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Prefiguring Futures: Towards a Politics and Ethics of Non-Domination

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this investigation is to formulate a theory of change. To this end, I first explore what goal(s) can productively inform a wide range of struggles. I argue in favour of an experimental ethics tentatively geared towards non-domination --a way of organising relations where parties have a hand over the way they are managed. Secondly, I explore what methods are best suited to achieve this goal. I argue that the path to non-domination involves two mutually sustaining processes. First is the cultivation of an ethics that revolves around self-rule, self-control, responsiveness, responsibility, and openness. The second process encompasses the deployment of techniques for change that are qualitatively compatible with non-domination. Such techniques include infrapolitics, discursive challenges, reform, and non-participation, but exclude confrontation and revolution. These two processes combine to prefigure non-domination here and now, if tentatively and imperfectly, instead of relegating it to a distant future.

KEYWORDS: change, power, freedom, subjectivity, non-domination, ethics, self-transformation, prefiguration, ethical struggle, transposition, integration.

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Introduction

As 2010 came to a close, popular protests against Ben Ali's authoritarian regime in Tunisia inspired similar protests across North Africa and the Middle East. This wave of dissent soon spread to Europe, North America, and some Asian countries, where social discontent over economic inequality and corporate dominance have provided fertile ground for the occupation of public spaces and public demonstrations. While the so-called Arab Spring and the Occupy Movements have dominated the news headlines lately, they are in fact only two examples of a series of less publicised yet equally important struggles, such as environmental conflicts to stop major polluters, workers' strikes against lower wages and insecure jobs, and indigenous peoples' attempts to reclaim their lands.

All these struggles find their *raison d'être* in the protesters' *own* sense that a certain state of affairs is problematic and can no longer go on as it is. In other words, these struggles betray the protesters' own willingness to transform a purportedly problematic condition through a *project of change*. Now, any such project begs two main questions:

1. What is the *finality* of change? This questions asks for an investigation into what end-goal (if any) informs a specific struggle.
2. What is the *modality* of change? This question complements the first one, insofar as it aims to investigate the methods deployed to achieve a desired end-goal.

This investigation explores the finality and modality of a number of struggles, either in their actual instantiations or as refracted through the lenses of their accompanying theoretical discourses. Thus, for example, I will be looking at

Marx's theoretical insights as a way to gain an understanding of the agitations and revolutions conducted in the name of labour throughout the XIX and XX centuries. My overarching aim in looking at different struggles is to detect potential patterns or regularities whence to derive a *theory of change* --a way of thinking that enables us to make sense of change itself. Specifically, I am interested in investigating (a) what normative end-goal (if any) can productively inform a wide range of struggles for change; and (b) what methods (if any) are best suited to achieve this end-goal.

It is important to note that, while my investigation will clearly argue in favour of specific principles and ideas, these are not regulative ideals that apply to everyone, everywhere, and at all times. Rather, they are *critical ideas* --norms that I argue are desirable but that others can always interrogate, in an effort to expose their limitations (Foucault in Tully 2008: 129). Consequently, the ideas that I advance are provisional, malleable, and always open to critique, instead of "universal, necessary, and obligatory" (Foucault 2003: 53).

My investigation into both the finality of change and the pathways to it will unfold over the course of five chapters. Before introducing either topic, however, it is necessary to set the stage by identifying the field upon which change occurs. What do projects for change seek to transform? In other words, what is the *object* of change? In my mind, the answer to this question lies with the social reality in which people are immersed and live. This reality encompasses an intricate pattern of *social relations* --that is, the ways in which any one individual and/or group relates with other individuals or groups. Such relations exist between, among, and within, say, capital-owners, workers, consumers, ethnic groups, citizens, political institutions, corporations,

environmental organisations, non-citizens like refugees and immigrants, and so on. Accordingly, I take social relations as an umbrella term that includes, but is not limited to: what is usually regarded as the political sphere (that is, relations with or among state institutions); economic relations between producers and consumers; and cultural relations between groups with different languages, customs, symbols, and ways of life.

Struggles for change are struggles that target social relations in order to transform the way in which different agents interact with each other. In other words, such struggles aim to either *entrench* or *combat* the marginalisation, oppression, discrimination, domination, bullying, or exploitation of a number of actors *by* others. Thus, for example, different environment groups struggle against their own silencing by corporations and political institutions, while white supremacists attempts to increase the dominance of white people over people of colour. Similarly, a variety of civic groups may seek to fight the marginalisation of homeless people by their polity and communities, while some capital-owners may seek to maximise profits by reducing workers' wages and cutting corners on safety. The point that I want to draw attention to here is that at the heart of these struggles is the attempt to mould interactions with or between different actors.

As the aforementioned examples show, different struggles have different aims. But are all these aims equally worthwhile? If not, which one is better than others? And how do we determine which aim is worthwhile? As I argue in Chapter 1, the dominant way to answer these questions has been through the formulation of theories of justice. The specificity of these theories is that they proceed under the presumption that there are such things as

"universal, necessary, and obligatory" principles of justice, which both justify and are held in place by equally *definitive* social arrangements (Foucault 2003a: 53). I argue against providing such a theory, advocating instead a critical-experimental attitude --a way of living that centres on both the critical scrutiny of existing modes of action and thought, and the experimentation with the possibility of "acting and thinking differently" (Tully 2008: 76).

If we adopt this way of life as an end-goal, then is there not the danger of sliding into the relativistic position that everything is permitted? Recognising that this danger is real, Chapter I seeks to salvage the critical-experimental attitude from the charge of relativism. It does so by identifying non-domination as a provisional principle that gives this attitude its content and its direction. Broadly speaking, I take non-domination to mean a way of organising social relations, such that parties to these relations are able to influence one another in a relatively reciprocal fashion and in a spirit of collaboration. As I will argue in Chapter 1, the normative thrust of this arrangement lies with the fact that it minimises the occurrence of modes of interaction that parties to a social relation deem to be injurious or abusive. The reason for this is that non-domination provides social agents with the opportunity to have a say and a hand over the way in which they are managed by others. This is in sharp contrast to domination, which generates suffering by exposing the party that is being dominated to abuses, impositions, and bullying.

Having singled out non-domination as a *critical* idea that can productively inform the direction of a wide range of struggles, I then move onto exploring what pathways are best suited to bring about this end-goal.

Completing this task, however, requires that we first carry out of survey of methods for change. What techniques are available to people in their attempt to transform the social reality in which they live? As I argue in Chapter 2, reform and revolution have been the poles around which answers to this question have traditionally revolved. The former provides for people to organise in parties and to use the mechanisms of electoral democracy in order to legislate changes through the state. Revolution, by contrast, calls for a vanguard party to forcibly seize state power and use it to carry out far-reaching transformations in the social realm.

However different, both methods *share* two basic presuppositions. First is the assumption that power (broadly understood as the ability to carry out change) is a thing or a substance that one can hold, seize, or lose to others. The second presupposition is that power is concentrated in the state or, more precisely, in the hands of the sovereign. On this view, then, social change comes by way of the political sphere --that is, by way of the state. Taken together, these two presuppositions constitute a perspective of power that I call 'reified-sovereignist'.

As I will argue in Chapter 2, this perspective effectively serves as the *horizon* against which the debate on reform or revolution gains its intelligibility. In other words, the debate on the relative merits of reform vs. revolution presupposes the reified-sovereignist view of power. As I will further argue, this view has now become almost self-evident and commonsensical. To corroborate this argument, I will attempt to show that this perspective of power has not only structured what is perhaps the leading

tradition in western political through (that is, liberalism), but has also influenced liberalism's greatest nemesis: Karl Marx.

Although the focus of Chapter 2 is on theoretical traditions rather than actual struggles, this does not mean that the argument that I lay out is inattentive to real events. On the contrary: I analyse both the liberal tradition and Karl Marx's thought *precisely* because they have been both the discursive reflections of, and the justifications for, the major struggles in the past three centuries. Thus, for example, Marxist thought both drew inspiration from and inspired the revolutions of 1848 throughout Europe, the Russia revolution of 1917, and the Cuban one in 1959 (among others.) Similarly, liberal theory has both provided the impetus for, and developed out of, revolutionary struggles against authoritarian regimes like the French and American Revolutions, in addition to electoral contests among a wide variety of parties in liberal democracies.

The upshot of the above is that, while actual struggles are clearly distinct from ways of thinking about change, there is no exteriority between them. Any such way of thinking both justifies and informs specific struggles on the ground. Conversely, such struggles are instantiations of, or at least provide the material for the formulation of, specific ways of thinking about change. By the same logic, the reified-sovereignist view of power finds its material anchor in reform and/or revolution, which in turn find their discursive support in the reified-sovereignist view of power.

