rigorous as can be.[538] The purpose of science, then, is an advance towards "an infinite yet attainable aim": the discovery of "new, deeper, and more general problems" and the subjection of "our ever tentative answers to ever renewed and ever more rigorous tests".

IV. *Against Method*

While several of the most important conclusions that Feyerabend made in his 1975 work *Against Method* have already been discussed, we can now, after having briefly surveyed Popper's deductive logic, go more in depth into Feyerabend's critique, or rather invalidation, of the scientific method. Popper's aim was to criticise the use of inductive logic in science and, instead, found it in deductive logic and falsifiability. Feyerabend's aim, however, is to expose the anarchic nature of scientific discovery and dispel the myths of scientific naturalism and normativity. Feyerabend claims that

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[536] Ibid.
[537] Ibid, 26.
[538] Ibid, 281.

anarchism is "excellent medicince for *epistemology*, and for the *philosophy of science*",

as it is the case that

> …[a] complex medium containing surprising and unforeseen developments demands complex procedures and defies analysis on the basis of rules which have been set up in advance and without regard to the ever-changing conditions of history.[539]

Feyerabend understands science as being, historically, a "complex" and "chaotic"

enterprise, "full of mistakes", and that the ideas that make it up are equally as

"complex, chaotic" and "full of mistakes", which are just as "entertaining" as "the

minds who invented them".[540] The way that science is consumed, by those who

learn of science but operate outside of it, is via a simplification of its history;

making it "duller, simpler, more uniform, more 'objective' and more easily

accessible to treatment by strict and unchangeable rules".[541] The objective of

scientific education, accordingly, is to develop this original simplification through

a further simplification of its participants, which is described by Feyerabend as

such:

> …first, a domain of research is defined. The domain is separated from the rest of history…and given a 'logic' of its own. A thorough training in such a 'logic' then conditions those working in the domain; it makes *their actions* more uniform and it freezes large parts of the *historical process* as well. Stable 'facts' arise and persevere despite the vicissitudes of history.[542]

Furthermore,

> …[an] essential part of the training that makes such facts appear consists in the attempt to inhibit intuitions that might lead to a blurring of boundaries…[his] imagination is restrained, and even his language ceases to be his own. This is again reflected in the nature of scientific 'facts' which are experienced as being independent of opinion, belief, and cultural background.[543]

Science as it is taught, then, for Feyerabend, is a sanitisation of its true and anarchistic

nature, which is how the developments, conclusions and results that it produces and

that ultimately affect the world actually come about. Feyerabend supports a science

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[539] Feyerabend, Paul. *Against Method*. 9-11.
[540] Ibid, 11.
[541] Ibid.
[542] Ibid.
[543] Ibid.

that is both methodologically anarchist, "a pluralism of theories and metaphysical views", and humanitarian; this means that science should not stifle human imagination and its potential impact on the world: "…[it] is possible to *retain* what one might call the freedom of artistic creation *and to use it to the full*…as a necessary means for discovering…perhaps even changing the features of the world we live in".[544] He seems to be opposing the institutionalisation of scientific discovery, which, in theory, could be done in an institution or by applying some sort of methodology to the process, but the way that this is *actually* done (in universities, laboratories, 'in the field', etc.) and the dogmatic adherence to the 'facts' that this practice produces is not in line with what Feyerabend views as the ultimate objective of science, which is to adapt itself "to the values of the people [it is] supposed to advise" and to support humanitarian aims and a multiplicity of minds.[545] This is where the social and politically focused core of Feyerabend's thesis becomes explicit; he even makes the point that a free society must insist on "the separation of science and society", as it is the case that the structuring of a free society must result from "open debates" and not "guided debates".[546]

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[544] Ibid, 38.
[545] Ibid, 3-4.
[546] Ibid, 229.

V. Foucault's 'Method'

> I have read one book by Foucault (*Madness and Society*), and thought it was a marvellous case study of the different treatments madmen had received throughout the ages…These kinds of things I like. I did *not* like Foucault any longer when he became *general* and started to speak about the human condition…(Feyerabend, 280)

> Perhaps the reason why my work irritates people is precisely the fact that I'm not interested in constructing a new scheme or in validating one that already exists. Perhaps it's because my objective isn't to propose a global principle for analyzing society…My general theme isn't society but the discourse of true and false…and it's not just their formation that interests me, but the effects in the real to which they are linked. (Foucault, 237)

For Foucault, the question of method or, rather, methodology is not necessarily a question of how best to define or understand a concept or object of study; it is not a question of the method that one should follow in one's research or conceptual analysis, though it may sound oxymoronic to say that methodology is not about method. The idea of a methodology itself is interesting because choosing a method already says something about the work to be done; one may go so far as to say that it will, explicitly or implicitly, already hold the outcome of the work. In other words, a specific method can only produce a specific result, even if that result may seem like a discovery or revelation hitherto unknown. If we believe, like a naturalist or natural realist, that the reality that we inhabit is independent of us, then the only valid method, particularly in scientific research, is that one that leads us to truth or to an understanding of said reality that is verifiably understood as true; here, simply put, there are things that are true about the world and only that which helps us understand these truths is valid. Foucault, however, questions the very validity of said truth; what is more important: the truth that our research leads us to, or the method that led our research? This is why Popper and Feyerabend are so important to Foucault's question(s) of method. For Popper, the problem is one of scientific validity and for Feyerabend, the problem is a lack of understanding of the anarchy of knowledge and the ways in which society creates artificial epistemic domains via science. Feyerabend, in correspondence with Imre Lakatos, explicitly made his views on Popper and Foucault known. He criticised

both for seeming "to go against the sanctity of the individual" and as "enemies of the individual (and, naturally, of Good Science)".[547] Popper, as mentioned in the previous section, argued that subjective conviction can never be taken as fact unless corroborated through rigorous and objective testing, which even then only raises the conviction to the status of a temporarily corroborated and scientifically valid statement that may be falsified at some point in the future. Foucault, in a way, challenges both of these perspectives, though he certainly, in many ways, shares certain affinities with Feyerabend. A concept like "Good Science", as Feyerabend puts it, would mean nothing to Foucault, because first, if we take Popper's view, then it is science itself that is the judge of whether or not certain statements, experiments, conclusions, theories and the like are scientifically acceptable, i.e. *good*, and second, if we take Feyerabend's view, then it is the individual and, ultimately, society, understood as a group of independent and autonomous individuals, that is the arbiter of *good science* because it is they who develop and advance scientific thought, practice and discovery via an untethered and audacious imagination. However, in the first case, if science defines its own criteria for truth and objectivity, then it must be the case that it is not aiding us in our understanding of reality, but rather explicitly defining reality itself and what qualifies as such. In the second case, though Feyerabend does not ignore the power of the state over the individual nor over scientific enterprise, in general, it is not clear how any individual, or group of individuals, is able to 'escape' or function independently of the societal and administrative practices that work to dictate our understanding of what is true and what is false and, at a level above this, what can even be recognised as a practice, as *reality*. An individual, in Feyerabend's world, would, presumably, function as an 'acculturated' individual, but one who is able to

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[547] Feyerabend, Paul and Imre Lakatos. *For and Against Method*. 282.

transcend this 'reality' and is able to apprehend a multitude of 'realities'. It may be a case, here, of the process and the principle being more important than the definition, when it comes to understanding 'Good Science', but it is difficult to see how the process and meaning are distinct.

The Abstraction of Truth:
Power, Fascism and Epistemology

I. Introduction

This chapter will look at how Deleuze and Guattari understand the concepts of power, truth, individualisation and fascism and how these relate to language, representation, society, reality and epistemology. It will be argued that if Delueze and Guattari's thesis is, at the very least, valid, then not only does 'power' become an obsolete concept, but it also becomes a dangerous and socially irresponsible one. Power, as Deleuze and Guattari understand it, is the foundation of the West's structuring of order and truth, but brings with it a fascist mode of thought and action. In order to further this argument, in addition to analysing other works by Deleuze and Guattari, this essay will look at the work of John Fiske, specifically his book Media Matters, in order to understand how reality and representation function in modern society and how the act of 'discourse' challenges the emergent fascism of truth and reality. It will be argued that while 'discourse', an 'anti-Oedipal' life and new forms of politics are in no way guaranteed cures to the fascistic tendencies of life in 'Western society', they are certainly freer and more responsible ways of living that challenge the very notion of a status quo and the acceptance of oppressive and/or repressive forms of life.

II. The Abstraction of Truth

> Words are not tools, but we give children language, pens, and notebooks as we give workers shovels and pickaxes. A rule of grammar is a power marker before it is a syntactical marker. The order does not refer to prior significations or to a prior organization of distinctive units. Quite the opposite. Information is only the strict minimum necessary for the emission, transmission, and observation of orders as commands…Language is not life; it gives life orders. Life does not speak; it listens and waits.[548]

Michel Foucault, in his preface to Deleuze and Guattari's book, *Anti-Oedipus*, seems to claim that the authors have intentionally made their work difficult to understand, to take seriously and to fully engage with because they are committed to their own theses.[549] Deleuze and Guattari's thesis, as Foucault understands it, is that concepts such as 'power', 'truth' and 'individualisation' are fascist concepts that serve to control and order those who subscribe to and employ them. For Foucault, *Anti-Oedipus* set out to present, or at least begin to present, an "art of living counter to all forms of fascism, whether already present or impending".[550] He even goes as far as to summarise a few "essential principles" that he believes explain and outline the 'anti-Oedipal', and anti-fascist, form of life that Deleuze and Guattari present in their work; the most important of which seems to be the renunciation of power.[551] This essay will look at how Deleuze and Guattari understand the concepts of power, truth, individualisation and fascism and how these relate to language, representation, society, reality and epistemology. It will be argued that if Delueze and Guattari's thesis is, at the very least, valid, then not only does 'power' become an obsolete concept, but it also becomes a dangerous and socially irresponsible one. Power, as Deleuze and Guattari understand it, is the foundation of *the West*'s structuring of order and truth, but brings with it a fascist mode of thought and action. To structure is to order and to delimit, and to order and delimit is to begin to negate and discard, which requires the

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[548] Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*. 84-85.
[549] Ibid, XIV.
[550] Ibid.
[551] Ibid.

destruction, or banishment, of that which is deemed superfluous or unlimited. This means that order and truth are qualities or states that emerge from negation and exclusion, rather than from production and inclusion. As Foucault states in his summary of *Anti-Oedipus*, it is 'the Negative', i.e. laws, limits, etc., that "Western thought" has presented as "a form of power and an access to reality".[552] In order to further this argument, in addition to analysing other works by Deleuze and Guattari, this essay will look at the work of John Fiske, specifically his book *Media Matters*, in order to understand how reality and representation function in modern society and how the act of 'discourse' challenges the emergent fascism of truth and reality. It will be argued that while 'discourse' and an 'anti-Oedipal' life are in no way guaranteed cures to the fascistic tendencies of life in 'Western society', they are certainly freer and more responsible ways of living that challenge the very notion of a status quo and the acceptance of oppressive and/or repressive forms of life.

II. *Anti-Oedipus*

> To be anti-oedipal is to be anti-ego as well as anti-homo, wilfully attacking all reductive psychoanalytic and political analyses that remain caught within the sphere of totality and unity, in order to free the multiplicity of desire from the deadly neurotic and Oedipal yoke.[553]

Mark Seem, in his introduction to *Anti-Oedipus*, argues that Deleuze and Guattari invite us on a "journey through *ego-loss*"; they urge us to strip ourselves of "*all* anthropomorphic and anthropological armouring, all myth and tragedy, and all existentialism, in order to perceive what is nonhuman" in us, in our will, our forces, our transformations and our mutations.[554] Seem claims that the sciences have "accustomed us to see the figure of Man behind every social event" and that such

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[552] Ibid.
[553] Ibid, 6.
[554] Ibid.

"forms of knowledge project an image of reality, at the expense of reality itself".[555]
Furthermore:

> [t]hey talk figures and icons and signs, but fail to perceive forces and flows. They blind us to other realities, and especially the reality of power as it subjugates us. Their function is to tame, and the result is the fabrication of docile and obedient subjects.[556]

As Seem understands it, 'oedipalization' is the "internalization of man by man"; it is the internalisation of suffering and an introduction of the state of depression to everyday life.[557] Seem explains that depression and Oedipus are "agencies of the State", of paranoia and power that are then delegated to the family; Oedipus is the figure of power, while neurosis is "the result of power on individuals" and "Oedipus is everywhere".[558] Oedipalism is the desire for control, for limits, for distance, for repression; it is the desire to have no desire, for fear of life devoid of *loci*, whether these are physical, psychological, social or familial. The home, the school, the workplace and institutions, in general, seek to Oedipalise and neuroticise their 'participants', 'inhabitants', etc., and fascism is ubiquitous. What Deleuze and Guattari are investigating is how fascist beliefs "succeed in taking hold of a body" and "silencing the productive machines of the libido"; they are also investigating counter-fascism, i.e. how it is possible for the body to become free and manage to ward off "the effects of power". Deleuze and Guattari conclude that neurosis is, in fact, the result of the "Oedipal imprints" taking, while psychosis is the state of being, more or less, immune to oedipalisation, "even and especially by psychoanalysis".[559] Revolution, then, involves studying the psychotic, in order to learn how to "shake off the Oedipal yoke and the effects of power" and how to "initiate a radical politics of desire freed from all beliefs".[560] *Orphanage*, *atheism* and *nomadism* are all "anti-oedipal forces" that serve

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[555] Ibid.
[556] Ibid.
[557] Ibid.
[558] Ibid, 7.
[559] Ibid.
[560] Ibid.

to dissolve "the mystifications of power" as a part of the radical politics mentioned before.[561] Schizoanalysis, a counter-psychoanalysis, is the act of 'schizophrenising', so as to "break the holds of power and institute research into a new collective subjectivity and a revolutionary healing of mankind"[562]; the creation, essentially, of a new self or, rather, many selves in one. It is only through a loss, or rejection, of the ego that a new politics, free of neurosis, can emerge; a politics that embraces both singularity and collectivity and "where collective expressions of desire are possible".[563] This type of politics is unique in that it does not try to individualise "according to a totalitarian system of norms", but rather attempts to subvert normalisation and individualisation via a "multiplicity of new, collective arrangements against power"; the goal of this politics is nothing short of a complete "transformation of human relationships", an analysis and struggle on the part of "militant groups", and "lone individuals", "against the effects of power that subjugate them".[564] Revolution is impossible if the "relations between people and groups" remain "relations of exclusion and segregation"; groups, then, "must multiply and connect" in novel ways that 'free up' "territorialities for the construction of new social arrangements".[565] Theory is only a preface to action, the foundation; it should be thought of as "a toolbox, producing tools that work".[566] The primary objective of schizoanalysis is to "destroy the oedipalized and neuroticized individual dependencies though the forging of a collective subjectivity, a nonfascist subject—anti-Oedipus"; anti-Oedipus is a group or an individual who "no longer functions in terms of beliefs" and seeks to redeem humanity "from the ideals that weight it down" and from nihilism.[567] Anti-Oedipus acts

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[561] Ibid.
[562] Ibid.
[563] Ibid, 8.
[564] Ibid.
[565] Ibid.
[566] Ibid.
[567] Ibid, 9.

collectively, breaking from power through madness, which takes "the form of a disconnection"; anti-Oedipus, however, only learns from madness in order to "move beyond it, beyond disconnections and deterritorializations, to ever new connections".[568] The first victims of this 'anti-Oedipal' politics, this "politics of desire", are "loneliness and depression"; this is a result of the 'anti-oedipal strategy', which is, essentially, a person's connecting themselves to "the machines of the universe", being in tune with their own desires and becoming "anchored".[569] Thus, when a person no longer concerns themselves with "the fitness of things", with the behaviour of others, with justice and injustice or what is "right or wrong", then the life within them "will manifest itself in growth" and "growth is an endless, eternal process"; it is this process, the process of "desiring-production, that is "everything" and that Deleuze and Guattari are analysing.[570] They believe that if a society represses desire, then it is because "every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of a society"; every desiring-machine is explosive and the mere assembly of a desiring-machine requires the demolishment of "entire social sectors".[571] Desiring-machines, desire, in general, "is always a combination of various elements and forces of all types", which is why not only revolutionaries, but anyone "who know[s] how to be truly objective", must be taken into account in the production process.[572] As Deleuze and Guattari state:

> …[r]evolutionaries, artists, and seers are content to be objective, merely objective: they know that desire clasps life in its powerfully productive embrace, and reproduces it in a way all the more intense because it has few needs.[573]

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[568] Ibid, 9-10.
[569] Ibid, 10.
[570] Ibid.
[571] Ibid.
[572] Ibid.
[573] Ibid.