And yet --as I will argue in Chapter 3,-- neither is the reified-sovereignist theory of power the only way to understand power, nor (by transition) are reform and revolution the only methods for change. For, as

Nietzsche (1989: 119; italics in the original) argued, "there is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'; and... the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing...be." I take Nietzsche to be saying here that there always exist different viewpoints from which to view any one issue, such as power. Crucially, each of these perspectives can never give us an all-encompassing view of a given issue. The reason for this is that viewing an issue from a specific angle foregrounds some aspects while leaving other ones in the dark.

If it always possible to look at a given issue from another point of view, then the questions arises as to the *difference* that it makes to view this issue in *this* way instead of *that* way (Tully 2002: 534, 545). That is to say, what is the value of one perspective in comparison to another perspective? Which perspective is better at guiding us in ways that matter to us? These questions call for a comparative evaluation of different perspectives; an evaluation that the reified-sovereignist theory of power has by and large managed to escape. This is unsurprising, for the aura of self-evidence that has come to shroud this theory has effectively rendered it impervious to critical scrutiny. Most theorists and practitioners have become so captivated by the reified-sovereignist theory of power that they have come to see this theory as the *only* way of understanding power rather than *one* way among others. In other words, they have become *captive* of this perspective, such that they are able neither to see its partiality nor, by transition, to consider other perspectives (Owen 2002: 218).

By foreclosing alternative understandings of power, this state of captivity has effectively barred investigations into methods for change outside of reform and revolution. And yet, as the reified-sovereignist theory of power has made it possible to elaborate reform and revolution as possible answers to the question of how to effect change, similarly we can expect a competing understanding of power to yield different methods for change. Consequently, in Chapter 3 I explore the *relational* view of power as an alternative to the reified-sovereignist perspective, in order to then investigate the methods for change that this competing view yields in Chapter 4. This investigation will enable us to develop a more comprehensive survey than we now have, by broadening the range of methods for change *beyond* the debate on reform or revolution.

As I argue in Chapter 3, the basic tenet of the relational view of power is that power is a relation between any parties that seek to influence one another (say, between corporations and consumers, employers and workers, workers and workers, corporations and corporations, different levels of government and citizens, and so on.) In this sense, power relations overlap with, and are indistinguishable from, social relations. As I further contend, power is not something that is divided between those who hold it exclusively and those who do not have it; rather, parties to a power relation are in a position to both exercise power over others and to submit to power --i.e. to lead others' conduct and to be led by others (Foucault 2003a: 139). However, this does not exclude asymmetries in the way in which parties influence each other's conduct. In the case of states of domination, for example, the balance

of power is tilted in such a way that the dominant are able to control their counterpart's conduct with little reciprocation and relative certainty.

I will further argue in Chapter 3 that, while power relations are distinct from each other, they always interact in complex ways. For example, they diverge, thereby limiting each other, as when psychiatric doctors contend with law enforcement in order to claim certain criminals as patients in need of medical help. Conversely, power relations converge, so as to find support in one another as if they were part of a chain. An example of this is environmental struggles that link up with anti-racism, economic struggles, etc., so as to create a common front. Furthermore, power relations intersect or even overlap, as any one person takes part in different power relations at any one point in time --one is a worker and, at the same time, a consumer, a woman, a member of an ethnic group, etc. Finally, power relations cluster together, as in the case of institutions. In these latter, relations between individuals congeal and are regulated in such a way that such individuals work together to achieve a set of collective goals, like ensuring public security in the case of the police. Of course, the way in which different power relations are arranged and interact with each other is always-already context-bound. As a result, the precise dynamics of power at a specific time and space can only be ascertained by means of an *empirical* investigation.

Against this background, Chapter 3 will argue that the state is not a monolithic instrument that one can take over and wield differently, as the reified-sovereignist paradigm of power has it. Rather, the state integrates a number of institutions, each of which in turns integrates a number of relations. In keeping with my previous observation on the context-bound nature of

power dynamics, I will draw upon Foucault's work to illustrate that the actual role of the state has changed throughout history. According to Foucault, in the Middle Ages the relation between the sovereign and its subjects came to assert itself over all other relations, to the point of becoming the model of representation for such relations. And yet, sovereign power was relatively disinterested in all other relations --or better, it was interested to the extent that they helped preserve sovereign power itself. In late-modern societies, by contrast, the proliferation of forms of power like discipline and biopolitics across several relations and institutions, such as in hospitals and schools, has challenged the status of the state as the locus of power. At the same time, the state has become the global overseer and regulator of the power relations with a view to managing how long and well people live.

It is worth lingering on the deep implications that the different understanding of power that I sketch in Chapter 3 has for the way in which we understand *politics* in modern societies. If it is true that politics is about power, then viewing power as a set of relations that pervade society means that politics is not *simply* about political parties, the division of powers, and the functions of the state, as the reified-sovereignist view of power has it. While the modern state is an important node of social relations, it does not *exhaust* the operations of power. On this view, then, politics is certainly about the state, but it is also about what liberal theory has relegated to the private sphere: class relations, gender relations, race relations, educational and medical relations, and so on.

Chapter 4 proceeds to delineate the four methods for change that one can derive from the relational view of power. First is infrapolitics, which

consists in engaging in low-profile infractions with a view to probing the limits of the possible in a power relation. Secondly, change agents can challenge the dominant by discursively critiquing their ways of exercising power and by asking that these ways be modified. Thirdly, when a relation is non-negotiable, change agents can turn to direct confrontation with the dominant "in acts of liberation and self-determination" (Tully 2011: 146). Or, fourthly, they can resort to non-participation, whereby they refuse to comply with the dominant and withdraw their labour or services.

To be clear, I do not claim to be the first one to have discovered these methods. In fact, not only have these methods have been around a long time, but there are also examples of people using them (as I will show in Chapter 4). In spite of this, such methods have largely remained at the margin of political struggles and discourse, in the sense that they have not reached the popularity that either reform or revolution have. Consequently, the point of Chapter 3 is to *retrieve* the four aforementioned methods, so as to move them from the margin of political struggles to the centre.

It must also be noted that the attempt to think change beyond the debate on reform or revolution neither stems from nor implies *a priori* rejection of reform and revolution. Rather, the main reason for thinking change differently is that, as noted, fixating on the debate of reform versus revolution precludes turning our attention onto other practices that *may* be turn out to be better suited than reform or revolution in a given situation. While I tackle the question of how best to achieve change in Chapter 5, Chapter 4 partly sets the stage for answering this question. It does so by discussing some of the shortcomings and advantages that accompany infrapolitics, discursive

challenges, reform, and revolution. (I discuss the limits and advantages of confrontation and non-participation in the last section of Chapter 5.)

Having offered a more comprehensive, yet perhaps still incomplete, survey of methods for change, in Chapter 5 I finally tackle the question of how best to achieve this end-goal. To this end, I first probe the relation between means and ends. I begin by critiquing what is perhaps the dominant way of understanding this relation --one that we have inherited from the major traditions of social and political thought, such as the classical Marxist one. On this view, the process does not matter, as long one reaches one's desired end-goal: that of overcoming one's adversaries. If one has to kill in order to break a state of domination, then be it. Thus, for example, Marx contended that a stateless, harmonious, and peaceful communist society would be born out of a violent takeover of the state apparatus on the part of the proletariat (see Marx and Engels 2002a: 244).

What this view fails to grasp --I will argue-- is that the process *does* matter. The reason for this is that the iteration of a certain practice as a way to obtain a specific end makes that practice *habitual*. Thus, resorting to violence as a means towards a relation of non-domination creates a mode of being that centres on, and is disposed towards, the use of violence whenever a problem arises. Another way to put this is to say that means are in fact ends in their embryonic forms, in the same way as seeds are incipient forms of their corresponding trees. As Gandhi (1997: 81) put it, "there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the tree and the seed."

As incipient forms of the end goal, means *prefigure* their corresponding ends in the here-now. That is to say that the desired end-goal is not something that will happen in the future, *after* the completion of a number of sequential steps. Rather, the end-goal is a thing of the *present* --something that the means instantiate here and now, if imperfectly. The practical and political implications of this theoretical insight are clear: namely, that the means must be of the same nature as the end that they seek to bring about, lest they corrupt this end-goal in the very process of achieving it.