III. The 'Origins' of *Anti-Oedipus*

Mark Seem argues that *Anti-Oedipus* is, effectively, a sort of sequel to Nietzsche's *The AntiChrist*, because it calls for the destruction of the church that is 'psychoanalysis', which is "a form of treatment based on a set of beliefs that only the very faithful could adhere to".[574] These "very faithful" individuals are those "who believes in a security that amounts to being lost in the herd and defined in terms of common and external goals" and such a security would be anathema to Nietzsche, who believed in the *philosophy of will* and the *will to power*: a 'will' that neither aspires, seeks nor desires, nor does it desire power itself, but simply creates and gives.[575] The neurotic, the 'patient' of psychoanalysis, seeks a life free of pain and trouble: "a tranquilized and conflict-free existence".[576] This need for security, this "herd instinct", comes from "a desire to have someone else legislate life"; a desire that in Europe has expressed itself, politically, as fascism.[577] *Anti-Oedipus* takes up questions that Wilhelm Reich, and Spinoza[578], had asked before: namely, how is it that people can desire and tolerate their own oppression and then wish to perpetuate and extend that same oppression to others? Reich, for example, describes the "average intellectual", of the 1930s, who does not wish to be 'politically active', as someone who "is motivated by immediate economic interests and fear for his existence, dependent as it is on public opinion"; it is this "fear" that encourages this person to sacrifice "knowledge and conviction to a grotesque degree".[579] Though Reich focuses on the "sexual conflicts" that individuals engage in, he explains that the inhibition of "rational thinking and the development of social responsibility, and the apprehension and defensiveness that said sexual conflicts bring about, allows one to be able to turn to the "fascist program"

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[574] Ibid, 2.
[575] Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. 85.
[576] Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*. 2.
[577] Ibid, 2.
[578] Ibid, 42.
[579] Reich, Wilhelm. *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. 173.

as a 'solution' and surrender to it; this surrender to the fascist program "provides a momentary release from…chronic inner tension" and it can "unconsciously give a new form to [the] conflict and thereby seemingly solve it".[580] Reich claims that "[e]very living being will spontaneously attempt to discover and to eliminate the cause of a catastrophe which has overcome it; it will not repeat actions which have brought about the very catastrophe" and that this "lies in the nature of overcoming misfortune by experience"; politicians, on the other hand, do not have these "natural reactions".[581] Reich explains that the practise of "sound science" involves operating under certain theories as long as one can "operate well" within them; it is only when said theories have "proven inadequate or erroneous" that it is necessary to "find the errors in them" and develop "new concepts on the basis of new facts".[582] This "natural procedure", however, is "alien to politicians"; Reich claims that democratic politicians fail to "go back to the starting points of the democratic principles", "to correct them according to radical changes that have taken place in social living" and "to make them practically fruitful".[583] He states:

> …[n]o matter how many new facts are added to the old, no matter how many errors have become obvious, the old theories continue to exist in the form of *slogans* and new facts are obfuscated in an illusory way.[584]

It is this inability to learn and to incorporate experience that Reich believes "disillusioned millions of people in Europe and thus made fascist dictatorship possible".[585] He argues that the "basic elements of peace and human collaboration" are already given, "tangibly", in "natural human work relationships" and that is from these very relationships that things such as peace, cooperation and harmony must

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[580] Ibid, 173-174.
[581] Ibid, 175.
[582] Ibid, 176.
[583] Ibid.
[584] Ibid.
[585] Ibid.

develop; it is not necessary to introduce anything further.[586] Reich compares the

treatment of a sick organism to the treatment of a sick, *social* organism: rather than

introduce a new type of health to the diseased organism, a physician "plays" the

healthy elements present in the organism against the "disease process".[587] If one

approaches the sick social organism, "from the standpoint of *social scene*", rather than

from the standpoint of the politician, then one realises that it is only possible to

"organically develop actually existing freedoms" and to "eliminate the obstacles" that

are not allowing them to develop; it is not possible to "graft legally guaranteed

freedoms" onto a sick social organism.[588] Deleuze and Guattari claim that those

regimes, or States, that claim never to have suffered under fascism, e.g. the United

States and the United Kingdom, are reluctant to deal with the question of fascism, more

generally; fascism becomes the problem of others and it becomes a "phenomenon that

took place elsewhere", a problem "for others to deal with".[589] We all carry "fascisizing

elements" deep within us and even revolutionary groups that question these elements,

to at least some degree, can fall prey to a:

> …rarely analyzed but overriding group 'superego' that leads them to state…that the *other* is evil (the Fascist! the Capitalist! the Communist!), *and hence that they themselves are good*. This conclusion is reached as an afterthought and a justification, a supremely self-righteous rationalization for a politics that can only "squint" at life…[590]

The people that make up these groups are like the 'man of *ressentiment*' that Nietzsche

contended with; a man who loves "everything covert" and takes this as "*his* world, *his*

security, *his* refreshment", who "understands how to keep silent, how not to forget, how

to wait" and "how to be provisionally self-deprecating and humble".[591] This person need

to believe in some sort of "neutral, independent "subject"", which is "the ego", because

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[586] Ibid, 177.
[587] Ibid.
[588] Ibid.
[589] Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*. 2.
[590] Ibid.
[591] Ibid, 2-3.

they are motivated "by an instinct of self-affirmation and *self*-preservation that cares little about preserving or affirming life", an "instinct "in which every lie is sanctified""; this is the world of what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as "the silent majority".[592] This problem, the "problem of the subject" and the "behind-the-scene reactive and reactionary" person, is one of the main problems, if not *the* main problem, that Deleuze and Guattari take as a starting point in developing their schizoanalytic approach.

IV. *Schizoanalysis*

> Destroy, destroy. The task of schizoanalysis goes by way of destruction—a whole scouring of the unconscious, a complete curettage. Destory Oedipus, the illusion of the ego, the pupper of the superego, guilt, the law, castration. It is not a matter of pious destructions, such as those performed by psychoanalysis under the benevolent neutral eye of the analyst. For these are Hegel-style destructions, ways of conserving.[593]

The schizoanalytic approach that Deleuze and Guattari develop is one that is simultaneously "diagnostic" and curative, though what it attempts to cure us of "is the cure itself".[594] Psychoanalysis "measures everything against neurosis and castration", while schizoanalysis begins with the schizophrenic and their "breakdowns and…breakthroughs"; this approach works against the Oedipal, "oedipalized territorialities", such as the family, the church, the school, the nation, the political, and, especially, the "territoriality of the individual".[595] What *Anti-Oedipus* seeks, then, are the "flows of desire" that are "deterritorialized" and that have not been "reduced to the Oedipal codes and the neuroticized territorialities"; it seeks the "*desiring-machines*" that escape said codes "as *lines* of escape leading elsewhere".[596] These *desiring-machines*, if they are, in fact, meant to be the opposite of oedipalisation, oedipalised territorialities and individual territoriality, must, then, be found in that which psychoanalysis is trying to 'cure'. A *desiring-machine* must, unlike that which has been

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[592] Ibid, 3.
[593] Ibid, 355.
[594] Ibid, 3.
[595] Ibid.
[596] Ibid.

territorialised, be unrestrained, limitless, positive and grounded in freedom, rather than in repression. Deleuze and Guattari's strategy is to develop a "materialistically and experientially based analysis" of those behaviours and ways of life that psychiatry labels as 'schizophrenic'; they investigate the "process of life flows as they oscillate from one extreme to other": from "paranoia to schizophrenia…fascism to revolution" and "from breakdowns to breakthroughs", on a scale from 0, "*the body without organs*", to the *n*th power, "*the schizophrenic process of desire*".[597] Seem views Deleuze and Guattari's relationship, as the undertakers of this investigation and analysis, as one a philosopher (Deleuze) being in communion with a militant (Guattari); what this means is that the strategy that they employ combines different modes of knowledge: the *intuitive*, the *practical* and the *reflective*, which each correspond to a different 'machine': the 'artistic', the 'revolutionary' and the 'analytical'.[598] These modes of knowledge become, in a sense and in bits and pieces, a single machine "whose target is the ego and the fascist in each of us"; they develop, through this strategy, a "politics of experience", which extends thought and action to their respective extremes: madness and revolution. This experience is not a human one, but, rather, an experience is what is not human in us, our "desires and forces", and this politics of desire is "directed against all that is egoic—and heroic" is us.[599] As Seem points out, the number of authors and concepts that Deleuze and Guattari refer and allude to is vast, but these references and allusions are "never done in an academic fashion aimed at persuading the reader"; as schizoanalysis is a process, or process driven, these references serve as points and signs, rather than directives, that show us the way to our objective.[600] It would, seemingly, appear contradictory for Deleuze and Guattari to

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[597] Ibid.
[598] Ibid, 5.
[599] Ibid.
[600] Ibid, 5-6.

claim that there is only way, one path or one method to loss of the ego, our ultimate objective, which is why they offer, as Seem also points out, "a multiplicity of solutions and a variety of directions for a new style of politics"; their strategic *schozanalysis*, a "political analysis of desire", irrespective of how exactly it plays out, remains the tool that they have chosen to help humanity revolt.[601] Schizophrenia, as a process, which is precisely what allows for the aforementioned 'multiplicity of solutions and…variety of directions', remains, again irrespective of how exactly the process goes, both our "point of departure" and our "point of destination".[602]

V. A Life Against Fascism

> How does one keep from being fascist, even (especially) when one believes oneself to be a revolutionary militant? How do we rid our speech and our acts, our hearts and our pleasures, of fascism? How do we ferret out the fascism that is ingrained in our behavior? The Christian moralists sought out the traces of the flesh lodged deep within the soul. Deleuze and Guattari, for their part, pursue the slightest traces of fascism in the body.[603]

Foucault summarises *Anti-Oedipus* with incredible pithiness and very succinctly; this summary/analysis serves as a preface to the text, but it works as a brief opus, in its right. He argues that the book should not be seen as a work of theory, nor as a work of philosophy, but, rather, as a work of art, "in the sense that is conveyed by the term "erotic art""; it is an "analysis of the relationship of desire to reality and to the capitalist "machines".[604] *Anti-Oedipus* asks: "[how] does one introduce desire into thought, into discourse, into action" and "[how] can and must desire deploy its forces within the political domain and grow more intense in the process of overturning the established order"?[605] The book confronts, as a consequence of the questions that it asks, three adversaries: first, "political ascetics…sad militants…terrorists of theory" (who are part

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[601] Ibid, 6.
[602] Ibid, 6.
[603] Ibid, xiii.
[604] Ibid, xii.
[605] Ibid.

of the same 'group'); second, the "poor technicians of desire…" and, finally, fascism.[606]

The first adversary concerns "those who would preserve the pure order of politics and

political discourse", the "[b]ureaucrats of the revolution and civil servants of Truth"; the

second concerns the "psychoanalysts and semiologists of every sign and symptom",

those who would "subjugate the multiplicity of desire to the twofold law of structure and

lack"; and the third concerns "not only historical fascism", but the fascism "in all of us,

in our heads and in our everyday behavior": the fascism "that causes us to love power"

and "to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us".[607] The last adversary,

fascism, serves, in a sense, as the 'tactical' focal point of the 'anti-Oedipal' strategy;

the strategy itself, however, can be referred to, as Foucault does, as "the art of living

counter to all forms of fascism", i.e. the "non-fascist life".[608] Foucault states that this

'art' works alongside several "essential principles" that, if we keep kind them in mind,

serve to guide us in, around and through the 'non-fascist life'.[609] These seven principles

are, roughly, as follows: 1) free political action from all unitary and totalizing paranoia;

2) develop action, thought and desires by proliferation, juxtaposition, and disjunction;

3) withdraw allegiance from the old categories of the Negative…prefer what is positive

and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities…; 4) do not think that one

has to be sad in order to be militant…it is the connection of desire to reality (and not

its retreat into the forms of representation) that possesses revolutionary force; 5) do

not use thought to ground political practice in Truth and do not use political action to

discredit, as mere speculation, a line of thought; 6) do not demand of politics that it

restore the "rights" of the individual…the individual is the product of power…what is

needed is to "de-individualize" by means of multiplication and displacement; 7) do not

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[606] Ibid.
[607] Ibid, xii-xiii.
[608] Ibid, xiii.
[609] Ibid.

become enamored of power.[610] Foucault argues that Deleuze and Guattari translate their renunciation of power to their work and this accounts for the "games and snares scattered throughout the book"; he points out, however, that these 'games and snares' are not meant to manipulate or trick the reader into acquiescence, but, rather, that they are part of a humour and playfulness that are necessary elements of the ultimate project of *Anti-Oedipus*: "the tracking down of all varieties of fascism, from the enormous ones that surround and crush us to the petty ones that constitute the tyrannical bitterness of our everyday lives".[611] While the text itself may be considered 'difficult', it is merely a lexical representation of the anti-Oedipal process, which is, by its very nature, difficult and tedious, but necessary. A few questions that might be raised here, however, are whether or not the idea that one has come to fully understand the 'anti-Oedipal strategy', which could breed complacency and a form of inaction or, on the other hand, arrogance and certainty, can also give rise to a sort of fascist sentiment; this is, in effect, the question of the role of the intellectual *qua* activist, or vice versa, which is primarily what the seven principles that Foucault outlines address. The logic (if one can call it that) behind the 'playfulness' of the text is that certainty, knowledge, judgment, etc. constitute forms of power, which feed one's need for identity and awareness and can lead to fascist thought and action. Nevertheless, does the proscriptive nature of the anti-Oedipal strategy, i.e. reject power, 'de-individualise', do not retreat into pessimism or nihilism, etc., not create a new intellectual/practical nexus and domain that one who does not follow the 'rules' would be denied? There do seem to be 'rules' to the strategy, though the process, essentially, seems to require an anarchic mode of life, which could, even then, easily lead one into fascism. This does not mean that the entire project should be rejected in favour of something less 'difficult',

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[610] Ibid, xiii-xiv.
[611] Ibid, xiv.

but, rather, that questioning what it means to be 'anti-fascist' or 'anti-power', and questioning even those conclusions, is an activity that is essential to the process.

The Empty Place of Power:
Dyrberg's Circular Structure of Power

I. Introduction

This chapter focuses, primarily, on Torben Bech Dyrberg's work, 'The Circular Structure of Power', and his 'non-derivative' conception of power. Dyrber's theory argues that power is, essentially, a phenomenological process that can only be understood by challenging and developing our understanding of the concepts of subjectivity and social identification. Rather than take for granted that power is legitimated by an external, or a priori, authority or legitimating force, power should be seen as a purely socio-political process that is manifested in the process/activity of subjectification and the interaction of subjects. While none of these processes stand on their own, none of them can be said to have been derived from another, as all of these processes are concurrent and, in a sense, symbiotic. The purpose behind rejecting a derivate conception of power is to reject the idea that power is a causal and, effectively, tyrannical force that is utilised primarily to control, manipulate and create exploitative relations. Dyrberg's account of power clarifies the motives and foundation of a myriad of social phenomenon that are typically branched under the concept of 'power' and 'control', but cannot, themselves, be explained adequately by any given definitions or power/control.

II. The Empty Place of Power

> …Dyrberg rightly reminds us that power is an inescapable feature of human interaction, that it is ubiquitous, and that no identities can be formed independently of its effects. This is not to say that notions like democracy, the common good or public interest should be abandoned. They must instead be rethought in terms of what psychoanalysis helps us to envisage as an 'impossible good'...[612]

Power and control, in many disciplines, are typically thought of as conceptually symbiotic concepts, at least in terms of definition. Control might be considered as 'power over' or as a 'power to' or as a sort of order or absence of chaos. Power might be thought of as 'ability to', 'capacity' or 'control over' or as an exercise of right or freedom. These concepts can be thought of in relation to the self, to others, to objects or even in relation to other concepts: power or control over one's self; over others or other things; or even as a power or control over other ideas or concepts, i.e. their definitions or ontological status. Self-control, coercion, manipulation, exploitation, regulation and similar concepts demonstrate the power/control symbiosis in a relatively simple way. Wherever we find power, control follows and vice versa. Are there, however, situations or examples where one might be found without the other? Is mere stasis a sort of power without control; is a meditative state a sort of control that ignores power? Certain theories of power associate the concept with domination, control, coercion and the like, but can power exist without the need to dominate, control or coerce? If we adopt the view that power is only coercive and manipulative, i.e. 'power/control over', then how do we explain acts of self-control or self-regulation? It is strange to think that one is manipulating oneself when one decides to exercise more or to adopt a 'healthier' diet, though that may be the case. Having 'power' over oneself, when referring to self-control or discipline, is also a strange notion, as the whole concept of 'agency' seems to derive from the fact that one is capable of acting

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[612] Mouffe, Chantal. "Foreword to the Paperback Edition." Foreword. *The Circular Structure of Power: Politics, Identity, Community.* Torben Bech Dyrberg, xii.

and of deciding what actions to take, generally. To have power over the self, in this case, seems redundant or conceptually gratuitous. What does 'power', as a theory, have to say about self-control and discipline, then? Again, it seems superfluous to think of having to tell our 'selves' what to do or think, as this process of 'self-reflection' or 'self-control' seems to be a part of the very act of thinking or conversing with one's 'self', but there is certainly something more there than mere thought or conversation. It could be argued that this very process, i.e. the process of self-control/self-discipline, is both the ontological and epistemological foundation of the subject, of subjectivity itself. To say that power, in the political, and even social, sense, depends on force, influence, economy, manipulation and the like, does little to explain the relationship between one's thoughts, one's behaviour and one's subjective understanding. The problem of subjectivity and the problem of agency can be understood as the problem of power; in other words, understanding one concept can lead to an understanding of the others, but the process threatens to become recursive. Dyrberg, in his work *The Circular Structure of Power*, attempts to theorise what he calls a "non-derivative conception of power", which argues, essentially, that power is characterised by a circular logic, as opposed to a derivative one, and that there exists no "form of external authority…from which power might be descend or be legitimated"[613]; power, then, must be understood *in situ*, which, in this case, means socially. Furthermore, this social understanding cannot derive its legitimacy or authority externally, but, rather, "it has to structure itself", which means that this legitimation can only be found in human interaction itself. This, in turn, means that it is the social, i.e. human interaction, that allows for power and legitimacy to present themselves politically, but it is this very same politics that allows for the social to structure itself; hence the 'circular logic'. The

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[613] Dyrberg, Torben Bech. *The Circular Structure of Power: Politics, Identity, Community*, 12.

social lacks, in a sense, objectivity, as it cannot be decided *a priori*, or prior to the political (and vice versa); however, the social does present itself, concretely, in subjective identities, as it is the establishing of identities that results from the establishment of 'structures of power and authority'. These identities are not 'fixed' and must be formed, though this process is never an entirely complete one. Power, thus, "has no a priori status" and, as Dyrberg concludes, "the most effective way to understand power is to approach it in terms of processes of identification, in the most politically undecidable sense of the term".[614] This means that Dyrberg's theory, as he himself puts it:

> …approaches the issue of power by directly addressing metaphysically loaded terms, like the subject and identity…there is no other way to understand power itself, or to consider the radical consequences that arise from this comprehensive approach, than to plunge…into the metaphysical terrain of what power as ability means.[615]

This means, then, that questions of self-knowledge and the relationship that one has with one's own mind, thoughts and speech are paramount to understanding power, psycho-social interaction and even metaphysics, as well as philosophy more generally, itself. The question is whether or not venturing into, as Dyrberg calls it, this 'metaphysical terrain' creates further problems that extend too far into philosophical genealogy to be truly useful; in other words, Dyrberg's approaches could potentially lead us astray from our ultimate goal, which is an understanding of power and control in the context of human interaction. If it is the case, however, that "power adheres to nothing but itself"[616], then we must analyse power as, itself, a metaphysical concept.

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[614] Ibid, 13.
[615] Ibid, 19.
[616] Ibid, 7.

II. The Irreducibility of Power

Power, for Dyrberg, is "an irreducible relation or process", which means that "it cannot be derived from any form of social objectivity, such as free will or structural determination"; power "adheres to nothing but itself" and is derived from nothing but itself.[617] This relation or process does not localise around or above society as an objective, external arbiter of sorts, but is expressed, rather, as the *process* of subjectivity. Dyrberg argues that though there is really no consensus on how to define power, it could be said that "all notions of power entail 'ability'"; he takes it further, however, and argues that since power "must be contextualized in some way in relation to the issue of the subject", then ability should be considered as "a (if not the) defining characteristic of subjectivity".[618] The subject, then "*has* power", but it is this very idea, of possessing or not possessing 'power', that raises several issues, "not the least of which deals with the question: how do we theorize…the very conditions within which ability is made possible, particularly when the concept of agency…is being challenged?"[619] Attempting to understand power this way forces a confrontation with "the metaphysically loaded conceptions of the subject whose ability is…taken for granted, in the sense that it precedes the 'possession' or 'dispossession' of power".[620] This reveals the essence of Dyrberg's thesis: questions as to "who has power, how they acquired it, how much and under what circumstances" are not prioritised in attempting to understand the concept of 'ability'; understanding how ability is "constituted", on the other hand, is "the proper subject matter for a theory of power that does not ground power in something outside itself".[621] Dyrberg's non-derivative conceptualisation of power must, then, "be cast in terms of the constitution of identity";

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[617] Ibid.
[618] Ibid, 8.
[619] Ibid.
[620] Ibid.
[621] Ibid.

nevertheless, for Dyrberg, to say that a subject 'has power', and to theorise "the very conditions of possibility" that give rise to this possession, demands a "certain flirtation with a kind of transcendental logic".[622] These conditions are not meant to be understood as conditions that are expecting fulfilment or realisation in order to manifest themselves, nor should they be understood as the conditions *for* power: rather, it is these conditions, "and the transcendentalism to which they point", that need to be understood "against, or in terms of, the copula: ability *is* power".[623] An analysis of these 'conditions' and of said transcendentalism will not lead to an understanding of power *per se*; it is not something to be discovered. Power does not exist *as* power, but it does "make a difference"; in fact, "it *is* difference" and, according to Dyrberg, it is "*that* which cannot be conceptualized proper".[624] We cannot find nor create, objectively, a subject who can then become equipped with power or 'ability'; a subject does not exist independently of ability, for this is the very identity of the subject. The subject's identity, "as well as social and political constructs in general, cannot be taken for granted or reduced to the structural positionality of the subject"; a subject's identity "must be studied in terms of an immanent process…in the becoming of identity".[625] Power is to be conceived of via the process of identification, in the deepest sense of the term, and only in this way can we produce its non-derivative understanding. As Dyrberg explains:

> …in so far as power derives from something else, say, agency of structure, or a combination…the moment of the becoming of identity cannot but presuppose what, in fact, needs scrutiny. The conceptualization of power cannot…presuppose the objectivity of the social (that the structuring of the social is grounded in, say, transcendental structures or the faculty of will), but has…to deconstruct what appears as given.[626]

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[622] Ibid.
[623] Ibid, 9.
[624] Ibid.
[625] Ibid.
[626] Ibid.

To seek power outside of the identification process is, in a sense, to already fundamentally dismiss it and enter a conceptualisation that almost actively attempts to deindividualise 'the social'; in other words, subjectivity, as a process, is the fundamental characteristic of power, if it is not power itself. The utility of such an understanding goes beyond simply attempting to understand the power process and extends further, into conceptualisation itself.

III. The Ability to Conceptualise

Dyrberg does not argue for a "general form of power", nor for an "infinite set of particular types of power". For Dyrberg, power can exist only "in terms of a 'forgetting of its origins'…a forgetting of itself as 'pure' ability"; this is intended to focus on the idea that "the nature of ability as the becoming of identity" is, "analytically speaking", "…prior to its particular form and content".[627] He claims that only by accepting his non-derivative concept of power can we "begin to account for the variety of relations of political struggle, and…for the political itself in a non-reductionist way"; as long as power "is based in social objectivity, such as agency or structure; and politics is conceived merely as a supplement to…an economic or social logic, then power and politics are deprived of their means of expression".[628] The "specific nature" of power and politics "cannot be accounted for", so long as they are considered "reducible to other logics".[629] In reckoning with the nature of identity and subjectivity itself, it is necessary to reckon with the level of explanatory power of politics and power, as concepts, and with their own ontological status. It is the 'becoming of' of these concepts that allows them to express themselves fully and, more importantly, usefully. This theorisation forces politics to account for itself at the conceptual level, just as the

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[627] Ibid, 10.
[628] Ibid.
[629] Ibid.

subject must account for its own ontology. If power is in all of these concepts, if power

is all of these concepts, as processes and abilities, then everything becomes, in a

sense, active and pliable, though political transformation may require significant

struggle. Dyrberg states that he is not attempting to find a novel 'defintion' of power,

but, rather, to reckon with "the most important underlying problems" that plague its

conceptualisation and "to consider the consequences of these for political theory".[630]

The key question, here, is what "power as ability entails", rather than a prioritisation of

the questions of who has power, how do they obtain it, where is it and why. Such

questions, according to Dyrberg, "operate on the basis of ready-made assumptions as

to the basis and nature of power as well as its characteristics"[631]; Dyrberg considers

his approach a "'higher order' conception of power", since it concerns itself with "how

power as ability is constituted".[632] Here, we arrive at the essence of Dyrberg's

methodology: the transition "from the higher-order to the lower-order level"[633] of power

analysis, which gives rise to several methodological questions. Power analysis

typically moves from the lower-order to the higher-orderl, in a sort of abductive fashion,

which leaves the analyst with a series of mistakenly generalised conclusions about

the nature of power and power relations that may be, at best, merely true

'observations', rather than 'truths'. As Dyrberg states:

> …power is usually analysed as a causal mechanism, rooted in either agency or structure; it both generates and prevents conflicts and consensus; and its vehicle typically comprises interests striving to dominate others. When we set out to investigate what power is, we are always guided by specific research interests and…in the Gadamerian sense…'prejudgements'…[634]

Dyrberg argues that what are often taken as universalised particular meanings and

organisations of power are typically only "claims about what power is on the lower

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[630] Ibid.
[631] Ibid.
[632] Ibid.
[633] Ibid.
[634] Ibid, 10-11.

level" and this "hegemonic enterprise in inherently reductionist"; this approach can be seen "as a mirror image of the prevailing assumption that power in general, and political power in particular, connotes repression in one way or another".[635] It could even be said, then, that the method of analysis has a very conspicuous effect on one's ultimate conceptualisation of power. This may seem an uncontroversial statement, but praxis often takes priority over method in certain disciplines and approaches and that seems to be exactly what Dyrberg is arguing against; promoting, instead, a direct leap into higher-order and metaphysical inquiry. With power analysis, he claims that a "higher-order level of analysing power looks at the ongoing processes of the constitution of identity into which particular strategies insert themselves in order to give these processes form and content"; these lower-order level strategies, however, "can never fill in, or fully domesticate, ability as such".[636] A "constitutive or irreducible gap" exists between these two levels, "between part and whole"; if this is not acknowledged, Dyrberg claims, then "the conception of power becomes inevitably reductionist because the part is hegemonizing the whole, and its opposite, the whole is reduced to the part".[637] He states that his aim is "to figure out what can be said about power at the higher-order level", which makes it his task to see "how the higher-order structure of power conditions, and can be traced in, the lower-order structures"; he is concerned solely with "how [the two levels] are built into each other, and what this means for the constitution of identity".[638] Dyrberg analyses the "higher-order structure of power" as "an immanent condition for the lower-order structuring of power" and this means that, since the higher-order level of power deals with power "as such" and the lower-order level deals with "the particular forms and contents of power", then

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[635] Ibid, 11.
[636] Ibid.
[637] Ibid.
[638] Ibid.

the lower level must be contingent upon the higher level.[639] The lower level must, then, conform to the higher and uphold this structure of power as "the ability to make a difference"; power must be non-derivative and we neither "can nor should…make any assumptions as to what power as such is" and it must remain "an empty place".[640] In other words, power "is and must remain an unspecified and open-ended process of identification in which identity is becoming what it is"; it is this "empty place" that, in the process of triggering effects at the lower level, becomes what Dyrberg terms "an 'absence incorporated'".[641] It is, effectively what ability must come up against as it structures itself, meaning that it guides the process of subjectivity by triggering it, in the first place. This approach serves to 'democratise' power, in that it does not impose the universal onto the particular, but, here, the universal is never attained, as power is never a 'finished' concept. As Dyrberg states:

> The empty place of power, the site of ability as such, is always 'present' as an ontological condition and possibility, which is why power cannot ever be exhaustively explained or definitively mastered by any political institution.[642]

IV. Authority and Society

> Political authority can…be seen as a power which has managed to universalize itself spatially and temporally. A political authority can legitimize itself by, for example, inventing a mythical origin – as in social contract theory where authority is deduced from the proposition of autonomous and rational individuals. (125)

It could be argued, given Dyrberg's claims, that political authority is political power taken *beyond* itself; *beyond* the limits of power. However, limits themselves are both an effect *and* cause of power, which means that moving 'beyond' said limits would be natural to such an understanding of power. This move is the 'universalisation' of power; a totality that is expressed "spatially and temporally". Political struggles, nevertheless, operate at the meeting of limits, whether these limits be seen as

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[639] Ibid.
[640] Ibid.
[641] Ibid, 11-12.
[642] Ibid, 12.

identities of "forms of life". When limits clash, then an expansion occurs; this expansion occurs across many terrains, whether they be biological, social or physical. Authority wishes to account for these terrains, though they can neither be accounted for, predicted nor easily 'mapped out', at least in a 'totalising', or 'universalising', sense. Dyrberg describes authority as "universalized power", as a "cluster of power relations which has occupied *the place of the political*" and has become "the vehicle and symbol for the social structuring of social relations". The difference between 'the political' and 'the authoritative', then, is that to the extent that the political is protean in its expression and both a cause and effect of new social realities, the authoritative gives claim to all of this. In other words, authority is *all* expressions of the political and it is *finished*. This means that anything that 'appears' novel can be explained, because it is a result of something prior and is merely a reconfiguration of 'facts'. The universal, in the 'naturalist' sense, admits novelty only if it can be integrated with previously admitted novelties and incorporated into a totalised incorporation of reality. As Dyrberg puts it:

> Political authority is…a power strategy which, by virtue of particularizing all other power strategies, attains a 'universal' status. Political authority attains this status because it is the overdetermined expression of power: the point of condensation where the particularity of power turns into its opposite by embodying universality.

Every 'thing', in the individual sense, is determined and, in fact, 'overdetermined', by the whole; in the context of the social, a way of life is 'determined' because it is legitimate in the eyes of a social authority, i.e. the state, the church, etc., but 'ways of life' are overdetermined in the sense that all *possible* ways of life are already delineated (as vague as that delineation may be) by the rules of said authority. An authority must account for what is, but also for what is *not* or for what is *not yet*. The 'social', then, is not something that is 'up for debate'; it cannot be contested, nor, like 'society', is it "a valid object for discourse". It is simply something that exists and,

through various methods of discovery and epistemologies, can come to be known by us. Authority, however, is the result of a number of struggles, be they ideological, political or social. If it is a question of locating the origin of society in a social authority, say the state, then how is it possible to distinguish between the two if, for example, one claims that a precondition for the state *is* a social order? Even the very constitution of an authority is a struggle; a struggle which is concurrent with the struggles that it is meant to totalise. Dyrberg criticises political authority for claiming to be a power strategy that is above all other power strategies; its task is to establish "some form of order", which, in the end, becomes an ordering and delimitation of power itself. He claims that power "is immanent in social relations not as their hidden and enigmatic substance…but as their limits" and he understands these limits as "points of recurrence and stumbling blocks that throw subjects into games of signification and identification". Power, then, comes before the subject, or could even be said to be "the political constitution of identity" itself. In other words, in contradistinction to authority, power is, effectively, without limit, but must be given limits in order to be rendered intelligible. Objectivity, for example, is a subjectively understood concept, or 'reality', but is meant to understood as something that does or would exist independently of any subjectivity. Objectivity, like order, authority and the like, is meant to exist beyond and before its own constitutional elements, but such an explanation quickly threatens to become tautological.

The Metaphysics of Power:
Power Beyond Biopolitics

I. Introduction

  This chapter will explore the inception and the evolution of the concept of 'biopolitics'. This will be done, mainly, by focusing on the work of Thomas Lemke, whose book 'Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction' pretends to be the first introduction to the subject. Lemke argues that biopolitics, ultimately, aims "at the administration and regulation of life processes on the level of populations" and that it "focuses on living beings rather than on legal subjects" or, rather, that "it deals with legal subjects that are at the same time living beings". Lemke, then, follows a "relational and historical notion" of biopolitics, rather than a "naturalist and politicist" understanding, which was first proposed by Foucault. This means that biopolitics represents the emergence of a "specific political knowledge" and of novel disciplines such as: "statistics, demography, epidemiology, and biology". This essay will run through Lemke's understanding of Foucault's work, to Agamben and Hardt and Negri's development of Foucault's biopolitics, to an analysis of the 'mode of politics' that distinguishes biopolitics from 'classical' forms of 'politics' and an understanding of what the 'substance of life' means in a biopolitical world. Lemke then addresses the notion that biopolitics cannot be separated from the economisation of life, which incorporates the concepts of an "economy of humans", proposed by Goldscheid, "vital politics", promoted by German liberals after WWII, and "the theory of human capital", which was proposed by the Chicago School. Finally, Lemke takes all the developments that followed Foucault's biopolitics and integrates them into an "analytics of biopolitics" and he shows how this 'analytics' is different to "bioethical discourse".

II. The Metaphysics of Power

> An analytics of biopolitics should investigate the network of relations among power processes, knowledge practices, and modes of subjectivation. Accordingly, it is possible to distinguish three dimensions of this research perspective…[643]

For Thomas Lemke, defining 'biopolitics' is not a "value-free activity that follows a universal logic of research"; meaning that even establishing a definition for the term would only be one step in understanding it. He admits that the term clearly, and literally, "denotes a politics that deals with life", but that even this understanding brings with it a series of problems: among them, how to define 'life', 'politics' and 'biological life'; as well as what politics should and should not deal with or contain. What, then, is biopolitics? Lemke argues that biopolitics involves a "network of relations among power processes, knowledge practices, and modes of subjectivation"; this means that biopolitics deals with three 'dimensions': first, a "systematic knowledge of "life" and of "living beings"; second, an understanding of how "strategies of power mobilize knowledge of life and how processes of power generate and disseminate forms of knowledge"; and, finally, "forms of subjectivation", which deals with "the manner in which subjects are brought to work on themselves, guided by scientific, medical, moral, religious, and other authorities and on the basis of socially accepted arrangements of bodies and sexes".[644] Why is this important, however? Why the need to distinguish biopolitics from politics 'proper'?

II. Biopolitics

Lemke argues that over the centuries, not only has "the importance of "life" for politics" increased, but, also, the "definition of politics has thereby been transformed".[645] Biopolitics allows for a rapport between "domains that are usually separated by administrative, disciplinary, and cognitive boundaries". As Lemke states:

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[643] Lemke, Thomas. *Biopolitics*. 119
[644] Ibid, 119-120.
[645] Ibid, 121.

> …categorical divisions between the natural and the social sciences, body and mind, nature and culture lead to a blind alley in biopolitical issues. The interactions between life and politics cannot be dealt with using social-scientific methods and research models alone. The analysis of biopolitical problems necessitates a transdisciplinary dialogue among different cultures of knowledge, modes of analysis, and explanatory competences.[646]

It is also not enough to deal with biopolitical questions in an 'isolated' manner; in other words, one cannot adequately analyse the "medical, political, social, and scientific aspects" of biopolitical questions independently. Biopolitics needs, though it is a 'challenge', to be presented as "part of a greater context": a context that "contains numerous divisions in the form of empirical facts that could be explained historically and perhaps overcome or at least shifted in the future".[647] Biopolitics must also be, fundamentally, a 'critical' enterprise; it must show that 'biopolitical phenomena' are "grounded in social practice and political decision-making", as opposed to resulting from "anthropologically rooted drives, evolutionary law, or universal political constraints"; said phenomena are not assigned to a "necessary logic", but, rather, "are subject to specific and contingent rationalities" and they "incorporate institutional preferences and normative choices".[648] An "analytics of biopolitics" must then "reveal and make tangible" the myriad "restrictions…contingencies…demands and constraints, that impinge upon it".[649] Critique, here, must be understood as a "productive and transformative, rather than negative or destructive" process; there is no promise of "an ultimate and objective representation of reality" that is "based on universal claims of scientific knowledge", but, instead, it "critically assesses its own claims and exposes its own particularity, partiality, and selectivity".[650] This analytics is not founded on "authoritative knowledge", but, rather, has an "ethicopolitical orientation"; meaning that biopolitics, as an enterprise, can have no real 'end' in the

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[646] Ibid.
[647] Ibid.
[648] Ibid, 122.
[649] Ibid.
[650] Ibid.

sense of an ultimate, final truth, but must be empirically adaptable. Biopolitical critique cannot result in the prioritisation of "some general normative preferences", instead of offering critical *empirical* analysis; meaning that it cannot end, simply, in newer, either more general or more specific, 'ultimate' conclusions (not matter how 'radical' these may be), if these conclusions are not themselves self-critical in nature and adaptable. Lemke argues against the "institutional and discursive dominance of bioethics", as said dominance has limited the scope of political and social debate and discussion, as it is "mainly conducted in ethical terms and as an argument about values". Bioethics, in a sense, seems to naturalise the relationship between biology and politics and to draw ethical and ethico-normative conclusions from said relationship. Biopolitics attempts to present us with the "epistemological and technological foundation of life processes and their integration into power strategies and processes of subjectivation", as opposed to bioethics, which deals in "abstract choices" and "no examination of who possesses (and to what degree) the material and intellectual resources...to use specific technological or medical options". Bioethics, in a sense, can be seen as a biopolitical 'problem'; it is obscuring the 'empirical elements' of certain debates in order to 'frame them' in a different light and both result and process are specifically biopolitical contentions. Bioethics does not take into account the socio-politico-economic constraints and variables that affect a person's ability to actually make 'bioethical' decisions or to "take advantage of the options that, in principle, are available to them".