At this point --as I will show in Chapter 5-- we will be in a position to apply the aforementioned insights to the argument on the finality of change developed in Chapter 1. The qualitative compatibility that must exist between the means and the end-goal they seek to achieve means that the best (or even only) way to achieve non-domination is through a process infused by non-domination itself. As I will explicate, this process involves two mutually sustaining courses of action . First is the cultivation of an ethics of non-domination on the part of change agents. This ethics revolves around the personal virtues of self-rule, self-control, responsiveness, responsibility, and openness. The second process encompasses the deployment of methods for change, with a view to getting one's counterpart to agree to a more symmetrical relation. I will argue that, out of the six methods that I will have surveyed in Chapter 4, confrontation and revolution prove to be incongruous with an ethics of non-domination. The reason for this is that they create an aggressive mode of being that, being disposed towards violence, is bound to suppress the points of resistance that it encounters. But in doing so, one

effectively exercises power over others in an *authoritarian* fashion, thereby foreclosing the possibility for non-domination in one's relations with others.

Accompanying these two processes is, of course, the task of creating links of solidarity *within* a group of subordinates, such that they come to converge on a shared political project of change. While *intra*-solidarity-building is paramount to modifying a given power relation, linking with peoples and groups *outside* of one's own immediate circle is necessary if one wants to bring about *systemic* changes. The overarching purpose of this inter-solidarity is to create a "general line that traverses" individual power relations "and links them together," as if they were part of the same chain (Foucault 1990: 94). In other words, solidarity helps to align these power relations in the same direction --that is, towards the goal of non-domination.

To be sure, this process of large-scale alignment goes beyond solidarity-building among different subjectivities and groups. What this process requires --I will argue at the end of Chapter 5-- is also the *transposition* of both an ethics of non-domination and its appropriate methods for change onto one's entire life. In other words, one has to align her different subjectivities (as a worker, as a woman, a parent, a partner, etc.) such that they converge on the field of non-domination --one should seek to enact and live non-domination in *all* the relations in which she takes part. This kind of transposition interacts with the aforementioned inter-solidarity to create a space *within* the existing system that prefigures an alternative to this system in the here and now.

By way of concluding, I would like to draw attention to a peculiar paradox that people interested in change are bound to face. This paradox is the

result of the combinations of two centrifugal factors. First is the fact that, as Foucault (2003b: 361) pointed out, "the forces operating in history do not obey destiny or regulative mechanisms." For, there is neither a divinely set course that people have to follow, nor a final destination to which societies will inevitably arrive. The lack of a master-plan in history endows human being with the responsibility for how the world in which they live is and will be. In Wendy Brown's (1995: 24) words, the contingency of the world "bequeath[s] us the task to make something not only of ourselves but also of the world whose making now lies in no hands but our own." Without transcendental guarantees like an inevitable historical trajectory, it is for human beings to transform the societies in which they find themselves.

Counterbalancing the extraordinary responsibility that we have towards ourselves and the world, however, is the complexity and unpredictability of the world itself. In fact, whether a project for change is successful or not depends not only on whether change agents want to do and can do, but also on the chance encounter of factors over which such agents have no control. At times, for example, relatively minor events tap onto an existing reservoir of dissatisfaction with the *status quo* and trigger major transformative processes. An example of this is the way in which the self-immolation by a street vendor in Tunisia sparked a wave of dissent in Tunisia, that soon spread to the Middle East and beyond. Other times, by contrast, well-meaning attempts not only fail, but even backfire --one is reminded here of Gorbachev's desperate attempt to prevent the collapse of the USSR through the promulgation of policies that ultimately catalysed its collapse.

However, the fact that the complexity of the world makes it impossible to predict with absolute certainty needs not lead us to a fatalist attitude. Torn between extraordinary responsibility and the uncertainty that shrouds their own actions, change agents must be like "sailors trying to navigate stormy seas" (Westley *et al*. 2007: 20). While sailors cannot control such seas, they can train themselves in such a way to become "adept at reading the weather, understanding the patterns, reacting to changes and adjusting [their] sails" (Westley *et al*. 2007: 20). Similarly, while the world is far too complex for us to predict with certainty, we must develop our skill to *navigate* this complexity by detecting trends and understanding patterns. In other words, we need to ascertain what kinds of things "are more *likely* to result in [positive] transformation than others" (Westley *et al*. 2007: 19). This is precisely what my investigation sets out to do, through a study both of actual struggles and of theoretical works in political and social thought.

I

Between Justice and Nomadism: The Finality Conundrum

> There is nothing else that human beings find more
> difficult to endure than an unbendable justice.
> Friedrich Dürrenmatt[1]

While the socio-political landscape in which we live is far too complex to anticipate and control with precision, its making ultimately lies in human beings' own hands (Brown 1995: 24). If this were not true, then people would be nothing more than inert spectators before this landscape. But the history of past struggles against discrimination, exploitation, and oppression testifies to the fact that people *can* transform a state of affairs that they deem problematic through a concerted effort. Looming over any such effort are two main questions. First, what is to replace the state of affairs that we are trying to transform? Second, how can we best achieve our desired end-goal? Attempting to enact change without having given thought to either the finality of change or the pathway to change is akin to writing a book without knowing its main theses or the chapter breakdown.

The aim of this chapter is to *begin* staking out the main lines of a framework that can guide both our thinking about change and our going about it, by tackling the first of the two aforementioned questions. More explicitly, I want investigate what end-goal (if any) can productively inform the attempt to transform a given state of affairs. To this end, this chapter is divided in three sections. In the first part, I argue against providing a theory of justice that proceeds under the presumption that there can be such things as "universal,

[1] Friedrich Dürrenmatt. 2002. *La Morte della Pizia* [*The Dying of the Pythia*]. Translated from German into Italian by Renata Colorni. Milan: Adelphi, p. 53 (my own translation).

necessary, and obligatory" principles of justice that both hold in place and are held in place by equally definitive arrangements (Foucault 2003a: 53). Secondly, I lay out an alternative in the form of an attitude geared towards both the critical scrutiny of existing modes of action and thought, and the experimentation with the possibility of "acting and thinking differently" (Tully 2008: 76). Thirdly, I salvage this critical-experimental attitude from the charge of relativism (or, as I call it, pure nomadism) by singling out non-domination as the principle that gives this attitude its content as well as its direction. As I will argue, this principle is a wager that gains its thrust from the experiential knowledge of people who are subject to domination, that domination itself is the generative structure of their own suffering.

I.1. Theories of Justice and their Limits

The question of what is to replace the *status quo* necessarily asks for an answer that is *normative,* in the sense of being concerned with that which is desirable. From Plato to Rawls, passing through such theorists as St. Augustine and Proudhon, this answer has traditionally taken the form of a comprehensive theory that details the characteristics of the ideal or just society (Tully 2002: 551). Underpinning this type of answer are two inter-linked assumptions: first, that there are definitive principles that ought to structure society; and second, that such principles both inform and are grounded in equally definitive arrangements or practices, which serve as guarantees and instantiations of justice.

An illustration of this kind of approach is Rawls's *Theory of Justice* (1971). In it, Rawls argued that it is possible to arrive at the organising

principles of a just society by abstracting away from the actual circumstances in which one finds oneself. More explicitly, Rawls's argument was that one can generate universal principles by means of a thought experiment, whereby one imagines oneself to be behind a 'veil of ignorance', with no knowledge of her socio-economic standing, racial traits, culture, etc. These principles then serve as regulative ideals that govern, and are actualised in, the establishment of basic liberties and the distribution of socio-economic advantages in the context of a democratic, representative, and constitutional state.

Crucially, the principles (and their corresponding practices) that theories of justice such a Rawls's give rise to are *transcendental limits*. These latter are to be understood in their Kantian declension, as norms and practices that purport to be "universal, necessary, [and] obligatory" (Foucault 2003a: 53). First, these principles are *limits* to the extent that they are the ultimate tenets on which ideas of justice build and beyond which one cannot go. Second, they are *universal* because they apply everywhere, to everyone, and at all times. Third, these limits are *necessary*, insofar as the realisation of justice requires that these principles and practices be in place. On this view, then, these limits are the condition of possibility of justice but, as limits, are not themselves grounded in more basic principles. Finally, these limits are *obligatory* in that they cannot be otherwise: either a just society structures itself in light of principles and practices that are always-already just (and therefore fixed), or this society is not just. To put it more prosaically, transcendental limits leave no room for tweaking.