III. An Analytics of Biopolitics

> Bioethics focuses on the question, what is to be done? It reduces problem to alternatives that can be treated and decided...An analytics of biopolitics opens up new horizons for questioning and opportunities for thinking, and it transgresses established disciplinary and political borders.[651]

Bioethics is methodologically opposed to biopolitics, as Lemke understands it. It is reductionist, dialectical and specific. Biopolitics, on the other hand, deals in the production of problems, in "questions that have no yet been asked" and in answers that can, and must, be questioned. It highlights "all those historical and systematic correlations that regularly remain outside the bioethical framework and its pro-contra debates". While bioethics is a prescriptive discipline, biopolitics is a creative one; one that, through problematisation, "links a diagnostics of the contemporary with an orientation to the future". At the same, biopolitics operates subversively, destabilising "apparently natural or self-evident modes of practice and thought". It invites us, as Lemke puts it, to "live differently". Thus, it is a fundamentally "speculative and experimental" enterprise: "it does not affirm what is but anticipates what could be different". Biopolitics, then, favours, and even produces, uncertainty, experimentation, speculation and imagination. It respects, equally, both theory and praxis, while expressing, and demanding, an inherent irreverence towards both. The beauty of an analytics of biopolitics, then, is that it invites all disciplines (biology, sociology, political science and philosophy, in particular) to question, speculate, experiment, innovate and change, fundamentally. This Protean innovation should lead, ideally, to a more *accurate* science or discourse; not 'accurate' in a *strict* scientific sense, but accurate in a biographical, phenomenological way. An example of such a shift could be a move towards a new type of biology, or *biography*, that integrates rigorous biotechnological and medical research with biographical and phenomenological experience. An

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[651] Ibid, 123.

analytics of biopolitics has, effectively, no limit to its scope; modern biotechnology and medicine has put even our living in thraldom to death, disease and time into question. When even the very limits of life are thrown into question, the only question one can ask if: where do we go from here?

IV. Nature, Reinvented

> Foucault's concept of biopolitics remains bound to the notion of an integral body. His analyses of disciplinary technologies which are directed at the body, in order to form and fragment it, are based on the idea of a closed and delimited body. By contrast, biotechnology and biomedicine allow for the body's dismantling and recombination to an extent that Foucault did not anticipate.[652]

Lemke highlights several authors who have questioned the limits of Foucault's conceptualisation of biopolitics. These theorists question not only the limits of biology, politics and biopolitics, but also the limits of our conceptualisations of nature, life, death, ontology and epistemology.   Several scientific theorists have suggested that, with regard to biotechnologies, genetic mapping and engineering and the like, biotechnology and biomedicine, as a whole, represent a paradigmatic shift from "traditional forms of bioscientific and medical intervention" to a novel, and reprogramming, form of bioscience. This bioscience seeks to "reprogram" biological processes, as opposed to "merely" modifying them. This "political epistemology of life" is not concerned with a "control of external nature", but, rather, "the transformation of inner nature"; biology, then, is "no longer...a science of discovery that registers and documents life processes but rather...a science of transformation that creates life and actively changes living organisms". This is not merely an epistemological concern; such a conception of biology has ontological and metaphysical ramifications, as well. A naturalist view of biology would argue that there are objective, intellectually-independent truths and realities that we must discover and learn to recognise;

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[652] Ibid, 94.

normatively, there are even general principles, rules and laws that we can observe or come to know, via certain epistemological methods. This 'new' biology, however, argues that we are not the subjects of nature, nor, more radically, of any sort of external, anthropologically independent reality, but, instead, that we are capable of creating new 'natures', new 'realities' and, most importantly, new 'biologies'. This new conception of biology raises all sorts of political, social and philosophical questions and concerns, but, primarily, it problematises *humanity*, more generally.

V. Thanatopolitics

> ..."human material" transcends the living person. The person who dies today is not really dead...Death can be part of a productive circuit and used to improve and extend life. The death of one person may guarantee the life and survival of another.[653]

New biotechnologies and biomedicines, as mentioned in the section above, have created "a new relationship between life and death". Death is not necessarily the end of the *life* of a human organism; this person "lives on, at least potentially", as parts of them may continue to exist within others. "Cell...organs, blood, bone marrow" and the like, can all be transplanted to someone else's body and either improve that person's quality of life or spare them from death, entirely. The "organic materials of life", as Lemke puts it, are not "subordinate to the same biological rhythms as the body is": said materials "can be stored as information in biobanks or cultivated in stem cell lines". The *elements*, or 'materials', of life have become completely separated from what has traditionally, or naturalistically, been described as 'life', in the biological sense. Death is no longer as 'simple' as it once was; it has become "flexible and compartmentalized": developments such as the introduction of "brain death", "the development of reanimation technologies" and "the splitting of death into different regions of the body and moments in time" have allowed for "transplantation medicine"

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[653] Ibid, 95.

to flourish. The concept of *human life* is defined and conceptualised from beginning to end more so by "medical-administrative authorities" than by "state sovereignty", now. *Thanatopolitics*, the politics of death, is now "an integral part of biopolitics", but in "an entirely new sense". The medical-administrative evolution and development of death is certainly revolutionary and has, in fact, allowed for new biotechnological and biomedical innovations that would have seemed like science-fiction not too long ago, but this should not distract from the power that so-called 'state sovereignty' has over the lives, and deaths, of billions of people, on a global scale. Biology is changing the way that we look and life and death in a sanitary, controlled and scientific sense, but modern warfare has changed the way that we look at the living and the dead in a very raw, visceral, emotional, yet, for the most part, entirely 'digital' sense. Modern warfare has turned the average citizen into an enemy combatant and the enemy combatant into a pixelated, virtual opponent, ready to be exterminated at the push of a button or the click of a mouse. The state need not necessarily define, originate nor terminate life, in order to decide on those very same matters. Modern policing, too, has impacted the state's relationship with life and death. The decision-making power of law enforcement has become such that an officer is allowed to judge whether an individual or group is a threat to either said officer or the public-at-large, based on very little to no evidence. This decision-making power, both in terms of law enforcement and modern warfare, though not quite as revolutionary as new forms of biology, does, certainly, represent a paradigmatic shift in the state's relationship with its constitutive elements, i.e. citizens (and, now, corporations). Humans, as much as we may be able to modify them emotionally, psychologically/intellectually or genetically before or after death, have become, in the eyes of the military-industrial complex and the police state, nothing more than numbers, statistics and units to manage and control or destroy.

This is, in a much different and, perhaps, more immediate sense, *thanatopolitics*: the power to decide who lives and who dies, or who *should* live or die, is a very complicated form of power that still remains in the hands of very few. The courts, the boardrooms and different law-making bodies all make these decisions, though they may not be expressed in *thanapolitical* terms. Decisions concerning abortion laws, healthcare, social security, wages, social housing and benefits, public transport and the like are all *thanatopolitical* decisions, though they may not 'immediately' seem to be. This is not even necessarily akin to, as Lemke interprets it, Agamben's biopolitics, which is "above all "thanatopolitics": "death as the establishment and materialization of a boundary...". Thanatopolitics, here, is, to a certain extent, death as a promise, as a threat and as a bargaining chip. The questions that the state asks, whether indirectly or otherwise, are: do you *want* to die (as a threat); *how* do you want to die; and would you like to do *for* something? The first question relates both to the state as benefactor, as *giver* of life, and to the state as executioner, as *dealer* of death. It relates to social benefits, welfare and security and the idea that the state is merciful and responsible for its citizens well-being. The purpose of the state is to serve all of its citizens. As executioner, however, the state deals in order, justice and rule; this, too, nevertheless, is for the well-being of its citizens, so that they will be safe, learn to keep others safe and to keep the promised harmony of the state, i.e. the state itself, safe. The second question relates to the inevitability of death and to the acceptance of death as a guaranteed end, but, on the other hand, a limited amount of control over this inevitable and inexorable conclusion, whether that control be 'real' or illusory. This corresponds to different institutions, careers, ways of life and the like that the state promotes and supports, either in principle or financially, which promise a better standard of living/life than other available 'life paths'. While these may or may not involve immediate

decisions concerning whether or not one wishes to live or die, if we consider death as the limit to all of our choices, and life as said limit's rival and antagonist (as that which will delay it), then quality of life, standard of living and other social metrics are paramount to the state's thanatopolitical agenda. The third question, then, corresponds to the purpose that the state can give, or take away from, life, which can even come *via* death. This purpose is offered, again, by institutions and careers that the state promotes or supports, again, either in principle or financially, which promise to give a meaning and purpose to human life that it would not otherwise have (e.g. the military, legislator, judge, law enforcement, the church, etc.). These institutions utilise death, and life, to their advantage, by either weaponising it or glorifying and exalting it. The military is, in fact, the best example of this, as it takes both the threat of death (war) and the promise of new life (peace), weaponises these ideas, and then ties them, generally, to religious or philosophical doctrine. This 'purpose', or 'higher purpose', that is given to life is then defended to the death. The state, then, offers death as a threat, as a weapon, as a promise, as leverage and as a purpose.

VI. Anthropopolitics

Lemke outlines another critique that has been levied against Foucault's biopolitics: it is "exclusively oriented to human individuals and populations". Such an orientation does not allow for the inclusion of "ecological problems" and "the environmental discourse" into discussion concerning the "(re)production of the human species". Paul Rutherford, who raises this point, suggests expanding the "semantic field" to "allow the concept of biopolitics to stand for the administration and control of the conditions of life"; meaning that anything relevant to human life, and its success or failure, would have to be incorporated into the biopolitical discourse. Another problem, however, is that Foucault grants *agency* only to human beings and it is only humans

that qualify as "social actors"; only their actions can be considered as relevant to the discourse. Gesa Lindemann's response to this is the suggestion of a "reflexive anthropology" , which asks "who is empirically included within the circle of social persons" and, more importantly, who or what can have agency. Bruno Latour suggests, similarly, a "symmetrical anthropology", which "conceives of both human and nonhuman entities as capable of action" and, consequently, as participants in biopolitical discourse. Latour and Lindemann's "theoretical contributions", as well as others, move biopolitics towards an "anthropopolitics": a "new field of research that...investigates which entities, under what conditions, can become members of society and which cannot". These reconceptualisations of biopolitics serve to give us a wider array of tools and questions that we can utilise to confront dilemmas such as how to approach our relationship with the environment and with other animals and how to survive, as a species (if we want to call it that), in the face of changing conditions that threaten said survival. Anthropopolitics also serves, to a certain extent, the needs and concerns of non-human animals and organisms, which are, for the most part, widely absent from most forms of mainstream political discourse. Green parties and policies that concern environmental conservation and the like are certainly steps in this general direction, but granting a sort of anthropological status to non-human entities is a much more radical and, arguably, a far more effective move towards dealing with wanton environmental and ecological destruction and change. Anthropopolitics is an example of the radical and critical nature of biopolitics itself: instead of questioning how animals should be treated vis-à-vis human cohabitation and coexistence, biopolitics debates whether or not nonhuman animals should be granted the same legal and ethical considerations as humans and, furthermore, whether or not the human/non-human dichotomy should even hold.

VII. Biosociality

> In the future this new genetics will cease to be a metaphor for modern society and will become instead a circulation network of identity terms and restriction loci around which and through which a truly new type of autoproduction will emerge, which I call "biosociality". If sociobiology is culture considered on the basis of a metaphor of nature, then in biosociality, nature will be modeled on culture understood as practice.[654]

Paul Rabinow's concept of biosociality pretends to be "an extension of Foucault's biopolitical problematic". It theorises that a "new articulation" of the concepts of "body and population", as Foucault understood them, has emerged "from the Human Genome Project" and all of the "biotechnological innovations" that have been derived from it. A "new disciplinary order" has emerged; one that has overcome "the strict division between nature and culture" and has introduced "a new understanding of social relationships through biological categories". The question is how, given all of the knowledge that genetic research has 'given' us, we are going to continue to refer to and understand our own selves in light of this new information. Rabinow argues that given this genetic knowledge, "new individual and collective identities" shall articulate themselves. As "genetic information spreads" and becomes popular, "people will describe themselves and others in bioscientific and genetic terminology" and "biomedical vocabulary" will become integrated into popular language. In other words, people will begin to describe themselves as genetically predisposed to this or that or as genetically at risk for something, instead of through the use of more popular medical terms, as said knowledge increases and becomes more renown. This is reminiscent of Quine's argument that epistemology, as a naturalised science, would, one day, allow people to describe things such as moods and behaviours in terms of the chemical processes taking place in the brain and the body, instead of terms of emotion or feeling, which is not as empirically relevant.[655]

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[654] Ibid, 97.
[655] Quine, W.V. 1951. Two Dogmas of Empiricism. *Philosophical Review* 60: 20-43

[656]Rabinow's thesis, however, goes "even further"; he argues that these biotechnical innovations and new "scientific classification systems" create:

> ...the material conditions for new forms of socialization, representational models, and identity politics, whereby knowledge about specific bodily properties and genetic characteristics decisively determine the relationship of the individual to her- or himself and to others...[657]

Rabinow argues that "the experience of illness forms the basis of a field of diverse social activities"; the "groups of people" that experience illness, as well as "their families", work "*with* medical experts", as opposed to working *for* them. These groups advance studies and research "targeted at their needs", as well as building "networks of communication" that influence both medical community and the public-at-large. In other words, pathological knowledge creates "new forms of community and collective identity". Furthermore, this knowledge, or, rather, the popularisation of this knowledge, "results in a demand for rights based on biological anomalies and in hitherto unknown forms of political activism"; these have discussed as creating a new sort of "biological" or "genetic citizenship". The result is the articulation of a "systematic connection between biomedical knowledge, concepts of identity and selfhood, and modes of political articulation". The individual and collective identities that are formed around advancements in pathological knowledge "represent new collective subjects that remove the borders between laypeople and experts" and "between active researchers and the passive beneficiaries of technological progress". Biosociality is, effectively, a ver concentrated version of the biopolitical project, as it fuses epistemology, subjectivation and political action into, essentially, a new mode of life. Identity based around pathology or abnormality of some sort is not a novel concept, but what is novel is the way that, in biosociality, it is the person, and people, suffering, who, to a certain

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[656] Quine, W.V. 1960. *Word and Object*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
[657] Lemke, Thomas. *Biopolitics*. 97.

extent, is allowed to express and define their own experience. This may seem, at first, a bit of a naïve conclusion, since it will always be those experts who have a background and expertise in biotechnologies, biomedicine, biogenetics and the like, who will have the most authoritative say on how genetic matters are dealt with and, for certain reasons, it would be difficult to argue against this naturally being the case. However, biosociality has also introduced new forms of political activism that are organised "around shared political attributes", three of which are discussed by Lemke. The first form is lobbying, which works to "increase public interest" and "to attract state funding for research projects" that serve the cause of the lobbyists. The second form is a struggle "again material or ideological restrictions to gain access to medical technologies and bioscientific knowledge", while the third is the participation of "self-help groups and patient organizations" in "ethics committees and parliamentary deliberations, as well as the drafting of guidelines for the regulation of technological procedures". These groups fight the restrictive nature of copyright, intellectual property and patents "in the domain of biomedical and genetic research". The less restrictive access to this knowledge is, of course, the more accessible medicines and treatments, as well as public sensitisation, becomes. If said knowledge is in the hands of a few biogenetic or biomedical companies, then it is more than likely that these companies will seek to profit off of this information, as opposed to making it available to anyone, irrespective of their economic means. Lemke states that very few studies have been done concerning this "biopolitics from below", but it is clear that knowledge and information, and their swift proliferation via social media and other forms of media, can quickly mobilise certain individuals and groups, particularly those that have something vital, and personal, at stake. Lemke also notes, however, that these struggles are not so much concerned with "general health care" and "universal rights", so much as with

the protection "of a particular genetic profile...shared only by a few". This, as Lemke puts it, "complicates the political articulation of rights", as "the accent is placed more on genetic difference than on a common biological identity". Again, political movements, actions and struggles based in genetic difference or representation are nothing novel, but have, historically, led to war, genocide and transgenerational conflict. Here, the difference is that they are based around pathological identity and biological anomaly, as opposed to some genetically discriminatory ideology. This may be a fear that some have, however, concerning struggles that are based around genetically determined identities, as policy changes could very well lead to new, genetically-motivated lobbying for causes that are either not widely supported, morally questionable, discriminatory or a combination of all of these.

VIII. Ethopolitics

> If discipline individualizes and normalizes, and biopower collectivizes and socializes, ethopolitics concerns itself with the self-techniques by which human beings should judge themselves and act upon themselves to make themselves better than they are....[658]

Nikolas Rose, like Rabinow, believes that advances in biotechnology and biogenetics, as well as "genetic knowledge", more generally, have dissolved "the traditional boundary between biology and society" and that "recourse to a pre- or extrapolitical nature is blocked", which means that "biology cannot be separated from political and moral questions". Rose calls this synthesis, "ethopolitics". Rose wants to distinguish today's genetics from the genetics of the past, as the "biopolitical frame of reference, as well as biopolitical forms of regulation", are now different. The human genetics of today is directed "at the genetic makeup of the individual" and not "at the body of the population", which distinguishes it from the eugenic projects of the past century. Genetic intervention, today, is less concerned with "the health of the public at

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[658] Ibid, 101.

large" and more concerned with how to "improve the health of individuals and...help them avoid illness"; instead of the extreme and repressive methods of the past, we not see a "variety of strategies that...identify, treat, manage...administer those individuals, groups, or localities where risk is seen to be high". These strategies, however, do not, ultimately, only focus on "specific, limited subpopulations", but, rather, all "members of society are affected to the extent that everyone is predisposed to genetic risk". The idea of 'health' becomes relative and time-specific, as the "risk discourse" is broadened to include those are healthy, at the time, and to submit them "to the same medical monitoring as the sick in order to anticipate and...prevent future illnesses"; Rose understands this expansion as the "democratization of biopolitics". Medical decision-making, now, is characterised, to a certain extent, by "autonomy and self-determination", as socialised "forms of regulation" have been dismantled and "neoliberal programs and policies" have been established, which has resulted in individuals taking medically preventative measures into their own hands. Since the nature of the body appears to have changed, due to novel means of bioscientific intervention, people now view it as more important than ever in determining "individual identity and self-perception"; the body is now "malleable, correctable, and improvable", irrespective of how much 'health' an individual enjoys at any given time, as this could change at any moment. Gone are "the boundaries between the normal and the pathological...between healing and enhancement" and a new "set of ethical and political questions is emerging" that has the taken the place of the biopolitics of the before. The human body, then, the individual as a collection of organic material and possessor of thoughts and behaviours, is fully modifiable and ethopolitics is characterised by a "vital constructivism" that questions the concept of an "original, immediately accessible" nature and the "essentialist concepts of human existence" of

the past; ethopolitics is "vital politics". There are two ways, in a general sense, that such a politics can go: on the positive side, the antinaturalism and antiessentialism of ethopolitics allows individuals the possibility to "creatively make the best of transformative possibilities", through "deep ethical reflection that includes concerns about biological constitution, as well as concepts of identity and how one wishes to live". Biology was, before, only fact and it is, now, possibility; it has gone from being an "immutable" field to a politics that is concerned with "creating individual and collective potentials". On the negative side, these new possibilities and potential threaten to create new opportunities for exploitation, capital gain and control. These new life processes can, and will be, commercialised, which "puts research in thrall to the profit motive, and to the development of new forms of social inequality and exploitation". In addition to this, ethopolitics brings about "new institutional expectations and social norms" that create the need for a sort of "genetic responsibility"; said responsibility is taken on by those who deem themselves fit to do so and believe that they can best 'solve' ethopolitical dilemmas and existential questions. "Physicians, bioethicists, genetic counselors, scientists, and representatives of pharmaceutical enterprises and biotech companies" work to popularise "scientific knowledge, disseminate value judgments, and guide moral reflection". A person's striving towards "health and wellness", then, becomes "closely allied with political, scientific, medical, and economic interests". Ethopolitics threatens to allow *life* itself to fall into the hands of experts, both pseudo and qualified, instead of allowing for the dissemination and flourishing of genetic knowledge and research, on a global, yet individual, scale. Lemke points out two criticisms that have been levied against Rose's conceptualisation of ethopolitics. The first is that Rose is wrong in assuming a schism between the eugenic practices of the past and the vital

constructivism of ethopolitics. Lene Koch argues that "processes of exclusion and selection" in "genetic and reproductive technologies" do not belong to the past, but, rather, that only the "forms of intervention and modes of justification" have changed; the "fundamental objective" of these biotechnological and biogenetic developments remains the same: "guiding and controlling reproductive decisions". The second criticism is that it is not clear "to what extent biopolitics merges with ethopolitics". Bruce Braun argues that ethopolitics is only possible under certain socio-economic conditions, conditions that are not available to "millions around the world who must fight every day to survive". However, even in those states and societies where ethopolitics would be meant to flourish, there is, still, a "central dimension of contemporary biopolitical practices" that is missing. Ethopolitics does not account for, what Braun calls, "biosecurity"; biosecurity "aims to guide biological life and its developmental cycles and contingencies". Braun argues that Rose's idea of "an isolated and stable molecular body" that "provides the foundation for ethical decisions and practices of the self" cannot, in fact, exist solely based on these decisions and practices, as it can be "counteracted through other perceptions of the body". A body does not exist in isolation; it "interacts with other human and nonhuman bodies and is permanently threatened by the risk of disease". If biological security is not, in a sense, accounted for, then no ethopolitical decisions can take place or, at the very least, they become short-term decisions or effectively meaningless.

A Pure Critique of Power

I. Introduction

> ...government refers to a form of power that operates indirectly, by way of actions performed by subjects who are 'led' by means of the truth...Foucault defines critique as a social practice that seeks to escape being led and 'dominant truths'...His thesis is that the generalization and spread of arts of government from the sixteenth century on cannot be separated from a correlative moment, which simultaneously limits them and poses the condition for their unfolding.. For this reason, the genealogy of governmental technology is also a *genealogy of critique*...[659]

Michel Foucault is, without question, one of the foremost theorists of power of the last century, thought this is not without controversy. As Lemke claims, in *Foucault's Analysis of Modern Governmentality*, Foucault's work has a polarising effect in that some view it as successful, or, at the very least, while others view it as so problematic and fundamentally lacking in theoretical explanatory power that it creates more problems than it solves. Lemke argues, in a sense, that *both* views are actually correct, but that the latter view should not actually be considered a 'fault'. For Lemke, Foucault is following a tradition that puts critique above all else in the process of investigation and research. Those who defend Foucault's work claim that his "analysis of power continues and promotes projects of social criticism by dismantling hierarchies and processes of political domination"; Foucault's works "afford insight into how power works" and they are examples of "'theory as a toolkit'". He contributed to "critical (self-) reflection on intellectual labour by stressing the political significance of how knowledge is produced, structured and disseminated". Those who criticise his work claim that his work on power "raises an array of epistemo-logical and normative questions that it cannot answer satisfactorily". Not only is Foucault's "theoretical agenda" not suited "to developing a critique of modern power mechanisms", it actually "suspends the possibility...in a substantive fashion". Foucault's conception of power is so comprehensive that it becomes impossible to even "imagine a society free from its

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[659] Lemke, Thomas. *Foucault's Analysis of Modern Governmentality: A Critique of Political Reason*. 479

workings"; it combines two notions: the idea that power is "the condition for the existence of society" and that power is "a matter of social asymmetry". There is an "unresolved tension" between what Foucault *intends* to do, which is to critique, and his "neutral conceptualization of power"; this tension produces "paradoxes, contradiction and aporias" that do not allow for Foucault "to deliver on the critical claims he advances". Lemke points out three reasons why these paradoxes, contradictions and aporias are not actually 'problems', in his view, but, rather, part of the work itself. First, it is unlikely that Foucault would not notice these 'deficiencies' in his own work, so, assuming, that he was aware of them and yet refused to change his positions, we must, then, ask why this was the case; "what did he want to achieve"? Secondly, to point out theoretical inconsistencies or to criticise the lack of self-reflection in Foucault's work is, essentially, counterproductive; radical, critical theory would not necessarily seek or pretend to conclude with strict, normative and rationally coherent frameworks to justify its findings or conclusions. His critics seek normative and logical justifications for his claims, yet Foucault himself would not claim to have them, and he did so quite explicitly. Such critique, as Lemke points out, "follows a rationalistic strategy focused on insufficient theoretical reflection and intellectual misprision". Third, Lemke argues that critics do not arrive at a conclusive or clear assessment of Foucault's politics; while some see him as a conservative, others view him as a nihilist, anarchist, Marxist or as a proponent of any number of political positions. This proves that there is no generally accepted reading of Foucault's works, at least in political terms, which proves, furthermore, that there exist contradictions within the very criticisms levelled against Foucault. If the very critique that cries out for logical and theoretical consistency in Foucault's writing is not itself consistent in its characterisations of those same writings, then there is clearly something

fundamentally wrong with the entire critical enterprise. Lemke, as a result of these three observations, shifts the critique back against Foucault's critics and claims to find "a host of misunderstandings, misreadings and prejudices". One of the main problems that Lemke finds is that a majority of these critics are operating within "a conception of power from which Foucault explicitly sought to distance himself"; their conception of power is negative and "focused on constraint, repression, domination" and the like. Not only did Foucault wish to "demonstrate the political and historical limitations" of this power model, but he also worked with a fundamentally positive conception of power. Lemke himself discovers faults and contradictions in his criticism of Foucault's critics: Lemke, at first, wanted to prove that Foucault's work was not, inherently, contradictory and that what he concluded was, in fact *true*; this, however, is fundamentally at odds with Foucault's own methodology. Lemke 'discovers' that the contradictions in Foucault's work are not proof of its deficiency, but, rather, they are what make the work theoretically significant and they "define its 'problematic'". Many critics claim, as Lemke points out, that the reason that Foucault abandoned his work on power, to later focus on subjectivation and ethics, was that it was too riddled with problems and, ultimately, led to a theoretical "dead end". Lemke believes that the opposite is, in fact, the case: Foucault "turned to processes of subjectivation as the result, and due consequence, of his interest in practices of power". He did not abandon any position, so much as he corrected and continued his earlier studies; in fact, "this theoretical move bears on the conception of power, above all". Foucault recognised that his own model of "power as strategy", which he "analysed in terms of struggle, war and conquest", led to a number of problems that this theoretical framework could not adequately deal with. Lemke identifies two of these problems: "the relationship between subjectivity and power" and "the nature of state power". Foucault "develops

a critique of the effects of power processes of subjects", while, at the same time, claiming that subjects are "the products of these mechanisms" and that bodies "are shaped and ordered" as a result of the ways "in which confining, disciplinary institutions produce them". If power produces subjects, then, it is difficult to understand how "'domination', 'constraint' and 'subjugation'" are still relevant to products *of* power. Foucault holds that the subject is autonomous, but, rather, heteronomous and "subject to anonymous strategies of power"; Lemke points out, then, that it is unclear what *resistance* looks like, or whether it even exists, at all. The second problem, that of *state power*, questions how the state can continue to exist given Foucault's development of a "'microphysics of power'" that focuses on "site-specific practices and particular institutions". As Lemke states, "it is not enough to focus on micropolitical phenomena and understand the state as a result of social relations of power alone"; a "strategic model of power" should, somehow, be able to explain how the state supports its own power structures and expresses forms of social domination. These problems prove that Foucault had "struck the outer point of what" his "'analytics of power'" would allow and that a "change of conceptual framework" had become necessary. More analytical tools became necessary in order to examine "subjectivation processes as they relate to forms of social domination", i.e. "'how self-control is integrated into the practice of controlling others'". This corresponds to Foucault's shift towards government and *governmentality*, towards the act itself of governance.

II. The Problematic of Government

As opposed to rule, struggle, law and the like, Foucault "explored power relations in terms of 'conduct'". He did not simply abandon his genealogy of power and move on to subjectivity; he introduced a "new analytical dimension". This new

analytical dimension was meant to resolve the problems created, in the framework of an analytics of power, by the relationship between subjectivity and power and the nature of state power. The "problematic of government" serves to avoid "the traditional separation between micro and macro levels of analysis" by viewing, for example, the "'political government' as practised by the state" as simply "one form of government among others". This new problematic also serves to more fully explain the relationship "between governing others...and modes of self-government", which allows for "a more thorough examination of processes of subjectivation". Lemke claims that the concept of government is key to understanding Foucault's work "as a whole"; the concept serves as a "'hinge' between different aspects of the overall project: it connects "strategic power relations and conditions of domination" and allows for Foucault to distinguish "between domination and power"; it also connects "power and subjectivity" and allows us to see "how techniques of domination connect with 'technologies of the self'". Lemke remarks on how it is "remarkable how little attention this corrective to the analysis of power has received", but this serves to explain a great deal of the misunderstandings and misreadings that Lemke attributes to many of Foucault's critics. Foucault, in his lifetime, was only able to focus on one side of the problematic of government, "forms of self-relation", and was not able to elaborate the concept "in the narrower, political sense". The problematic of government "lends concrete form and substance to the categories or critique and resistance in Foucault's work"; it allows for an analysis of the relationship between "power, truth and subjectivity". His thesis argues that *power* intends to "'lead' individuals in agreement and cooperation" with a truth that this very same power produces. *Government* is a "specific way of exercising power" and does not utilise "oppression, constraint or ideological distortion" so much

as it produces and utilises truth. Government does require "subordination and obedience on the part of individuals", but, rather, it "demands acts of truth".

III. The Politics of Truth

The question, then, becomes: how do people govern "(themselves and others) by the production of truth"? Foucault would argue that the "political problem" is not so much "the untruth of social relations", which might present itself as oppression, prevarication, force, exploitation and the like on the part of others, but, instead, the "truth" of social relations: social relations are rational and positive, in any guise, seemingly. Critique "that argues by means of contrast and affirms what is right against the backdrop of social conditions that are false" fails because of its pretence to truth, when what it claims to be false is *already* truth. Foucault, then, concerns himself with a "politics of truth", as opposed to an "economy of untruth". This should not be taken to assume that Foucault held that truth was 'relative', nor that he believed that truth was 'individual' or 'voluntary'; Foucault was concerned with cultivating a "'*limit-attitude*'" that distanced itself "both from the absolutism of single truth and from efforts simply to dissolve it". The problem with this stance, if it really is a problem, at all, is that, because Foucault refuses to play "the 'game' of universality and...must occupy a position outside of 'the true'", then he is open to attack by those who do, in fact, play this game; precisely because Foucault's work "concerns historically variable forms of distinguishing between true and false" is it open to the same analysis. It takes, as its stance, a critique of the production of true and false distinctions, rather than electing one or the other. Foucault's answer to government was precisely this: *critique*. *Critique*, not only as act or process, but as "'attitude' or 'ethos'". Critique is defined as "both a struggle for truth and a refusal of modes of leadership and conduct", as opposed to "an 'analytics of the true'—which asks about the formal conditions of

rationality". Critique, then, is not "based on knowledge, which it then legitimates"; Foucault's *critique* is neither 'legitimate' nor founded upon anything. It does not make itself legitimate "by appealing to law, rights or truth", but, rather, it self-generates and does not censor itself. Foucault problematises critique and formulates questions "that others think they have already answered"; Foucault's contradictions, then, make us face "what is not 'self-evident about the 'truths' that supposedly provide the basis for performing critique in the first place". Again, the 'problem' with Foucault's *critique* is that it is not really possible to come to it seeking a solution, an answer or a guide. Foucault's writings can, at most, provide theoretical tools that allow us to ask appropriate questions and to frame those questions critically. The problematic of critique creates problems, rather than solves them, because to do otherwise is to seek government, reason, rule, order and the like, which only come via imposition and truth *before the fact*. Truth can never be attained or *known* in the way that we typically conceive of knowledge; truth requires an epistemology and a consensus that is relative to the time: truths are only *truths* if they are recognised as such. Critique, in the way that Foucault understands it, is, in fact, difficult; when one is engaged in this form of critique, this 'critical *attitude*', it is not something that, in the logical sense, ends. It can be silenced or interrupted, in the case of death, censorship, imprisonment and the like, but it can always be taken up again or by others. As Lemke explains:

> Challenging the notion of a logical link between theory and practice, for the sake of sketching a form of critique that does not rely on abstract necessity so much as the freedom of a practical bearing—however paradoxical it may seem—represents one of Foucault's most significant *theoretical* achievements.[660]

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[660] Ibid, 27.

IV. The Genealogy of Critique

Lemke explains that government is a form of power that does operate *directly*; it operates "by way of actions performed by subjects who are 'led' by means of the truth". Critique, then, as defined by Foucault, is "a social practice that seeks to escape being led", as well as "'dominant truths'". Critique, however, is not a reactionary or antagonistic practice; it is an element "within" practices of government. *Government* is a form of power that "structures the field of subjects' possible actions through the production of truth" and it must, at all time, deal the question of "'true government'", which is the question of "its principles, scope and aims". *Critique*, then, is "the act of voluntary insubordination" as it relates to "the problem of 'true government'": just as government must constantly confront its own aims, so too must the subject confront the aims of government *and* confront his or her *own* aims. We know that many philosophers of science, mathematicians and physicians, throughout history, have praised parsimony, elegance, purity and the like, as theoretical virtues and as the hallmarks of good science. This may, however, be the source of so many of the debates, misunderstandings, paradoxes and dilemmas that have plagued science, mathematics, physics and biology. The need, the desire, to contain so much within a few statements, sentences or proofs. Science has come to admit that even laws are finite and subject to change, but, in praxis, laws tend to be regarded as absolute notions.

V. The Critical Attitude

What does it mean to problematise the truth, to problematise truth or to problematise anything? Problematisation, Lemke explains, "is a specific form of critique that defines itself in contradistinction to the search for universal rules and

necessary constraints". Problematisation does not result, nor begin, in knowledge; it, instead, questions the very status of knowledge. Critique, ontologically speaking, cannot be considered as "a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating: it has to be conceived as an attitude". Not every attitude is a critical one, however, as critique means "analysing the epistemologico-political limits of our historical existence—and thereby indicating how they may be surpassed"; critique neither affirms nor negates "the standing order", as its problematisations "aim at a deeper, more basic level—the common ground of both these 'solutions'". Criticism, according to Foucault, consists of an analysis and reflection upon "limits"; it is not a rejection, but, rather, an attitude: a "*limit-attitude*". It is not necessary to base critique "on scientific knowledge"; in fact, "doing so harbours a host of dangers and problems". To seek legitimation within scientific knowledge leads to subjugation to "an imperative of knowledge"; an imperative that not only censors, but also "rejects whatever does not fulfil established criteria as 'unfounded' and 'unjustified'". This sort of critique is limited in its commitment to "truths", as it "seeks to affirm, against domination and exploitation, a larger truth", which is also "tied up in manifold power relations". Change and resistance are admitted, in this form of critique, as far they "respect human 'nature' and the social 'laws'. Individuals, then, are compelled to admit constraints "in order to 'explain' universal patterns and laws and 'prove' that resistance must assume a certain form in order to qualify as 'resistance' at all". Critique, of the kind described above, is not only self-defeating and counterproductive, it also becomes a recursive exercise: as one submits to said 'imperative of knowledge', one will soon wish to free oneself of said submission and this critique will continue to occur, without end. Lemke claims that Foucault rejects the view that "resistance and critique" need to form some sort of relationship to "expert

knowledge", by defining critique, instead, "as an *ethos*"; an *ethos* that does not need to find legitimacy in "normative criteria". It is, in fact, this "normative criteria" that critique seeks to throw into question; critique is questioning the very notion of 'truth' itself, so attaching itself "to a 'true' identity" is precisely it is working against. Critique is not so much scientific as it is ethical, as it shows us that "we are responsible for the 'truths' that we think, say and perform—and that no theoretical justification can relieve us of such responsibility". Critique as *ethos* shows us not what we *must* follow nor what constraints we must submit to, but, rather, "possible liberties and starting points for resistance". Lemke points out that the separation between knowledge and critique does not mean theory should be abandoned nor that it is not useful. Theory can perform the important task of checking "claims to universality" and revealing "elements of arbitrariness and contingency within them"; theory, then, that "reflects on its own, historical conditions", functions as a sort of "counter-science" that allows us to change social practices "by liberating us from the sovereignty of knowledge and its constraints". Theory does not even justify nor necessitate "liberation and struggle", but can only serve as an instrument for them. Understanding or claiming that "liberation and struggle" are important can only come from thinking, saying and performing them as 'truths', rather than from accepting them as natural truths or gifts of reason. Critique that cannot "justify itself through claims to universality and 'ultimate reason'" can "only ever be historical and '*experimental*'; problematisation itself must "always stand open to critique" and allow for "(self-) correction". Foucault must even call his own work into question, if he stands by his own ethos. Problematisation becomes, in a sense, a meta-critical affair: it becomes necessary to understand "how, and in what context" problematisation operates, as well as what "'dangers' it produces and the possibilities it affords". Problematisation must put itself "to the test...of contemporary reality, both

to grasp...where change is possible and desirable, and to determine the precise form this change should take".