Contra theories of justice, the position that I advance is sceptical of the ontological belief that there are such things as transcendental principles and,

by transitions, that these principles inform definitively just practices. At the root of this skepticism is *not* the absolute certainty that such principles do not exist, for this certainty would be a transcendental principle itself. Rather, this scepticism finds its basis in a precautionary posture. "What if this belief" on the existence of transcendental principles --asked Nietzsche (1989: 152)-- " is becoming more and more unbelievable, if nothing turns out to be [transcendental] any longer unless it be error, blindness, lies?" That is to say, what if what we hold to be necessary, obligatory, and universal (whether this be Justice, or God, etc.) turns out to be ephemeral?

Nietzsche's question provides a refreshing, if somewhat troubling, insight into the limits of theories of justice. Namely, that such theories *necessarily* shield principles that are purported to be transcendental from critical scrutiny, such that one cannot even call them into question. The reason for this is that to posit a principle as universal, necessary, and obligatory automatically inscribes the value of this principle as *factual* (Nietzsche 1989: 20, 152). In other words, it is the very nature of a transcendental that it is beyond all questions, for a transcendental principle is the most fundamental rule on the basis of which justice becomes possible. As the ultimate ground on which justice builds, a transcendental principle is a *given* to be made aware of, not an issue to be questioned. (The very act of questioning implies that the value of a principle is not a given but a problem.)

The impossibility of questioning a transcendental principle from within the theories of justice that have generated it is problematic both epistemologically and politically. From the epistemological point of view, the insulation of these principles from critique makes it impossible to ascertain

whether or not these principles are in fact ‘errors’ made by otherwise well-intentioned people; ‘lies’ created by less well-meaning people; or simply limited principles whose value is not as definitive as it is purported to be. The political concern, on the other hand, is that, in the absence of the constant testing of these principles, their corresponding practices "become closed structures of domination under settled forms of justice" (Tully 2002: 552). Testimony to this concern are the numerous communist, socialist, fascist, and anarchist experiments that, in the attempt to establish the ideal or just society, ended up in failure at best, and in mass murders at worst.

In fact, one need not go beyond Rawls's very own liberal tradition to find expression of the danger of settling for definitive practices. In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville (2004) drew attention to a new form of despotism that takes root in, indeed is made possible by, democratic, representative, and constitutional societies --precisely the kind of arrangement that Rawls's theory of justice centres on. This despotism, argued de Tocqueville (2004: 861), does not take the form of dictatorship; rather, it is a benign, elected, "tutelary power" that rules over "men all equal and alike, incessantly endeavouring to procure the petty and paltry pleasures with which they glut their lives." It is akin to the authority of a parent, except that "it seeks to keep [the people] in perpetual childhood" (de Tocqueville 2004: 861).

As democratic, constitutional states introduce the danger of a new form of despotism, similarly the practices that instantiate supposedly transcendental principles can generate unforeseen dangers. Problematically, the portrayal of these principles (and, therefore, of their corresponding practices) as definitive insulates them from being questioned, scrutinised, modified, or replaced. As a

result, theories of justice are bound to lead to the following aporia. On the one hand, transcendental principles and the practices that these principles inform must be the way they are, for otherwise they would not be transcendental: "this is how it *must* be!" (Baker in Owen 2002: 221). The cognition of the dangers and imperfections that these practices create over time, on the other hand, puts in question their transcendental status: "yet, this *cannot* be thus!" (Baker in Owen 2002: 221). The conflict between these two positions cannot but lead to a state of paralysis --unless, of course, one is able to subtract himself from this conflict by abandoning the justice-oriented approach that generated this conflict in the first place.

Before moving onto an alternative approach, I want to briefly draw attention to yet another danger that has historically accompanied theories of justice --that of imperialism (Tully 2011: 151). For the past three hundred years, the claim that a set of principles and practices is universal has relentlessly served as a justification to coercively impose one's own way of life over other peoples. In the XIX and XX centuries, this justification took the form of a *mission civilisatrice*, by means of which colonial powers brought "the benefits of [their own allegedly universal] culture, religion and language to the unenlightened races of the earth" (Young 2001: 30). In the last decades, military interventions have increasingly found their justification in the purportedly universal concept and practice of electoral democracy and economic liberty, as in the case of the 2003 American invasion of Iraq.

To be clear, it is not my contention that universalism *necessarily* leads to imperialism. Rather, my point is that the historical deployment of universalism as a justification for imperialism makes it *prudent* to look for an

approach that is not oriented towards justice. This prudence turns into a more substantial necessity if we consider the aforementioned critique that theories of justice necessarily shield purportedly transcendental principles from critical scrutiny. As I have argued, this creates two main problems: namely, the epistemological danger of mistaking historically situated principles and practices for universal ones; and the political danger of becoming imprisoned into "closed structures of domination".

I.2. Towards a Critical-Experimental *Ēthos*

It follows from the above that theories of justice are *not* satisfactory answers to the question of what is to replace the *status quo*. Drawing upon both Foucault (2003) and Tully (2002), the approach that I advance does not seek to establish limits that, being transcendental, ought not to be crossed over. Rather, its aim is precisely the opposite: namely, that of exposing the historical situatedness of existing modes of thought and action, so as to make it possible to *experiment* with alternative modes of living (Foucault 2003a: 53). Accordingly, this approach is not so much a theory, in the sense of an investigation into primary principles, as a way of life that one embarks upon consciously --what the Greeks called an *ēthos* or ethics (Foucault 2003a: 48, 53; Tully 2002: 534). In our case, this way of life centres on the continuous critical scrutiny and possible overcoming of existing modes of thought and action.

The *ēthos* that I am advancing here is both historical-critical and practical-experimental (Foucault 2003a: 54). On the one hand, its *historical-critical* orientation is dictated by the aim to expose a specific way of acting

and thinking as a contingent limit that *can* be crossed over. This aim is accomplished through an historical investigation into: (a) how a specific practice originated; (b) how it changed since its emergence; and finally, (c) how it came to displace alternative practices, thereby becoming dominant (Nietzsche 1989: 20). The first two steps disclose the historical condition of possibility for any one practice under scrutiny. The third step, by contrast, unmasks this practice as one *form* of conduct among many others, through a work of retrieval of the competing practices that this dominant practice has relegated to the margins (Tully 2002: 548). The overall effect of this historical investigation is that of *dispelling* the aura of universality and naturalness that shrouds the modes of action and thought that we take for granted.

Frantz Fanon's insights into the psychological predicament that most colonised people have to face is an apt illustration of the argument above. In both *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (2004), Fanon argued that one of the most effective ways in which the colonisers have ruled their counterparts is by projecting onto the colonised a demeaning image of who they are. This image transpires not only through colonial propaganda and legislation, but also through everyday forms of interaction between the colonisers and the indigenous population: encounters on the street; labour practices; segregated services, and so on. For the colonised, the consequence of having been exposed to contempt is the internalisation of the demeaning image associated to being indigenous, and the corresponding mimetic desire to be like the colonisers (Fanon 1967: 83-108).

Against this background, the value of an historical investigation in the colonial case resides in its ability to disclose the historical situatedness of the

colonised people's own inferiority complex. More explicitly, this investigation can help expose the inferiority complex that affects the colonised as contingent instead of necessary, as the product of specific political and social arrangements instead of idiosyncratic problems. In this way, the colonised can gain some critical distance from their limited as well as limiting sense of who they are, thereby paving the way for a project of change.

Indeed, the disclosure of the contingent nature of specific practices makes it possible to "both to grasp the points where change is possible and desirable, and to determine the precise form this change should take" (Foucault 2003a: 54). In this respect, the attitude or way of life that I advance here is *practical*, insofar as it is geared towards intervening in contemporary arrangements by experimenting with new modes of acting and thinking. Thus, to continue with the example above, indigenous peoples who have grasped the contingency as well as the political genesis of their own inferiority complex can take steps to rid themselves of it by, for instance, working to change the political configuration that produced this complex in the first place.

Crucially, both the task of turning our critical scrutiny onto existing modes of conduct and that of experimenting with new ones are never-ending. If these tasks were complete and our job done, then we would be unable to assess the value of our modes of conduct in light of changing circumstances. This is problematic, for, as we have seen, practices that we take up in a certain context may generate unforeseen dangers or turn out to be unsuitable under new circumstances. It is only through an attitude of continuous critical scrutiny that we can re- evaluate our modes of conduct and, if necessary, modify or replace them. As Tully (2008: 131) has noted, then, there is no

resting or final victory, for "we will always find that we have to begin again."

In light of the above, the difference between the *ēthos* that I advance and theories of justice lies not only in what they *are* (a way of life in the case of the former, an investigation into primary principles for the latter), but also in what they *do*. On the one hand, theories of justice set boundaries in the form of universal, necessary, and obligatory principles and practices that ought not be crossed over. A critical-experimental attitude, on the other hand, seeks to show the contingency of all existing boundaries in order to then experiment with the possibility of "acting and thinking differently" (Tully 2008: 76; Foucault 2003a: 56). While theories of justice direct us towards that which is fixed by virtue of it being universal, necessary, and obligatory, the *ēthos* I propose makes space for the irruption of alterity in that which is fixed. Consequently, this *ēthos* "is oriented to freedom before justice" (Tully 2002: 551) --taking freedom here to mean precisely the possibility of "acting and thinking differently" (Tully 2008: 76).

By doing away with transcendental principles, this attitude of critical scrutiny and experimentation avoids the two pitfalls of theories of justice: namely, (a) mistaking historically situated practices for transcendental ones; and (b) allowing allegedly just socio-political arrangements to become "become closed structures of domination" (Tully 2002: 552) However, as Lewis Call (2002: 52) has observed, avoiding these pitfalls can lead one towards another, equally dangerous trap. "If all essence, all fixed being, all laws... are to be swept away in the torrent of becoming," Call (2002: 52) asked, "can we be sure that this torrent will not carry us into some dark quagmire?" Is it possible to avoid, for example, the danger of experimenting

with practices that are oppressive? Can we keep away from sexism or racism, and more generally from domination, discrimination, and exploitation? If so, on what grounds?

The danger to be avoided at all costs here is that of pure nomadism (Day 2005: 186). By this I mean a philosophico-practical orientation that, being skeptical of transcendental principles, thrives on the constant dissolution and replacement of existing mode of being with *ever-different* modes (Day 2005: 165, 173). Much like a tribe that constantly moves from place to place, philosophical nomadism is the continuous wandering from one set of principles and practices to another one. But philosophical nomadism also plays off of the western imaginary on nomadic tribes, whereby not only such tribes have no fixed abode, but they also destroy anything that is permanent or sedentary. As Day (2005: 173) put it, "in the archetypical nightmare of European civilisation, the nomadic [tribe] gallops in off the steppes, sweeping away everything that matters: fields, walls, houses, castles." On this view, then, a nomadic attitude shutters the universal, necessary, and obligatory nature of all modes of action and thoughts, both as a condition for and as a result of experimenting with ever-new ways of conduct.

Perhaps the best encapsulation of pure nomadism is to be found in the motto of the order of the Assassins, an Islamic sect founded in the XI century: "nothing is true, everything is permitted" (cited in Nietzsche 1989: 150). The logic at work here is clear: the fact that there are no transcendental principles means that there is no definite way of adjudicating between certain practices and others, such that one is free to experiment with everything: with equality, but also with oppression; with openness to alterity, but also with violence;

with freedom, but also with exploitation. Clarity, however, is no substitute for cogency. In my mind, the flaw that shatters this logic takes the form of a *non sequitur*: namely, that it does *not* follow from the lack of transcendental guarantees that there are no norms at all for adjudicating between competing practices. Such norms do exist --they are not transcendental, but are rather *internal* to the 'perspectives' which competing practices both hold in place and instantiate, as I explicate below.

As Owen (2002: 217) has observed, a perspective is a way of thinking about an issue that enables people to make sense of that issue. Much like a spotlight, a perspective functions by bringing certain aspects of an issue to the foreground, while leaving other aspects in the dark. In other words, a perspective defines a search space --that is, a set of issues for consideration (Owen 2002: 217). For example, taking up the question of what ought to replace the *status quo* from the standpoint of justice will lead us to look for transcendental principles. By contrast, approaching this question from the perspective of freedom will direct us towards experimental ways of life. Crucially, a perspective only indicates where to look for an answer, as it falls short of specifying which answer is desirable, right, or true (Owen 2002: 217). Thus, to continue with the example above, a justice-oriented perspective directs us to investigate the set of transcendental principles, but it does not offer any clues as to how to select one specific principle from amongst the others.

Now, perspectives find their anchors on shared forms of life --that is, on shared practices or ways of going on and acting in the world. As Wittgenstein (in Tully 2002: 547; italics in the original) put it, "it is our *acting*

which lies at the bottom of the [perspective]." On this view, then, to approach something is always-already to approach it from *within* a perspective that is anchored in historically situated and contingent practices. As there are always multiple practices in existence at any specific point in time, there always exist several ways of looking at a certain issue. This does not mean that each of these perspectives will be equally well known, for some practices may be predominant over others and, therefore, more widespread than others. What it does mean is that each perspective is necessarily partial, to the extent that it foregrounds specific aspects than other perspectives fail to disclose.

Finally, the fact that all perspectives are partial and that all criteria are internal to specific perspectives does lead to the conclusion that each perspective is as good as the other. Rather, adjudicating between two perspectives requires an activity of "reciprocal elucidation" (Foucault in Tully 2008: 72), whereby one uses the standards internal to one perspective to throw light on the limits of another perspective and vice-versa. According to Tully (2002: 550), this activity requires the exchange of reasons "over the comparative value of [the] range of possible practices" that each perspective brings one's attention to --what the relative advantages and disadvantages of these practices are with respect to each other. This comparative evaluation allows one not only to establish which perspective is better, but also to rework or modify this perspective in light of the objections advanced from the standpoint of its competing perspectives (Tully 2008: 72). However, the results of any adjudication between different perspectives will always be tentative and open to challenge, as it is always possible to advance new arguments for or against this or that perspective.

The very same comparative evaluation that I have done so far between a freedom- oriented perspective and a justice-oriented one can serve as an illustration of my argument. The former perspective has alerted us to three main limits of the latter perspective. Firstly, transcendentally legitimated practices are necessarily insulated from critique, such that one is unable to test their validity. Secondly, and consequently, such practices turn into closed forms of domination once they go unquestioned. Finally, purportedly universal concepts and practices have historically been the beacon of imperialism. These three critiques have then prompted us to tentatively proceed under the principle of freedom before justice. This principle was in turn subject to testing in light of a critique advanced from the standpoint of justice: namely, that anything goes if we do away with transcendental principles. As I hope I have shown, this critique was fruitful, for it has helped us to see the "dark quagmires" inherent in a purely nomadic attitude whereby everything is permitted. However, as I have argued, the fact that there are no transcendental principles does not mean that it is impossible to adjudicate between competing perspectives and practices. Rather, adjudication place through an activity of reciprocal elucidation, on the basis of reasons that are internal to the perspectives that they purport to transcend. Consequently, certain principles and practices *can* be shown to be better than other ones (exit nomadism), provided that any conclusion arrived at be open to challenge. The overall and equally tentative conclusion of my comparative evaluation between justice and freedom is that the principle of freedom before justice is sound.

I.3. Critical-Experimental *Ēthos* Reconsidered: Non-Domination as an Informed Wager

The rejection of a purely nomadic attitude calls for the identification of a normative principle that can give a direction to the critical experimental *ēthos* that I am advancing. In other words, what should one's critical and experimental efforts aim for? We already have a partial answer to this question in the principle of freedom itself --defined as the practice of "acting and thinking differently" (Tully 2008: 76). However, this principle needs to be further refined if it is to withstand the charge of pure nomadism. As seen above, this charge results from the fact that experimenting with ever-new modes of acting and being can lead one into "some dark quagmire."

I want to begin this work of refinement by taking up Wittgenstein's cue that at the bottom of a perspective is way of acting in the world. Accordingly, I will start by investigating the actual practices that both inform and instantiate the principle of freedom. As I will show, this investigation will hold the key to pinning down the principle that ought to inform the direction of experimentation.

As Tully (2011: 149) has noted, what holds the principle of freedom in place is nothing more (or less) than practices of resistance. These practices *are* instantiations of freedom, for they are forms of "acting and thinking differently" (Tully 2008: 76) through which one challenges the way in which one is conducted by other people. Specifically, resistance arises as a "reaction to perceived injuries or constraints" to which one is subject in one's practical relations with others (Brown 1995: 7). That is to say, resistance originates as a way of declaring to one's counterparts that they have crossed a certain limit

and that, therefore, they have inflicted an *injury* (Brown 1995: 7).

Before proceeding any further, it may be beneficial to gain some clarity on the meaning and use of 'injury' in this investigation. I take injury to be an action (or lack thereof) that one *experiences* as causing harm and suffering to the self. Accordingly, the definition that I propose lends credence to the subjective experience of the party claiming to be injured. While individuals *may* differ on whether and to what extent an action is injurious, personal perceptions are not random but are anchored on shared ways of life and value systems. Consequently, it is always possible to check a claim of injury against reasonable interpretations by individuals who have been socialised in the same value system but are dispassionate (i.e., are not parties to the dispute).