VI. The Problematic of Critique

> ...we know from experience that the claim to escape from the system of contemporary reality so as to produce the overall programs of another society, of another way of thinking, another culture, another vision of the world, has led only to the return of the most dangerous traditions.[661]

Lemke highlights a number of "points of difficulty and weakness" that Foucault's *critique* contains, as it is the very idea of critique that admits that *all* critique is 'problematic'; any and all claims to certainty are "purely 'theoretical'". The first question that Lemke asks, with regard to critique as a "'limit-attitude'" is how it is possible to claim or argue that "the norms that are implied in certain struggles" are "'more just' or 'better'" than those norms that they are challenging or fighting against? How do "conflicting norms" compare and to what rubric or criteria do we hold them to? Lemke asks if it is not necessary, "in order to defend our convictions", whether they be to the left or to the right of the political spectrum, "to appeal to the solid foundation of human nature and universal values?" This problem, actually, is easier to 'solve' than most of the others that Foucault's critique presents. If a person who holds views that are now considered to be on the extreme right of the political spectrum, such as the idea that transnational immigration should be stopped or that segregation based on skin colour should be legal, for example, can use the same tools for justifying their beliefs as a scientist or a human rights lawyer can for defending their case, then there is clearly something wrong with those tools for justification. If the same religious beliefs that are used to justify a genocide or warfare can be used to preach loving one's neighbour and living modestly, then there is, again, something clearly wrong with this doctrine.

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[661] Ibid, 377.

Anything that does not allow for modification, revision, improvement, refinement and the like could be considered dangerous and geared towards authoritarianism. Lemke points out that Foucault's notion of the problematic of critique does not actually imply that it is the only form of critique available to us: problematisation "does not represent the 'correct' form of critique—one that replaces universalism and inherits its claims". Foucault's critique operates more in the form of a "suggestion" or "invitation", rather than as a command or prescription; Lemke argues that Foucault suggests grounding normative claims in "concrete experiences of (putative) causes of domination and exploitation". When we can see and experience certain states of affair or "practical realities" as clearly functioning as "obstacles to a 'better society'", then we have no need to turn to "theoretical principles" or moral truths to explain to us or help us understand what is morally questionable and societally prejudicial. This does, however, raise the question of whether or not we must *wait* to experience that which is exploitative or corrupt in order to change, stop or condemn it. This goes back to Lemke's point about having to appeal to something like human nature or universal values in order to prevent or contest that which we perceive to be unjust or immoral. Again, it is not clear whether projection is that much of a problem when we consider that truths are performed, thought and said and that one truth performed can lead to another and so forth. One normative valuation, so to speak, can lead to another and so on, though one need not necessarily justify the other. Experience can expose us to "practical realities" that we can then build upon and that do not necessarily need to be "theoretical" in nature. As Lemke claims, however, judgements that come from experience "are prone to a host of errors", but: 1) "every form of critique stands exposed to this problem"; and 2) the way to correct an erroneous judgement that came from to experience is through *further* experience and a general sort of heuristics,

whereas judgements made in error that are "rooted in general theories" are much more difficult to correct, if they can be corrected, at all. Another 'problem' that Lemke raises with critique is that "'experimental' critique based on practical experience does not aim for changes with a scope as radical as critique built on comprehensive theories". Lemke argues that this change in scope does not entail a lack of commitment to, or a developed ignorance of, "'global' or 'general structure", nor does it entail an abandonment of "systematic" claims "in favour of an arbitrary and wilful analysis". It entails, instead, "a shift of the 'revolutionary perspective'", which is articulated as: "great revolutionary breaks are not the precondition for, so much as the result of, local changes". In this sense, Foucault "offers both too much and too little": the former, because he does not offer a "theoretical grounding for the normative criteria of his work"; the latter, because he questions "the very connection between normativity and critique". Foucault does not question "whom, what, when" nor "how to engage in critique"; nor does he ask "what reasons there are for resistance, and what prospects for reform there might be". Instead, Foucault offers this:

> The necessity of reform mustn't be allowed to become a form of blackmail serving to limit, reduce, or halt the exercise of criticism. Under no circumstances should one pay attention to those who tell one, 'Don't criticize, since you're not capable of carrying out a reform'...Critique doesn't have to be the premise of a deduction which concludes: this then is what needs to be done. It should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is. Its use should be in processes of conflict and confrontation, essays in refusal. It doesn't have to lay down the law for the law. It isn't a stage in a programming. It is a challenge directed to what is.[662]

Foucault considers that so-called "normative questions" are, in fact, "practical matters" and not "theoretical problems". These matters are justified only "within the historical context of praxis to which they belong": critique, then, is, effectively, "'groundless' and 'unfounded'"; it is born "from the everyday functioning of power, and it is the operations of power itself that form its basis".

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[662] Ibid, 378.

Critique, then, functions alongside government, i.e. power, or, rather, at its *limits* and, in this mode, offers criticism. The question, here, is why government is, in fact, so *powerful*. Why is it necessary? Is critique, itself, not *powerful* enough to end the need for power to give some sort of sense and intelligibility to human life and social relations? As radical as Foucault's critique and government seem to be, there does seem to be a general sense of complacency to them, as if no other state of affairs were possible, even though Lemke claims that many forms of critique and government exist. This may be due to admitted 'practicality' of the critique and government problematics; we deal with, in a sense, what *is*, as opposed to what *should be*. If critique is more of a 'suggestion' or an 'invitation', rather than a directive or a necessity, then why even engage in it, at all? If government, *qua* power, is so seductive and positive, then why not simply submit to its promises and simplicity. Critique is *active* and, to a certain degree, too much of a risk considering how little it promises. It would seem that only those who are truly hurt and are suffering from the processes of government would be the ones to engage in Foucault's critique; what incentive would those who benefit and flourish under it have to end or change their practices?

VII. The Specific Intellectual

Foucault does not relate his critique only to knowledge and power, but also to subjectivity. Critique, for Foucault, is "both a means of struggle on the way to maturity and a 'sign' of its attainment". Critique, as an attitude, not only means "independence from knowledge...and power", but also an "unwillingness" to accept society as it is. Lemke compares this conception of maturity to Kant's. For Kant, maturity is a capacity

"to make use of one's understanding without the guidance of another"; maturity, then, offers us an insight "into the universal limits of knowledge and freedom that occurs in subordination to a general law". The universal subject, here, is a fusion of "the ethical subject, the epistemological subject and the juridico-political subject"; the universal subject conform to universal rules and, thus, acts in accordance with nature and, necessarily, in a just and moral manner. Foucault, on the other hand, rejects both this harmony between power, knowledge and subject, as well as any conformity to any proposed universal law or rules. Foucault argues that "free subjectivity" is born precisely out of a *rejection* of any notion of universal rules and the *construction* of "social conditions that differ from those founded" on universal principles. Foucault is interested in the creation of "new subjectivities with new experiences and other norms", not on the sharing of norms and convictions. He juxtaposes the concepts of the universal intellectual and the specific intellectual. The universal intellectual believes in a "'correct representation' of the world" that "both declares and prescribes what should be", all under the pretence of promoting "the universality of justice and the equity of an ideal law" in opposition to "power, despotism and the abuses and arrogance of wealth". A universal intellectual "knows that it already possesses the truth" and, thus, "'judges'...'condemns'...and denounces the 'falsehood' of social conditions against the backdrop of their 'true' lawfulness; this intellectual practices *via* the law and not *via* theory. The specific intellectual, on the other hand, "speaks only" for him- or herself, "not for others"; the specific intellectual "only speaks for other inasmuch as" he or she speaks "for, and about," him- or herself—"from the standpoint of [their] own experience". Here, subjectivity is not in dialectical opposition to objectivity; it *is*, in a sense, the most objective form of experience. A subject can only truly claim that their own experience is valid, but this also works to validate the

experience of all others who make the same claim. Thus, "the specificity of experiences achieves general meaning through 'the specificity of the politics of truth in out societies'".

Circadian Capitalism:
Jonathan Crary and The Ends of Sleep

I. Introduction

This chapter explains and engages with Jonathan Crary's conceptualisation of what he calls "24/7", a sort of universal state-of-affairs that explains how capitalism, which functions in a seemingly eternal and ever-present fashion, now concerns itself with fashioning individuals and developing subjectivities that are amenable to and, essentially, defined by ceaseless work and consumption. This chapter compares Crary's analysis to the Platonic ideals of society and productivity, as well as to Hobbes's conception of the commonwealth and Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the 'order-word'. Crary explains how contemporary life has degenerated our understanding of concepts such as 'time', 'productivity', 'democracy', 'the social', 'leisure' and the like. Crary's work allows us to go further in our understanding of fundamentally 'asocial' and 'non-social' modes of life, where the self becomes the locus of capital, society and politics.

Ib. How To Live A Life of Leisure

> …many institutions in the developed world have been running 24/7 for decades now. It is only recently that the elaboration, the modelling of one's personal and social identity, has been reorganized to conform to the uninterrupted operation of markets, information networks, and other systems.[663]

Life, taken phenomenologically (as *lived experience*), consists, primarily, of routine. Said routine(s), irrespective of how much 'spontaneity' is allowed, corresponds to the priorities, needs and quotidian desires of this phenomenological 'reality'. This 'reality', in turn, is shaped or defined by one's ability to establish, confront and realise these priorities, needs, etc. Unquestionably and invariably, there are

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[663] Crary, Jonathan. *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep.* 9.

certain needs that *must* be met by the human subject, namely: hunger, thirst, fatigue/exhaustion, thought, communication of some sort and, primally, survival. The factors that most directly affect how well we are able to address these needs are: time, space, economy/means, physical capacity and social 'circumstance'. These are all, to a certain extent, defined 'socially', i.e. through social or cultural dialogue. For example, if we are born without certain physical abilities, but we are born into a society that champions the rights of the disabled, then a certain quality of life is, to an extent, guaranteed by the norms of said society. This would, presumably, not hold if we were left to fend for ourselves. The same may be said of welfare and other social initiatives, with respect to the indigent. 'Time', in certain contexts and in many societies, is also viewed as a right: in some societies, for example, there are limits on how many hours one can, legally, work in a given period of time. These limits are a recognition of the value of time over labour, industry and commodities; the value of leisure, of the person or, at the very least, of rest. However, the division between leisure and work, as well as the personal and social, has become increasingly nebulous, over the past century. The nature of all of these concepts has changed radically. There are certain types of work, particularly those centred around 'entertainment', that are completely devoted to the production of 'leisure', albeit primarily for everyone but the producer. Those who work in social media, or as Jonathan Crary puts it: 'network technologies', or any kind of organisation that pretends to bring people together for a specific purpose (camps, schools, centres, etc.), bring the lives of others into their own and their work depends on well they can manage and execute this assimilation. A social worker or mental health counsellor must show empathy, understanding, care and a myriad of other affects towards their clients or cases, all while remaining 'professional' and personally 'detached'. Navigating this balance and learning how to 'be and not be', so to speak,

is itself a job. In any case, there is one thing that most, no matter what their station, can rely on as a time for rest, inactivity and renewal: sleep. Sleep is, unquestionably, our guaranteed period of physical inactivity, when we need neither think nor manage anything: we simply rest and enjoy it. The utility of sleep, however, has been put into question since the times of Plato. In his *Laws*, Plato explains, through the voice of an Athenian citizen, "how to live a life of leisure" and outlines the role that sleep should play in the life of an industrious person:

> Everyone should think it a disgrace and unworthy of a gentleman, if any citizen devotes the whole of any night to sleep; no, he should always be the first to wake and get up…By nature, prolonged sleep does not suit either body or soul…Asleep, a man is useless; he may as well be dead.[664]

Furthermore,

> …a man who is particularly keen to be physically active and mentally alert stays awake as long as possible, and sets aside for sleep only as much time as is necessary for his health – and that is only a little, once that little has become a regular habit.[665]

Plato questions the very nature of sleep, but also raises the question of how *natural* sleep truly is; while Plato does not condemn the very act of sleep as unnatural, he does see it as immoral and aberrant to enjoy *too much* sleep. What is even more interesting, for this discussion, is that he says that a person "should always be the first to wake…and let himself be seen by all the servants (It doesn't matter what we ought to call this kind of thing – either 'law' or 'custom' will do)". In a way, Plato is both legislating and socialising the act, and abstention, of sleep. The role of sleep, and insomnolence, extends beyond the household:

> Officials who are wide awake at night in cities inspire fear in the wicked, whether citizens or enemies, but by the just and the virtuous they are honoured and admired; they benefit themselves and are a blessing to the entire state. And an additional advantage of spending the night in this way will be the courage thus inspired in individual members of the state.[666]

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[664] Plato. *The Laws*. Book VII
[665] Ibid.
[666] Ibid.

Sleep (and the lack of it), here, serves a social and moral function, as well as a personal one. These "officials" who work, effectively, as sentinels, throughout the night, serve a purpose that is beyond their individual station; their lack of sleep both inspires and protects the state, as a whole. Care of the self, for Plato, becomes, logically and systematically, care of the state. Plato is clear on this, however. He begins with care of the self:

> Inessential business must never stop you taking proper food and exercise, or hinder your mental and moral training. To follow this regimen and to get the maximum benefit from it, the whole day and the whole night is scarcely time enough…every gentleman must have a timetable prescribing what he is to do every minute of his life, which he should follow at all times from the dawn of one day until the sun comes up at the dawn of the next.[667]

This moves, almost seamlessly, to care of the state: "…a lawgiver would lack dignity if he produced a mass of details about running a house, especially when he came to the regulations for curtailing sleep at night, which will be necessary if citizens are going to protect the entire state systematically and uninterruptedly". He continues: "While awake at night, all citizens should transact a good proportion of their political and domestic business, the officials up and down the town, masters and mistresses in their private households". It is unclear how this life of effectively non-stop activity is meant to correspond with a proper diet, level of exercise and optimal mental health, but Plato assures us that they are all contingent upon each other. Oddly, this argument against excessive sleep stems from the question of what best to do with one's leisure time, to which the answer seems to be: dedicate it to work. Plato claims that "leisured circumstances", which exist when "a moderate supply of necessities" have been "assured" and "other people have taken over the skilled work", should lead neither to idleness nor to frivolity. Inactivity is "*not* the right and proper thing" to (not) engage in; the fate of such a person, a person who "takes life easy", is to be "torn to pieces by

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[667] Ibid.

some other animal – one of the skinny kind, who've been emaciated by a life of daring and endurance". Plato insists, then, that if "there is something left to do in a life of leisure…it's only fair that the task imposed…be the most demanding of all". Finally, it is important to point out that Plato does not believe that this ideal will ever be realised "*fully* so long as we persist in our policy of allowing individuals to have their own private establishments, consisting of house, wide, children, and so on". What is interesting, here, is the division, or lack thereof, between the public and private sphere; it is the state that allows for the existence of a 'private' life, though what one does with one's 'private' time should be in line with what the state deems appropriate and morally sound. Though Plato would be "satisfied" as long as the individuals that make up a "private household" are industrious throughout the day *and* night, it does sound like he would feel more at ease if even households were run by an external authority. Plato makes it very clear that in the relationship between the public and the private, it is the public that takes priority and it is the state holds moral authority over the individual (and the 'household'). What, then, is the purpose of leisure in Plato's society, if it seems like he seeks to eradicate it? Well, the role of leisure must, clearly, be its own renunciation. This is echoed in what Plato says regarding 'appetite' and 'pleasure': "…the appetite for pleasures, which is very strong and grows by being fed, can be *starved*…if the body is given plenty of hard work to distract it". Plato seems to allow for nature, for 'natural' states or things to exist, but only to be actively and urgently negated. Another contradiction arises, when he discusses sex:

> …in sexual matters our citizens ought to regard privacy – though not complete abstinence – as a decency demanded by usage and unwritten custom, and lack of privacy is disgusting.

The contradiction, here, is the demand for privacy, when time and life are meant to be so strictly regimented and subject to public (and private) scrutiny. The main thesis, in any case, seems to be that leisure, pleasure, nature and other exist so that they can

be denied; to, in fact, *be* denied. Excess is immoral, but even certain things in moderation are immoral. Plato's Athenian seems to have a moral compass that only ever points in one direction. This sentiment plays very well into the work of Jonathan Crary. In his book, *24/7*, he describes a systematic tendency towards the abnegation of sleep and the universal ascendancy of industry, productivity and capital. While Crary's '24/7' system does not deny pleasure, leisure and nature in the way that Plato's *Laws* does, it is interesting to see how a disdain for sleep, fruitlessness, idleness and the trivial have endured. Crary describes '24/7' as "a time of indifference, against which the fragility of human life is increasingly inadequate and within which sleep has no necessity or inevitability". He continues:

> In relation to labor, it renders plausible, even normal, the idea of working without pause, without limits. It is aligned with what is inanimate, inert, or unageing. As an advertising exhortation it decrees the absoluteness of availability, and hence the ceaselessness of needs and their incitement, but also their perpetual non-fulfillment.[668]

This is, very clearly, the answer to the question: what if Plato's Athenian were taken seriously and to an extreme degree? This does, indeed, answer the question, but in a very perverse and distorted manner. Plato believed that industry, morality, discipline and the like were the glue that hold a just and prosperous society together. In Crary's case, it is precisely these things that are destroying not only society (or, rather, those that make up society), but also the very notion of 'the social', more generally. What our societies are built around now ("the uninterrupted operation of markets, information networks, and other systems") has become the model for our own subjectivity. The fear, shame, regret, bitterness and dissatisfaction, among other affects, that have become associated with 'interrupting' our engagement with what has become our 'social reality' is so powerful that we have grown to reject and despise that which might pretend to separate, albeit briefly, from our world. Sleep, as rest and

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[668] Ibid, 10.

as a form of healthcare, is inimical to an uninterrupted flow of capital; we can certainly design machines and networks to watch over our investments, transactions and the like, even as we sleep, but what consciousness itself were a form of capital? As Crary puts it:

> We are long past an era in which mainly things were accumulated. Now our bodies and identities assimilate an ever-expanding surfeit of services, images, procedures, chemicals, to a toxic and often fatal threshold. The long-term survival of the individual is always dispensable if the alternative might even indirectly admit the possibility of interludes with no shopping or its promotion.[669]

Consumption is no longer an activity that simply involves material goods, but also the use of services, knowledges, relationships, forms of communication and a list of other immaterial assets. Let us look, then, at how sleep has evolved into the enemy of capital.