Now, the fact that there exist several value systems and ways of life does not necessarily preclude their overlap on what counts as an injury. My specific contention here is that a limited number of actions, such coercion, bullying, discriminatory or exploitative treatment, and abuse, carry injurious connotations that are widely established. Firstly, these actions have an injurious aura because they are at odds with the affected party's own claim that he be presumptively approached as an equal instead of an inferior. One genuinely listens to the idea of an equal and negotiates with him when disagreeing with such ideas; inferiors, on the other hand, are ordered around, as their worth remains unrecognised. This lack of recognition demeans the affected party and causes her to suffer. Secondly, the injurious aura of the aforementioned actions is widely established because the experience itself of abuse, discrimination, etc. is widely shared, if unevenly across society and at different levels of intensity. This is due to the fact that *any* one person can find

herself in a situation or a position where her own ideas fall on deaf ears and orders, intimidations, etc. take the place of dialogic negotiation. This is the case of, say, a woman in a poor family who withstands abuses from her partner, but also of a child from a wealthy family who is bullied at school and patronised by his parents. While the harm involved in these two situations may not be the same, the subjective experience is --I would argue-- fundamentally similar. If this is true, then virtually everybody is acquainted with the painful feeling of being treated as an inferior.

Now that we have a better idea of the concept of ‘injury’, it is possible to parse out the link between injury, resistance, and freedom. Following Brown (1995: 7), I argue that injuries are at the very heart of figurations of freedom. The reason for this is that such figurations find their expression in the resistance that is born out of the perceived hurt that it protests against (Brown 1995: 7). In this sense, freedom is "inevitably reactionary" in its gestational stages (Brown 1995: 7). In itself, the reactionary origin of freedom is not necessarily a negative thing. The problem arises when ideas of freedom are unable to shed such origins, such that figurations of freedom come to exist *exclusively* in negation to immediate injuries. In this case, these figurations are not only reactionary but also *reactive* --they do not provide a constructive program in the form of a vision for a new relation; rather, they limit themselves to saying "no" to the immediate injuries that they oppose (Brown 1997: 73). To paraphrase what Foucault (1990: 85) said in another context, this kind of freedom is basically "anti-energy:" it is incapable of doing or producing anything, except for destroying its immediate enemies.

The predicament in which reactive figurations of freedom find

themselves is that they consume themselves in the very destruction of their nemesis. As a parasite weakens its host but is incapable to survive in its absence, similarly reactive figurations of freedom undermine themselves by undermining the injury against which they protest. Without a positive program that guides one's actions after victory, these figurations can only lead to a state of paralysis (that is, if they ever turn out to be triumphant). In this sense, reactive freedom deflects and annuls itself the very moment in which it emerges triumphant: born out of injury, it self-destructs once this injury is eradicated (Brown 1995: 7).

It should be clear by now that reactive freedom is *not* suitable as a principle for experimentation. It may prove more fruitful, then, to investigate the counterpart to reactive freedom, that is, *self-affirming* freedom. Figurations of freedom are self-affirming to the extent that they advance a constructive program. Whereas reactive freedom stands *against* a perceived injury, self-affirming freedom stands *for* a vision for a new relation. While the former necessarily recoils onto itself as soon as the hurt that it opposes no longer obtains, the latter projects itself beyond a given injury into the positive project of fashioning a new kind of relation. Consequently, these figurations survive the potential overcoming of perceived injuries.

However, one must proceed cautiously here, for there exist deployments of freedom that are self-affirmative at first sight but are in fact reactive. This is the case of constructive programs that find their justification in the will to seek revenge for one's own suffering. Consider workers who dream of becoming the new capitalists; women who want to play the role now occupied by men; colonised who cannot wait to become the new colonisers; or

overworked research assistants who wish to become professors, so that they can have their work done by other research assistants (Brown 1995: 7). What these visions have in common is the fact is that they are steeped in bitterness, anger, and loathing both of oneself and of others --in short, in what Nietzsche called *ressentiment*. This latter grows into "the most poisonous kind of hatred" when it is rooted in the self's own inability to have prevented the suffering to which one has been subject (Nietzsche 1989: 33). "Powerless against what has been done" --wrote Nietzsche (in Brown 1995: 72)-- the injured parties are "angry spectator[s] to what is past." They come to hate themselves for not having been able to withstand the dominant; the thought that they could and should have done things differently eats deep into them. Bubbling with bitterness, these parties seek to anaesthetise the pain resulting from their self-loathing, by attempting to "wreak revenge for [their] inability to go backwards…on all who can suffer" (Nietzsche in Brown 1995: 73).

Unsurprisingly, the vision of freedom that people filled with *ressentiment* advance is one that performs a mirror reversal of domination. In this reversal, the former oppressed become the new oppressors or, as Frantz Fanon (2004) repeated in *The Wretched of the Earth*, "the last will be the first." But as long as there is a first one, there is bound to be a last one, such that domination is not done away with but simply turned upside-down. By avenging one's own suffering by inflicting pain onto other people, this reversal fails to question domination as the "*organisation of the activity through which the suffering is produced*" (Brown 1995: 7; italics in the original). Domination functions as a matrix for suffering because it is a way of organising social relations in which one party is placed under a number of

constraints which they have neither a say nor a hand over. Thus does domination leave this party prone to actions that they would object to and, as such, would find injurious.

It follows from the above that reversing domination does not diminish suffering but simply replaces those who are subject to constraints and, hence, to potential injuries. Furthermore, this reversal is bound to fail in its attempt to anaesthetise one's own suffering by wreaking revenge upon others. To understand why, recall that this reversal finds its *raison d'être* in the will to revenge, which in turn feeds off the pain resulting from one's inability to modify one's past of suffering. This means that pain is at the very heart of any rancorous project of domination, or --which is the same-- that this project is invested in this pain. Consequently, the very actualisation of this project reinstates the pain that is its driving force; every attempt to avenge one's suffering upon others necessarily *reminds* change agents of their powerlessness over their own past of suffering. As Nietzsche (in Brown 1995: 73; italics in the original) nicely put it, "when he then stills the pain of the wound [through revenge,] *he at the same time infects the wound*." Consequently, the poisonous and bitter revenge that stems from *ressentiment* not only fails to put an end to one's suffering, but actually perpetuates it.

The two problems described above justify the normative move to abandon domination as a way to organise social relations, and to espouse non-domination in its stead. As a provisional definition, a relation of non-domination is one in which parties (a) are able to influence each other in a relatively reciprocal fashion in a spirit of collaboration, and (b) have a hand and a say over the way in which they are managed by others. This kind of

relation, then, maximises the space in which each party can drift away from prescribed behaviours without eliciting a repressive response from one's counterpart. While there are bound to be conflicts on what behavioural limits the other should not cross and on whether these limits can shift, non-domination provides for parties to work out their differences through negotiation. This is in stark contrast to a state of domination, wherein not only some actors have no say on the narrow range of conducts that the dominant impose on them, but they are also likely to be severely punished if they attempt to overstep the limits imposed on them.

Once again, caution is in order here, for there exist reactive declensions of non-domination. Non-domination is reactive when it serves as a surrogate for a vision of domination that one is too weak to be able to achieve. Accordingly, reactive non-domination is the product as well as the sign of one's own impotence to attain one's initial vision (Nietzsche 1989: 33). Filled with *ressentiment* for their own impotence, the injured parties attempt to turn non-domination into a weapon against the dominant. They do so by casting non-domination as normatively desirable, "as if the weakness of the weak…were a voluntary achievement, willed, chosen, a *deed*, a *meritorious* act" (Nietzsche 1989: 46; italics in the original). As a substitute for an action that one is too weak to perform, this kind of non- domination becomes deeply invested in the very impotence that produced it. It is saturated with rancour, even more so than the aforementioned case of domination. For, not only are change agents bitter for having being injured yet not being able to have prevented such injuries, but they are also loathe themselves for being too weak to attain their desired vision of domination. As a result, non-domination

becomes a weapon of recrimination, by means of which they seek to assuage their pain while constantly reinstating it.