II. 24/7

> …24/7 is inseparable from environmental catastrophe in its declaration of permanent expenditure, of endless wastefulness for its sustenance, in its terminal disruption of the cycles and seasons in which ecological integrity depends.[670]

Crary describes '24/7' as having created an environment that resembles a "social world", but is actually a "non-social model of machinic performance and a suspension of living that does not disclose the human cost required to sustain its effectiveness". It is the idea that human action serves only the purpose of capital, which is to increase without cessation, but, taken even further, that this increase is actually irrelevant. Growth, progress, change and the like are not necessary outcomes or aspirations when it comes to the effectiveness of the 24/7 system; destruction, chaos, failure and other typically negative outcomes, might even be seen as positive situations that serve to activate the mechanisms and gears of 24/7 and require them

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[669] Ibid.
[670] Ibid, 10.

even more. Sleep, then, as the shutdown of human activity and the cessation of

consumption practices, is the antithesis of 24/7:

> In its profound uselessness and intrinsic passivity, with the incalculable losses it
> causes in production time, circulation, and consumption, sleep will always collide with
> the demands of the 24/7 universe. The huge portion of our lives that we spend asleep,
> freed from a morass of simulated needs, subsists as one of the great human affronts
> to the voraciousness of contemporary capitalism.[671]

It is uncanny how these sentiments parallel those of Plato's Athenian, but from an

almost entirely different perspective. The obsession with productivity, industry, utility

and the like remains, but with something of a different goal in mind. Plato appealed to

something that he believed was independent of humans and of society-at-large,

namely morality, truth, virtue, etc. 24/7, on the other hand, appeals to nothing beyond

itself; in a way, 24/7 becomes *more* human than those who participate in its machinery:

it must survive, at any cost. Survival, in this case, however, has nothing to do with

basic needs or subsistence at the primal level; survival, from the perspective of 24/7,

simply means business-as-usual, but at *any* costs. 24/7, in a sense, would sacrifice

lives for the sake of selling graves, but simultaneously commit to heavily invest in

healthcare. These are not contradictions, nor conflicts of interest, but, rather, a striving

towards ultra-efficiency. Sleep, Crary argues, is "an uncompromising interruption of

the theft of time from us by capitalism", but it is easy to see how one might argue

against this. One could say that sleep is the theft of time from us by nature, or

something along those lines, and seek to find ways to limit sleep, make it more

efficient, regulate it or even to attempt to eradicate it altogether. Crary addresses this:

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[671] Ibid.

> Most of the seemingly irreducible necessities of human life – hunger, thirst, sexual desire, and recently the need for friendship – have been remade into commodified or financialized forms.[672]

He continues:

> Sleep poses the idea of a human need and interval of time that cannot be colonized and harnessed to a massive engine of profitability, and thus remains an incongruous anomaly and site of crisis in the global present. In spite of all the scientific research in this area, it frustrates and confounds any strategies to exploit or reshape it. The stunning, inconceivable reality is that nothing of value can be extracted from it.[673]

Now, this is a very powerful argument, but one would have to argue that the idea that sleep *cannot* be "colonized and harnessed to massive engine of profitability" is false or, at least, should be phrased differently. Fatigue, exhaustion, tiredness and the like cannot *themselves* be capitalised on (though this, too, may be false), but our dislike and antipathy towards these feelings and states can. Soporifics, psychoactive drugs, herbal remedies, forms of meditation and relaxation, entertainment, hypnosis and all of their related industries all capitalised on an inability to address and 'cure' our feelings and states of enervation. If anything, this further proof of the efficiency of the 24/7 system: it wants to alleviate what it causes, but only to perpetuate how effectively it functions. Sleep itself, i.e. how best to sleep, how to maximise the effectiveness of sleep, where one sleeps, etc., has, in fact, been commodified. The interpretation, translation and analysis of dreams is also a lucrative business. Crary claims that "pressing notions of sleep as somehow natural" have been "rendered unacceptable" and that even though "people will continue to sleep", sleep "is now an experience cut loose from notions of necessity or nature". In other words, sleep has gone from being a natural fact, as something considered the opposite of being awake, to a mere animal function. Sleep is now:

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[672] Ibid.
[673] Ibid, 10-11.

> conceptualized as a variable but managed function that can only be defined instrumentally and physiologically. Recent research has shown that the number of people who wake themselves up once or more at night to check their messages or data is growing exponentially.[674]

Sleep has become incompatible and a logical hindrance to the achievement, realisation and execution of processes, activities and goals that we have come to regard as essential and necessary, in our lives. If exhaustion is preventing someone from completing a project or participating in some form of entertainment, the person does not consider how to pause their work or continue what they are doing at some other time, but, rather, how to alleviate their fatigue. Stimulants, amphetamines and the like are meant to treat what is considered an impediment to achieving what we feel that we need to achieve; sleep is a weakness that must either be cured or regretfully and lamentably succumbed to. As Crary states, sleep is "an irrational and intolerable affirmation that there might be limits to the combability of living beings with the allegedly irresistible forces of modernization." This introduces the debate between naturalism, on the one hand, and what Crary calls "truisms of contemporary critical thought"; this latter type of thought argues that "there are no unalterable givens of nature – not even death, according to those who predict we will soon be downloading our minds into digital immortality". "Celebrated critics" would argue that believing that "there are any essential features that distinguish living beings from machines is…naïve and delusional". They argue that it is pointless to object to this, since "new drugs could allow someone to work at their job 100 hours straight"; furthermore, less sleep equals more freedom and the ability to live "further in accordance with individual needs and personal desires". A naturalist might argue, on the other hand, that we are "meant to sleep at night…that our own bodies are aligned with the daily rotation of our

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[674] Ibid, 13.

planet, and that seasonal and solar responsive behaviors occur in almost every living organism". The reply to this, from the critics, would be to claim that these arguments are akin to "pernicious New Age nonsense" or to an "ominous yearning for some Heideggerian connectedness to the earth"; finally, and most importantly, considering our discussion, here: "…within the globalist neoliberal paradigm, sleeping is for losers". Sleep, in the 24/7 (neoliberalist) environment, is associated with loss, not gain, and is seen as a burden, rather than as something alleviating and reinvigorating. The more one works, the more one earns; time is money and the early bird gets the worm: the world of 24/7 is a world of economic clichés and tropes that lead to inevitable and inexorable success, irrespective of whether or not said 'success' is really achievable. 24/7's covenant, its 'social contract', is the promise of success, prosperity, happiness, etc. to those who work towards it; never mind that this work must be incessant and that none of these concepts are necessarily defined, nor is any sort of 'goal line' demarcated that might le one know that they have achieved said concepts. The promise is not an empty one, however, as one does really come to experience these affects and emotions, but always in flux and at the same time as other, antithetical, feelings. We might compare this to the myth of Erysichthon, who became hungrier, the more that he ate, and who was, ultimately, forced to self-cannibalise, due to his insatiable hunger. This might best describe the destiny of an individual, in the 24/7 world.

III. Polyphagia and 24/7 Phenomenology

A modern phenomenon, which has its genesis in the (relative) 'democratisation' of a certain level of 'luxury' good(s), is the disposability of contemporary technologies and the development and promotion of a seemingly eternal state of hyper-

consumerism. Though we will not explore it, in depth, this 'democratisation' and development have been facilitated by both the introduction of a credit-based economy and the rise of advertising and marketing as (pseudo-) scientific enterprises. Suffice it to say that the means of material, and immaterial, acquisition that are at the disposal of the average consumer have increased dramatically over the past century; never mind the fact that loans, rent, temporary possession, pawning, resale and leasing, as opposed to full and legal ownership, have become the dominant forms of said acquisition. The main question that we will be looking at, here, is: what is the point of buying into a certain type of technology or acquiring a new good? For example: why do we buy a new iPhone iteration, when we already own the previous one? One answer is novelty and the production of novelty; we simply desire what is new and the promises that this novelty brings. Though it could be argued that this ties in with a sort of survival instinct, it could be said that the promise of a new and, presumably, better future is inherent in the novelty of a new technology, product, service or good. Crary claims that "...the form that innovation takes within capitalism is the continual simulation of the new, while existing relations of power and control remain effectively the same". This could, perhaps, be illustrated by the marketing of a new technology that promises to help make one's job 'easier', but one is, nevertheless, enriching and giving power to the company that is selling the product, as well as those who benefit, economically, from said product's continued use. Once one buys into the claim of enhanced, or progressively enhanced, efficiency and productivity, then one has fallen prey to the vicious cycle of simulated innovation: each new product, logically, will be more efficient than the last, with the eternal promise (ever more promising with each new release) of an ultimate product. This, irrespective of the fact that said ultimacy will clearly never come to pass. As Crary states:

For much of the twentieth century, novelty production, in spite of its repetitiveness and nullity, was often marketed to coincide with a social imagination of a future more advanced than, or at least unlike, the present. Within the framework of a mid-twentieth century futurism, the products one purchased and fit into one's life seemed vaguely linked with popular evocations of eventual global prosperity, automation benignly displacing human labor, space exploration, the elimination of crime and disease, and so on. There was at least the misplaced belief in technological solutions to intractable social problems. Now the accelerated tempo of apparent change deletes any sense of an extended time frame that is shared collectively, which might sustain even a nebulous anticipation of a future distinct from contemporary reality.[675]

Though this fits with Crary's claim that 24/7 is a sort of post-historical and atemporal (yet eternal and constant) environment, it does not seem like this "futurism" has disappeared; if anything, it is even more pronounced and, instead of believing that the future is just around the corner and that available technologies are hinting at future, paradigmatic innovations, we now simply believe that the future is always *now*. Crary states that 24/7 is "shaped around individual goals of competitiveness, advancement, acquisitiveness, personal security, and comfort at the expense of others"; this egoism, bordering on solipsism, allows for maximum efficiency (a frictionless/ideal machine, in the physical sense), as one is not impeded or concerned with the needs of others, nor the effects of one's actions on others. This creates a situation where the future "is so close at hand that it is imaginable only by its continuity with the striving for individual gain or survival in the shallowest of presents". This goes back to Crary's critique of "contemporary critical thought", as discussed in the previous section: human activity has become machinic, automatic, but with a purpose; and that purpose is to strive towards a future that can only be pursued, yet will never materialise. Another myth comes to mind, here: that of Sisyphus; the 24/7 version of Sisyphus, however, must push their rock up a mountain that grows ever higher. This Sisyphus may even be promised lighter and smoother rocks that become increasingly easier to push up the

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[675] Ibid, 40-41.

mountain, every year; the mountain, nevertheless, continues to grow higher and higher.

IV. The Wreckage of Day

> 24/7 steadily undermines distinctions between day and night, between light and dark, and between action and repose. It is a zone of insensibility, of amnesia, of what defeats the possibility of experience. To paraphrase Maurice Blanchot, it is both of and after the disaster, characterized by the empty sky, in which no star or sign is visible, in which one's bearings are lost and orientation is impossible.[676]

Let us return to the idea of 24/7 and its development. Crary compares it to "a state of emergency", but one that becomes permanent and normalised; an alarm has been raised, warning us of something, but we are both ignorant to what that 'something' is and when the alarm will be turned off. The emergency becomes "domesticated" and we, in turn, become complicit its eternity. Said emergency has transformed the earth into both a "non-stop work site" and an "always open shopping mall of infinite choices, tasks, selections, and digressions": the sleeplessness that is a both a result and the foundation of this emergency is "the state in which producing, consuming, and discarding occur without pause, hastening the exhaustion of life and depletion of resources". One would think that all it would take for one to become free of this emergency, of this self-destruction and oblivion, would be to recognise it as such and adopt a different mode of life. This, however, becomes impossible, as there is a sort of fear, and accompanying paralysis, that results from both an uncertainty of the future and a dissatisfaction with the present, as well as the emergency state, more generally. The ubiquity of death, suffering and violence, which is transmitted to us via different forms of media (24/7), is a factor that both motivates us towards seeking generalised forms of security and inures and numbs us towards remote horror(s). Crary claims that sleep is the "major remaining obstacle…to the full realization of 24/7

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[676] Ibid, 17.

capitalism", but that it "cannot be eliminated"; it can, nevertheless, be "wrecked and despoiled" and this wrecking is "inseparable from the ongoing dismantling of social protections in other spheres". Crary equates this "construction in relation to sleep" to the systematic devastation of "universal access to clean drinking water", "by pollution and privatization…with the…monetization of bottled water"; this manufactured scarcity of sleep gives rise to the "insomniac conditions in which sleep must be bought", though what is bought is merely a "chemically modified state only approximating actual sleep". Crary argues that no amount of soporifics or sleep-inducing methods/medications can bring about "an amelioration of current conditions that would allow people to sleep soundly and wake refreshed"; he goes even further by claiming that not even a "less oppressively organized world" is likely to eliminate insomnia. Insomnia, as such:

> …takes on its historical significance and its particular affective texture in relation to the collective experiences external to it…[it] is now inseparable from many other forms of dispossession and social ruin occurring globally. As an individual privation in our present, it is continuous with a generalized condition of worldlessness.[677]

Insomnia, then, is not something to be cured, ameliorated or, categorically, eliminated; it is, rather, a 'state of affairs' that 24/7, as a generalised system, has both created and exploited. Here we can go back to what were referred to, earlier in this section, as 'remote horrors'; catastrophes and miseries that, even though we do not experience them first-hand, we feel that we may somehow be responsible for or we somehow feel involved in them, merely by being aware of them. This recognition, coupled with inactivity and impotence, create the conditions for psychological and moral disorder; a disorder that is ripe for insomnia and neuroses. Crary cites Levinas as someone who has tried to "engage the meanings of insomnia in the context of recent history": Levinas holds that insomnia is "a way of imagining the extreme difficulty of individual responsibility in the face of the catastrophes of our era". All we

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[677] Ibid, 18.

can do, however, is observe and be witness to said catastrophes; we can neither avoid nor necessarily prevent the "horror and injustice that pervades the world". Insomnia, as Levinas would have it, neither excludes "a concern for the other", nor does it provide a "clear sense of space for the other's presence"; insomnia is where "we face the near impossibility of living humanely". This "sleeplessness" must, in any case, be distinguished "from an unrelieved wakefulness", which would be characterised by an "almost unbearable attention to suffering and the boundlessness of responsibility that would impose". It is almost as if, for the sake of some artificial form of sanity or moral substance, we seek to recognise horror, while simultaneously admitting our powerlessness in the face of its universal form. 24/7 seems to allow for just enough humanity for the individual to experience empathy, worry, fear and grief, but not enough for them to feel personally responsible nor involved. The individual prioritises their own self-interests, because one's power does not appear to extend beyond self-governance. This powerlessness beyond the self extends further, however. The desire for sleep, peace, security and the like, and their ultimate realisation, rests upon the immutability of various external factors; and these external factors, in turn, both form and depend upon the stability of society. Sleep, as "the most private [and] most vulnerable state common to all", is "crucially dependent on society in order to be sustained". Crary cites Hobbes's *Leviathan* as outlining the "defenselessness of an individual sleeper against the numerous perils and predators to be feared on a nightly basis" as an example of "the insecurity of the state of nature"; this obligates the state, "the commonwealth", to prioritise "security for the sleeper, not only from actual dangers but—equally important—from anxiety about them". Security, protection and sleep thus all become social functions; they exist, in this society, as social constructs. Reality, i.e. nature, in effect, is dangerous and must be, satisfactorily, sealed off, in

order to provide the safety and guarantees necessary for society to thrive and operate. This, in fact, could be seen, much likes the society of Plato's Athenian, as a rudimentary formulation of the 24/7 environment. Both Plato's Athenian and Hobbes's commonwealth require systematic and uninterrupted protection in order to thrive, but said protection must be provided for by each's constituents. Though security and defence can be outsourced, it is difficult to outsource the anxiety associated with their need and demand, in the first place; the mind produces its own battlefields, both real and imagined.

V. The End of the Weekend

> In spite of its insubstantiality and abstraction as a slogan, the implacability of 24/7 is its impossible temporality. It is always a reprimand and a deprecation of the weakness and inadequacy of human time, with its blurred, meandering textures. It effaces the relevance or value of any respite or variability. Its heralding of the convenience of perpetual access conceals its cancellation of the periodicity that shaped the life of most cultures for several millennia…[678]

Crary explains that 24/7 compared to what is known as an "order-word"; Deleuze and Guattari characterise the "order-word" as "a command…an instrumentalization of language that aims either to preserve or to create social reality, and whose effect, finally, is to create fear". To illustrate this, we must reflect on what 24/7 destroys, alters and redefines on an epistemological and ontological level; we must think of how time has been defined historically and scientifically. We define the week as consisting of seven days, a day as consisting of 24 hours and an hour as consisting of sixty minutes; we, of course, know how a year is measured, a month, a decade and so on. Though these are recognised as 'objective truths', independent of our own observations, we also recognise these divisions as human achievements; they are testaments of the order that we have *imposed* upon the world and universe,

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[678] Ibid, 29.

through our discoveries, as wrong and full of hubris this may sound. 24/7 is an affront to this order; 24/7, as a perverse form of eternity and of the infinite, exposes the "weakness and inadequacy of human time" and does away with our much-studied and expertly-organised "temporal differentiation[s]". Societies have cleverly structured the work week and magnanimously offered us the weekend, as a distinct space and time for leisure, respite and the attendance of personal affairs. 24/7, however, imposes its own logic upon our, comparatively, arbitrary divisions of time and climatic and physical phenomena. The homogenous and "monotonous" nature, or lack thereof, of 24/7 creates a world where we must confront the apparent vacuity of our own temporal ontology; this is aggravated by the fact that the weekend, as well as "individual days of the week, holidays" and "seasonal breaks", has survived, but has its "significance and legibility…effaced". Since 24/7 is antithetical to any sort of division of time and to the creation of any sort of space that might allow for any temporal division, it relentlessly incurs "into every aspect of social or personal life". This is mirrored in the proliferation of "wireless technologies", which have annihilated "the singularity of place and event"; phenomena seem to occur independent of space, and time, in a sort of ethereal non-place, when we witness them online or via a screen. This only exacerbates our abolishment of temporality, since we are able to see and experience innumerable things at any given time, but are also fully aware of what we are not seeing that *must* be happening, as well as things that *may* happen, due to our limitless access to phenomena, on a universal scale.