The way out of this double rancour is to advance a vision of non-domination that does not build on the injuries that one has suffered, but rather on what one desires or wants for the future for its own sake (Brown 1995: 75). This is neither an incitement to forget one's suffering nor a trivialisation of one's injuries. On the contrary, I think that one's experience of suffering can productively set the course of one's desires by serving as a *lesson* for the future. More explicitly, the injured parties' own experiential knowledge of domination as the generative structure of their own suffering justifies the move to *experiment* with something other than domination --and non-domination is an immediate first option here.[2]

Against this horizon, non-domination turns out to be a wager, for change agents do not know and indeed *cannot* know what its long-term effects are: for example, whether it generates unforeseen problems; or what specific arrangements it will take in different contexts. And yet, this wager is not unfounded. While agents may not be sure that non-domination is the definitively right answer, they know that domination is the wrong answer based of their own *experience* of suffering as injured parties in a relation of domination. In other words, the experiential knowledge the that subjugated gain of domination as the matrix of their own suffering serves as a reason to experiment with something *other* than domination.

As a self-affirmative way of organising the way one relates to others, non-domination does *not* function as a regulative principle or a categorical

[2] I tackle the question of how one can avoid falling prey to *ressentmen*t in Chapter V, p. 138ff.

imperative that is valid everywhere, for everyone, and at all times. Rather, non-domination is a *cautionary* principle that one chooses for oneself and offers as a suggestion to everyone else (Bilgrami 2002: 86). In this sense, non-domination is more like an *exemplar* that surfaces in one's practical relations, and that others may or may not take up.[3] Furthermore, the kind of non-domination I am advancing here is a "critical idea" --an idea whose value and limits must always be interrogated and subject to testing, in the spirit of the critical-experimental *ēthos* described above (Foucault in Tully 2008: 129). This means that it is always possible to re-work, modify, and even replace non-domination on the basis of a work of reciprocal elucidation with and against other norms.

Finally, it must be noted that there exists a dialectical relation between non-domination and the critical-experimental *ēthos* I have advanced in this section. On the one hand, as just observed, this *ēthos* applies its critical scrutiny to non-domination and re-works, tweaks, or even replaces this principle after a work of reciprocal elucidation with competing principles. On the other hand, non-domination provides this attitude with content and direction, insofar as it steers this attitude away from the "dark quagmire" (Call 2002: 52) of oppression and exploitation. Thus does non-domination insulate the critical-experimental *ēthos* that I have sketched out in this chapter from the dangers inherent in pure nomadism.

I.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have built upon the survey of methods for

[3] I expand on this point in Chapter V, pp. 140-2.

transforming a social relation that I have provided in the previous chapter, in order to delineate a theoretical framework for grasping change. I have attempted to develop this framework by answering two main questions. Firstly, what is the direction of change? This question called for a normative investigation into the end goal that change agents ought to strive towards. Secondly but not less importantly, how does one best achieve this end goal? More specifically, what are the most suitable means to this goal? This question required that we probe the relation between means and ends.

In relation to the first question, I have argued against theories of justice that postulate the existence of universally just principles as well as practices, on three grounds: epistemological, political, and prudential. From the epistemological point of view, to postulate that a specific principle is transcendental automatically shields it from critical scrutiny, such that one is unable to call this principle into question from within the theory of justice that has generated it. Secondly, and consequently, such principles of justice and their corresponding practices can turn into political forms of domination by capturing people into fixed arrangements that are likely to generate unforeseen problems. Finally, the claim to universalism that inheres in transcendental principles has frequently served as a justification for imperialism.

Successively, I have argued against a purely nomadic (that is, relativistic) attitude, on account of the fact that such an attitude allows for highly injurious modalities of interaction, such as exploitation and oppression. Accordingly, I have attempted to navigate the Scylla of theories of justice and the Charybdis of pure nomadism by advocating a critical-experimental attitude geared towards non-domination. By this latter I mean a way of organising

social relations, such that parties influence each other in a relatively reciprocal fashion. As I have argued, the normative thrust of this arrangement lies with the fact that it minimises the incidence of injuries that one suffers as a result of her failure to successfully resist what others do *to* and *for* her. The reason for this is that non-domination provides social actors with the possibility to shape the way in which they are managed by others. This in sharp contrast to domination, which generates suffering by exposing the subaltern party to abuses, impositions, and bullying.

While advocating for non-domination, I have warned against taking up the goal of non-domination all too easily. Specifically, I have argued that non-domination loses much of its emancipatory force if it is a surrogate for a vision of domination that change agents cannot realise because of their weakness. As a surrogate, non-domination would be invested not only in the impotence that produced it, but also in the *ressentiment* that this impotence breeds. If one is to avoid these pitfalls, then non-domination must be chosen *for its own sake.* At the same time, one should always question the value of this goal against alternatives through an activity of reciprocal elucidation.

II

In Search of Pathways to Change: Beyond Reform and Revolution

> A critique is not a matter of saying that things are right as they are. It is a matter if pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest.
>
> Michel Foucault[4]

Having singled out non-domination as a critical idea that can productively inform the direction of a wide range of struggles, I would like now to investigate what methods are most likely to deliver this goal. To this end, it is first necessary to complete a survey of methods for change. What techniques are available to people in their attempt to transform the social reality in which they live? While theorists and activists have answered this question in several ways, two positions have come to set the terms of the debate. The first position is the reformist one, whereby change takes place by means of targeted legislation enacted by a government that comes to power through regular elections. By contrast, the revolutionary position seeks to enact drastic, rapid change via the forcible seizure of power and, hence, the overthrow of the existing government. For better or for worse, reform and revolution have been the poles around which modern thinking about change has gravitated.

My aim here is not to enter the debate on the merits and disadvantages of reform vis-à-vis revolution, but rather to investigate the *assumptions* that have made it possible to think of change in such terms. In other words, I want

[4] Michel Foucault. 1988. "Practising Criticism" or "Is It Really Important to Think?" Interview with Didier Eribon, May 30-31, 1981. In Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, ed. Lawrence Kritzman. New York and London: Routledge, p. 155.

to explore the theoretical horizon against which reform and revolution have been elaborated as answers to the question of how to bring about change. As I will illustrate, this horizon encompasses a specific theory of power --one that conceptualises power as a thing or a substance in the hands of the sovereign. I refer to this conception of power as the 'reified-sovereignist paradigm'.

The project to explore the assumptions underlying the debate on reform or revolution finds its *raison d'être* in the Nietzschean attempt to question such assumptions. These have taken on an aura of self-evidence and naturalness that has rendered them impervious to critique. As a result, reform and revolution have appeared to many as the *only* possible methods for change. In fact, they are not. The reason for this is that, as seen in the last chapter, as Nietzsche (1989: 119; italics in the original) put it, "there is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'" (Nietzsche 1989: 119; italics in the original). Consequently, it is always possible to look at a given issue from competing perspectives. As the reified-sovereignist paradigm of power directs us towards reform and revolution as possible methods for change, similarly we can expect other perspectives to point us towards different methods.

If we want to maximise and make better sense of our capacity to challenge forms of power to which we are subjected, then it is crucial to look beyond reform and revolution. And this, in turn, requires that we think power beyond its usual characterisation as a thing in the hands of the sovereign. Before investigating an alternative view of power, however, it is first necessary to show how precisely the reified-sovereignist paradigm underlies the debate on reform or revolution. To this end, I first lay out the main features of this paradigm. The second section focuses especially on the father of

liberalism, John Locke, to illustrate the extent to which this paradigm has structured the liberal tradition. In the final section, I illustrate how far beyond the boundaries of liberalism the influence of the reified-sovereignist paradigm of power has extended. I do so by shifting my focus onto one of liberalism's greatest critic: Karl Marx. As I will argue, Marx's attempt to think power differently is arrested by his inability to free himself from the hold of the view of power as a thing in the hands of the sovereign.

II.1. The Reified-Sovereignist View of Power

The intensity of the debate on reform or revolution conceals one fundamental point of agreement between the two positions: namely, that the condition of possibility for social change is that one acquire political power. On this view, political power denotes the sovereign's legitimate ability to regulate people's actions as well as their interactions with each other through the law. The complexity of this definition warrants further explication, which I undertake below.

To begin with, power is conceptualised as a property or a thing that is unequally distributed between those who hold it and those who are excluded from it. In fact, power is concentrated in the sovereign, whether this be a specific person like a monarch, or certain state institutions, as in the case of the presidency or the parliament in democratic countries. It may also be case that sovereignty is shared between different institutions and specific persons, as in constitutional monarchies, wherein political power is apportioned between an hereditary monarch and an elected prime minister. The point that I want to draw attention to is that the sovereign, no matter what form it takes, is

the nucleus whence power radiates outwards towards the political community (Foucault 2003c: 30).