Non-dimensional Power

I. Introduction

An analysis of the relevant literature concerning power, in contemporary political science and philosophy, makes it clear that current conceptualisations are, at the very least, inadequate. As Byung-Chul han states: when "it comes to the concept of power, theoretical chaos still reigns"; while "the existence of the phenomenon itself cannot be doubted, the concept remains altogether ambiguous".[679] Furthermore, even theories and conceptualisations that present alternatives to mainstream understandings of 'power' seem to either serve to make the concept even more 'nebulous' and 'ambiguous' or are not radical enough in attempting to understand and explain the phenomenological experience of power as it is experienced by an individual, group or society. The argument, that is presented here, is that there are several reasons why this is the case: why it is that so many theories and conceptualisations of power ultimately fail in their aim(s). *First*, there is little to no emphasis, or, at the very least, very little emphasis, on the role of our biological understanding of human beings and the psycho-social realities present in our world, in contemporary theories of power. While studies in necropolitics/thanatopolitics, psychopolitics, ethopolitics and biopolitics, more generally, do certainly analyse the intersection between biology and politics and highlight the need to take seriously the demands that our ever-increasing technological and scientific knowledge impose upon any anthropocentric study, these fields of study tend to be quite specific in nature and seek to either move away from more 'universal' understandings of power or do away with them, altogether. While it may prove to be necessary and, indeed, a critical step in theorising power, it is precisely this sort of 'anarchic' understanding of power that raises further questions

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[679] Han, Byung-Chul. *What is Power?*. Polity; 2019. VII-VIII.

and creates more problems in praxis. For example, while a field like necropolitics may make the claim that the "ultimate expression of sovereignty largely resides in the power and capacity to dictate who is able to live and who must die"[680], it is, perhaps, difficult to understand this concept when death, destruction, cruelty and the like are not immediate or, at least, immediately at-hand. Furthermore, when the meaning of one concept depends upon the meaning of another concept, or, worse, a group of concepts, then it is easy to see how debates and conflicts are bound to materialise. Worst of all, if the meaning of a concept is dependent upon the very meanings of *concept, theory, methodology* and the like, then the project is almost doomed to fail, from the start. An example of this sort of conceptual polysemousness, again citing the field of necropolitics, is how one defines the process of subjectivisation. Mbembe explains subjectivisation as such:

> …the human being thus truly *becomes a subject* – that is, separated from the animal – in the struggle and work through which death (understood as the violence of negativity) is confronted...Becoming a subject therefore supposes upholding the work of death…Politics is therefore a death that lives a human life. Such, too, is the definition of absolute knowledge and sovereignty: risking one's life as a whole.[681]

Haugaard, on the other hand, describes subjectivisation as a "process of socialization" and this process of socialisation is founded upon one's "practical consciousness, which creates second-nature expectations that create security in the social subject"; this "ontological security", in turn, is founded upon "the establishment of routine, which begins with the infant's relationship with its primary carer". It would seem that, for Haugaard, the subject is defined by their relation with *life*, while, for Mbembe, the subject is defined by their relation with *death*. The implications of these two conceptualisations may not be antithetical, but their foundations, authority and methods of legitimation are, in fact. antithetical. *Second*, as we have just seen, different

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[680] Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics* (S. Corcoran, Trans.). Duke University Press; 2019. 66.
[681] Ibid, 68.

theories of power completely redefine, or seek to redefine, well known and generally uncontested concepts, which can confuse the reader, certainly, but, more importantly, force the theorist to commit to the Herculean (and Sisyphean) task of having to reconceptualise an entire topic and, likely, an entire field of study. This may explain, precisely, why biological explanations are not more prevalent in literature on power, as this would require not only something of a specialised understanding of biological principles and established truths, but also the need to introduce them into power debates and discussions, in order to contend with them. *Third*, and the last point to be made before moving to a proposed solution, is the idea that the process of conceptualisation and theorisation itself is an act of power, which is why the very process itself has become problematic. Institutions, organisations and individuals who find themselves in positions of at least some authority are those who, ultimately, define, debate and speculate on those concepts and ideas that are most important to society-at-large: the phrase 'knowledge is power' may appear to be nothing more than a trite statement in favour of education, but the reality is that not only is knowledge a manifestation of power, but so is the definition and legitimation of knowledge itself, in the first place. This begins to explain why, though there may be many 'alternative' and challenging conceptualisations and theories of power, only those that are more easily understood and fall more in line with mainstream theories are generally accepted. This resonates with the idea of paradigmatic shifts in scientific theory and Quine's two dogmas of empiricism:

> …it is misleading to speak of the empirical content of an individual statement - - especially if it be a statement at all remote from the experiential periphery of the field…it becomes folly to seek a boundary between synthetic statements, which hold contingently on experience, and analytic statements which hold come what may. Any statement can be held true come what may, if we make drastic enough adjustments elsewhere in the system. Even a statement very close to the periphery can be held true in the face of recalcitrant experience by pleading hallucination or by amending certain statements of the kind called logical laws…by the same token, no statement is immune to revision.[682]

Just as it is easier, empirically, to redefine 'power', rather than do away with it completely, it makes more sense to more readily accept theories that are less radical and require less of the reader/participant. To tell an individual that a theory is rooted in anarchy may well be liberating, in some sense, but, if true or accepted, then it brings along a whole new set of responsibilities previously supererogatory to that individual. When a concept or theory is proposed and defended, over the course of decades and even centuries, then merely the proposition of an alternative might constitute a radical act, as Quine points out.

II. Dimensionless Power

As a response, then, to the question of power and the debates surrounding its different dimensions, origins and conceptualisations, what is proposed, here, is the notion of *non-dimensional power*. As a form of conclusion, an outline of what this means will be presented, though much work needs to be done to elucidate and elaborate upon the ideas, processes and implications that it presents. *Non-dimensional power* is, effectively, a de-conceptualisation of power that is not meant to be understood or apprehended, *per se*, but exists, rather, as a sort of 'pure critique' of the concept. By borrowing from different theories on power, but discarding each *qua* theories and *qua* systems, we arrive at something, though perhaps not satisfactory in the scientific sense of theoretical research, much better equipped to face the lacunae created by theories of power. The logic behind non-dimensional power is not circular,

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[682] Quine, Willard V.O. *From A Logical Point of View*. Harper Torchbooks; 1963. 43.

nor is it deductive or derivative. By adopting an anarchic/protean stance towards power, logic does not really play into the equation; it can function at the pure, metaphysical level, or at the applied, empirical level; whichever is contextually appropriate. This anarchy/proteanism, however, strips power of its explanatory power, as it is too fluid to be logically or nomically contained. Furthermore, concepts such as 'oppression', 'exploitation', 'control' and many others typically associated with 'power', are much better served by not invoking 'power', at all, but, rather, by describing them in sociological, political, or even phenomenological, terms. Many forms of control, exploitation and dominance are not properly explained by 'power' and require the development of entirely novel, multi-disciplinary fields of study in order to even begin to unravel their complexity; these fields are still just as concerned with 'power', however, and, as a result, suffer from the same methodological issues that make the concepts under review so difficult to understand, in the first place. Eschewing power altogether, in favour of a more localised and specific mode of understanding these concepts, allows for a greater, and more creative, theoretical freedom, which would, effectively, be independent of *theory*. If we understand *power* and *control* as ideas that are rooted in biology and psycho-social interaction, then, with even just a quick glance at the literature on power, it is clear that there is a need for more work to be done on the subject. Fundamental to the questions of *power*, *dominance*, *control*, *exploitation* and the like is the question of what the most basic and fundamental needs of a human subject are and what it would take to satisfy said needs. It is no mystery why political, ethical and philosophical systems feel the need to contend with the question of how to define 'basic needs'; in his 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', Marx wrote:

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs![683]

Similarly, the authors of United States Declaration of Independence held that:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.[684]

Finally, as discussed earlier, in chapter XII, Plato held that:

Inessential business must never stop you taking proper food and exercise, or hinder your mental and moral training. To follow this regimen and to get the maximum benefit from it, the whole day and the whole night is scarcely time enough…every gentleman must have a timetable prescribing what he is to do every minute of his life, which he should follow at all times from the dawn of one day until the sun comes up at the dawn of the next.[685]

What qualifies as a fundamental or basic human need differs, depending on the philosopher, theorist, organisation, ideological mouthpiece, representative or authority making the case. This, however, seems to be the foundation of power, control, domination, exploitation, etc.: whoever holds access to, controls or defines how an individual or group can acquire or avail themselves of what they consider to be their fundamental and basic needs, at any given point in time, is the one who holds at least *some form* of power. Unfortunately, it is not as easy as saying that whoever has food holds power over the hungry or that whoever has shelter has power over the homeless, but this is a symptom, or perhaps mode, of the way that power operates and is exploited. If we define basic and fundamental human needs in terms of biological and psycho-social criteria, e.g. a satisfaction of one's hunger, thirst, need

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[683] Marx, Karl. *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (D. McLellan, Ed.). Oxford University Press; 2000. 615.
[684] Beeman, Richard. *The Penguin Guide to the United States Constitution*. Penguin Books; 2010. 2.
[685] Plato. *The Laws*. Penguin Books; 2004. 199.

for shelter, emotional needs, etc., then we give power to biologists, psychologists and sociologists to determine: first, what qualifies as hunger, thirst, etc.; second, what qualifies as having satisfied these 'needs'; and, finally, who is even allowed to determine this and who is responsible for carrying it out and managing their satisfaction. This, as Plato argued and maintained via Socrates, should fall to the philosopher-kings:

> The society we have described can never grow into a reality or see the light of day, and there will be no end to the troubles of states, or indeed, my dear Glaucon, of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands, while the many natures now content to follow either to the exclusion of the other are forcibly debarred from doing so. This is what I have hesitated to say so long, knowing what a paradox it would sound; for it is not easy to see that there is no other road to real happiness either for society or the individual.[686]

Proudhon, and Engels after him, argued in favour of 'scientific socialism' and that a person's "true chief and his king is the demonstrated truth; that politics is a science, not a stratagem; and that the function of the legislator is reduced, in the last analysis, to the methodical search for truth".[687] This "search of truth", like Plato's kingdom of philosophers, leaves us at the mercy of those who define and claim to scientifically demonstrate the truth. Though *non-dimensional*, or *dimensionless*, *power* is meant to be understood as rooted in the biological and psycho-social needs of human beings, this does not exhaust its meaning. Recognising this is merely the beginning of a *dimensionless* analysis of power. It is not precisely quantifiable to explain how hunger and nourishment are a part of our lives, but the fact is incontestable. To begin to attempt to quantify it is, however, a biological and scientific task, as we would understand it. The scope, meaning and impact of a scientific task is determined by the organisation and individuals behind said task and so on. Knowledge of our needs, as basic and essential as they may be, is delegated to science and science is delegated

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[686] Plato. *The Republic* (D. Lee, Trans.). Penguin Books; 2007. 473.
[687] Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph. *What Is Property?*. Cambridge University Press; 2002. 208.

to the experts. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, but it is clear how great the responsibility is and how high the stakes are, here. Even the act of calling information concerning these needs is a form of power, as the needs themselves control us and determine our lives unquantifiably, until we assign quantities to them. How powerful is fear or happiness? How powerful is hunger or thirst? How powerful are success and failure and how are they determined? These questions lie beyond the realm of the immediately empirical and require conceptualisation and empirical grounding, in order to be understood, though such a task would not exhaust the meaning nor scope of the questions themselves. The answers to these questions, nevertheless, can lead us to new understandings in the fields of psychology, sociology, politics, economics, philosophy and beyond, since these are the fields of knowledge that we have tasked with explaining power, and powerlessness, to us. Whether they are successful or not is determined by their application.

III. Dimensionless Power in Praxis

'Understanding' power as something that is dimensionless requires action and that action is an ongoing process of *critique*. Once we place 'power' within the realm of the psychosocial, we give it new dimensions, certainly, but we must understand that these new dimensions are neither necessarily helpful, nor should we see them as our target of analysis. The same happens when we place it within the realm of biology (or chemistry). Understanding that power, and control, are rooted in biology and in psychosocial interaction is to recognise that when decisions are made, when events occur, when someone has a thought or conveys something and when all sorts of observable human phenomena occur, there are myriad processes and factors that are at play that we simply *cannot* observe, though we may try to understand and analyse them. Famously, in Camus's *The Outsider*, the protagonist Meursault murders

someone, but never truly indicates why he commits the crime and, in fact, he even recognises that "all I had to do was turn around and walk away and it would be over…[b]ut an entire beach pulsating with sun pressed me to go on"; he then shoots a man several times after seeing him pull out a knife, though the man neither moves towards him nor seems to want to attack him, and seems to explain that he did it because:

> the sweat that had gathered on my eyebrows suddenly rushed down into my eyes, blinding me with a warm veil of salt and tears…I could feel…the sun crashing like cymbals against my forehead, and the knife, a burning sword hovering above me. Its red-hot blade tore through my eyelashes to pierce my aching eyes.[688]

Again, Meursault never really goes on to explain exactly why he did what he did and his only 'salvation' is to simply accept what did and accept the consequences.[689] The relevance of this example, though fictional, is that it shows the possibility that actions and choices, particularly those which are quite extreme, ostensibly senseless or tragic, may not have a 'logic' behind them and are simply motivated by the body, the mind or nothing explicable, at all. Something similarly tragic happens in Richard Wright's *Native Son*, where the protagonist, Bigger Thomas, is put in a situation where he fears for his life and he ends up killing the daughter of the family who have just hired him. Wright's novel predates Camus's by two years, but the descriptions of the murders feel very similar:

> Frenzy dominated him. He held his hand over her mouth and his head was cocked at an angle that enabled him to see Mary and Mrs. Dalton by merely shifting his eyes. Mary mumbled and tried to rise again. Frantically, he caught a corner of the pillow and brought it to her lips. He had to stop her from mumbling, or he would be caught. Mrs. Dalton was moving slowly toward him and he grew tight and full, as though about to explode.[690]

Though he was initially trying to help, Bigger, panicked, ends up suffocating Mary while trying to silence her with a pillow, because of his overpowering and debilitating fear of being caught, alone, in the room of a white woman, especially since she had

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[688] Camus, Albert. *The Outsider*. Penguin Books; 2013. 69.
[689] Ibid, 135.
[690] Wright, Richard. *Native Son*. Jonathan Cape; 1970. 84.

been drinking. His fear of a particularly horrible outcome led him to do something even more horrible and the realisation hits him, profoundly:

> The reality of the room fell from him; the vast city of white people that sprawled outside took its place. She was dead and he had killed her. He was a murdered, a Negro murderer, a black murderer. He had killed a white woman. He had to get away from here…In the darkness his fear made live in him an element which he reckoned with as "them."[691]

Again, though this example is fictional, we imagine the weight of both Bigger's psychological and physical traumas pressing down upon him and taking control of him, in this situation, while also imagining the weight of the pressures of existing in a society that might criminalise any one of his actions, simply because of the colour of his skin. These are realities that criminal justice systems all over the world must grapple with every day; what is the role of compassion in enforcing the law and how seriously must we take the motives of someone convicted of a crime, especially if the crime is qualified as particularly 'heinous'? A non-dimensional understanding of power understands that not everything, perhaps going so far as to say *nothing*, can be understood as easily as *A* because *B or A* did *C* because of *B* and *D*. The motivations and processes behind just a single thought are uncountable, but we make them quantifiable because it simplifies things, we can understand things this way and because being able to communicate things is a vital element of social coexistence. In fact, the imagination, particularly when reading a novel or other work of fiction, is triggered (or not) by our ability to empathise or sympathise with characters in fictional situations. Asylum laws and social welfare, for example, exist not only for those who need them now or for those who have already found help, but more so for those who will come to need help and for those who we imagine might one day need sanctuary. These laws and social structures exist so as to say 'we understand that you need or

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[691] Ibid, 86.

may need help, at some point, and we would like to provide it'; there is an empathy and a compassion that are meant to exist outside of time and independently of the person or situation, but these feelings rest in the imagination, in the mind and in the body, originally. Society extends these same feelings towards the homeless and the hungry, at least to a certain extent. Everyone needs food and some form of shelter in order to survive and we know this because most of us are able to experience suffering, hunger, cold, pain and sadness. A society understands pain because its constituents are able to feel it; the values and realities of a community are held as priorities and codified into its laws and mores. We can ask, 'how much does suffering affect and inform what a community or a person does?', but we could never *really* know the answer. We can see and experience certain manifestations of a person or society's understanding of suffering, but to quantify how much it informs the entire existence of said entities would be all but impossible. The same could be asked of most emotions and biological processes and sensations: how much do fear and anger inform your decisions; how much does thirst motivate what you do; and so on. Certainly, we could provide some answer, but quantifying these things, with precision, is almost nonsensical, even though we can recognise it. The point is that power and control, when understood *dimensionlessly*, operate at levels beyond those theories in other conceptualisations of power and control and they operate, as a matter of course, in ways that we cannot immediately or very simply explain.

IV. Conclusion: A Critique of Dimensionless Power

We have seen some of the deontological consequences of accepting that power and control operate at and are rooted in the biological and psychosocial realms: understanding the role that biological processes play in our lives, however limited that understanding may be, is a first step in moving towards revealing the dimensionless

factors that motivate our actions, thoughts, decisions, impulses and the like. A shift in focus towards the body and the mind, while recognising the relevance and trying to understand the importance of our interactions with others, forces a prioritisation of the personal and the interpersonal. We see what it means to prioritise the power of violence, the power of economy or the power of international and supranational organisation: a vast number of resources being invested in warfare and buying and selling armaments, protecting corporations and their assets at all costs and protecting the actions of state actors all around the world, if they cooperate with other powerful state actors. How we define power very clearly defines policy and our policies dictate the lives of millions, at least. Personalising our understanding of power, with all the questions and lacunae it leaves in our understanding of the self, is a step towards a more empathetic and responsible world. Just like diagnosing a mysterious illness or malady can lead to the beginning of a recovery process or cure, or at least an understanding of one's situation, while raising even more questions and unknown variables, dimensionless power is a move away from the violence, greed, corruption and extra-legal anarchy of the governments and societies of now. Though dimensionless power is a critical process of deconceptualising and demands further elucidation, it seems to be particularly useful at explaining away the deficiencies of so many other conceptualisations of power. While power and control are misunderstood and their human origins ignored, societies and individuals suffer.

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