The specific mechanism through which political power radiates from the sovereign to the community is that of juridical rule, that is, the law. Accordingly, the sovereign wields power by promulgating laws --a function that is his exclusive prerogative, such that he can avail himself of the use of force to punish any usurper. Now, the law works through a two-fold device. The first one is that of prohibition, which may be either explicit or implicit. In the former case, the law takes the form of a negative injunction that directly forbids a specific action or activity that one may wish to undertake, such as arbitrarily appropriating others' goods. In the latter case, the law introduces the obligation to do something that one may not necessarily wish to do, such as paying taxes. Here the prohibition manifests itself as the necessary underside of a positive injunction. Thus, for example, the obligation to pay taxes is always-already coupled with the prohibition of tax-evasion.

The fact that prohibition is at the heart of law carries significant implications for how power works. Manifesting itself in and through prohibitions, power is essentially the ability to say "no" --i.e. to block or set a limit on what people can do (Foucault 1990: 85). An example of this is using the law to restrict legitimate killing to self-defence and to prohibit the arbitrary appropriation of others' goods (Foucault 1990: 85). On this view, then, power operates negatively: as Foucault (Foucault 1990: 85) eloquently put it, power is "incapable of doing anything, except to render what it dominates incapable of doing anything either, except for what this power allows it to do" (Foucault 1990: 85).

Accompanying the device of prohibition is that of imposing a punishment on anyone who transgresses the law itself. Punishment, or the threat thereof, serves the crucial function of cowing people into submission, and therefore of enforcing obedience. In the reified-sovereignist paradigm of power, however, the roots of obedience are to be found in something deeper and more fundamental than punishment itself: namely, the legitimacy of the sovereign. Here, legitimacy indicates the state of being in accordance to a foundational right, whether this be divine right or an either real or fictional oath of loyalty. This right *establishes* the sovereign by bestowing upon him the ability to promulgate laws. At the same time, this right creates the subject as any one who, being subjected to the sovereign, has the legal obligation to obey him (Foucault 1990: 85).

The question of how to justify power has been an enduring concern for theorists working within what I call the reified-sovereignist paradigm of power. The answers to this question have been numerous, at times even conflicting. Some theorists, such as Sir Robert Filmer (see Filmer 1949), derived the legitimacy of the sovereign's power from divine right. Hobbes (2011), by contrast, located the source of legitimacy in a fictional contract, whereby naturally free individuals consent to give up some of their powers to a sovereign charged with ensuring peace and stability. In both cases, the sovereign holds power because he has a *right* to it. This means that the sovereign has (a) the ability to set and modify a juridical framework in order to guide people's interactions, and (b) the authority to use force against whoever interferes with this right.

Now, while sovereignty is the source of power, power flows to society through a set of state institutions such as the bureaucracy, the police, and the judiciary. Such institutions are manned by their own personnel and may even enjoy a degree of autonomy, but are subject to the sovereign and ultimately respond to it. Their specific function is to implement as well as to enforce the sovereign's will on the ground. In this way, these institutions allow power to trickle down and provoke changes to society. On this view, then, social change happens through the state, which is taken to make up the political sphere.

II.2. Power in the Liberal Tradition

The section above has provided a brief overview of the theory of power that I call 'reified-sovereignist'. This rather awkward adjectives are meant to capture the way in which this theory conceptualises power as a thing (in Latin *res*, hence the adjective *reified*) in the hands of the sovereign. Crucially, this view cannot be traced back to any single thinker; rather, it designates a way of representing as well as analysing power that cuts across different traditions of thought, without being specifically localised in any one of them. Consequently, this view is more a *paradigm* than a clearly delineated theory. Among the thinkers working from within this paradigm we find, for example, theorists of the divine origins of sovereign power such as Jean Bodin (1530-1596) and Sir Robert Filmer (1588-1653); contract theorists who defended absolute sovereignty, such as Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) or, conversely, who argued in favour of limited government, as in the case of John Locke (1632-1704); and finally, advocates of the democratisation of power, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778).

In this section, I would like to focus on Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, in order to show the extent to which the reified-sovereignist paradigm of power structures modern liberalism. I focus on the *Second Treatise* because this text is not only one of the founding documents of modern liberalism, but also the "title-deed" of the liberal constitutional state (Macpherson 1980: vii; Bobbio 2005: 6). My contention is that Locke's liberalism is broadly representative of modern liberalism, understood as the theory of limited government. Consequently --as I will attempt to show,-- an investigation into the former will give us an insight into the conception of power that pervades the latter. My argument proceeds in three steps. Firstly, I outline Locke's theory; secondly, I show that this theory espouses a reified-sovereignist view of power; and finally, I move onto contemporary debates in liberalism, arguing that they still build upon a reified-sovereignist view of power.

Unsurprisingly, the main purpose of Locke's treatise was to justify limiting the powers of the state. To this end, Locke postulated a condition in which human beings supposedly first lived, known as the 'state of nature'. The main feature of this state was that there was no central authority. Accordingly, all human beings possessed two main "powers" (Locke 1980: 9) in the state of nature. (Here, Locke used power to mean a right, that is, a capacity or a potential to do something that the right-holder can enforce by availing himself of the use of force against any transgressor.) The first such power was the right to do as one thinks fit within the boundaries of the 'law of nature'. This latter, which was a basic law that exists independently of any positive law, prescribed that "no-one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or

possessions" (Locke 1980: 9). Secondly, everyone had executive power, insofar as they had the right to punish those who transgressed the law of nature. Importantly, these two powers were natural, in the sense that everyone possessed them by nature. As a result, the state of nature was one of "*perfect freedom*," as people could "order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they [thought] fit" (Locke 1980: 8; italics in the original). However, people were still bound to the law of nature, such that the freedom that they enjoyed was not licence. Furthermore, that state of nature was a state of "*equality*, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another" (Locke 1980: 8; italics in the original).

The quasi-idyllic character of the state of nature, however, became fuzzier as Locke introduced his theory of property. Briefly, the central tenet of this theory was that each person, having property in his own body and in his own labour, could legitimately appropriate whatever nature affords with which she mixed her labour (for example, the land that she tilled and the fruits she picked). There were, however, two qualifications to how much one can appropriate: first, that there must be "enough, and as good, left in common for others" (Locke 1980: 19); and secondly, that nothing in one's possession can be left to rot. The introduction of money allowed one to circumvent the spoilage clause through the exchange of perishable stuff for money. Consequently, people started to enlarge their possessions, such that all vacant land became occupied (Locke 1980: 29). The ensuing unequal land ownership clearly contradicted the clause that there should be enough land and as good left for others. Locke (1980: 26) transcended this contradiction by arguing

that, since privately owned land was more productive than communally owned land, there would be enough conveniences for everyone in the market.

Locke argued that the desire to enlarge one's own possessions often caused quarrels, and resulted in a "state of war" every time that one attempted to deprive another of her life, liberty, or possessions. As a result, the state of nature became "full of fears and continual dangers,", where one's own life was often at risk and "the enjoyment of property... [was] very unsafe" (Locke 1980: 66). This state of fear encouraged people to quit the state of nature by consenting to a sovereign in the form of a central government. The establishment of a political society took place through a contract, by means of which persons transferred their executive powers to the sovereign while agreeing that their power to do as they think fit "be regulated by laws" (Locke 1980: 67). Thus, people became subjects in the sense of being subjected to a sovereign; at the same time, the newly constituted sovereign acquired legislative as well as executive power. These two powers are the stuff of "political power" (Locke 1980: 8, 89), that is, of power proper.

While the contract conferred to the sovereign the right to power, this power could be neither arbitrary nor absolute. An absolute government could "destroy, enslave, or impoverish [its] subjects" at will (Locke 1980: 71), thereby defying the very purpose that people had tried to achieve by establishing a political society: namely, to safeguard their own lives, liberties, and estates. The sovereign, then, had "no other end, but the peace, safety and public good of the people" (Locke 1980: 68), and more precisely, that of "preserv[ing] the members of society... in their lives, liberties, and possessions" (Locke 1980: 89).

In light of the argument above, Locke contended that the only legitimate government was a limited one. By this Locke meant two distinct things. First, that power would have to be exercised in accordance to some constitutional laws stemming from the natural rights to life, liberty, and possession. Such rights imposed upon the sovereign the duty not to arbitrarily harm its subjects' lives, interfere with their liberty, or seize their possessions. At the same time, they gave the right-holders the power to require the sovereign to respect these duties, or else rebel (more of this below) (Bobbio 1990: 5). In this sense, then, a limited government was *rights-based* as opposed to absolute (Bobbio 1990: 11).

Secondly, Locke's limited government was also *minimal*, insofar as its functions were limited to protecting its subjects from interferences in their exercise of their rights (Bobbio 1990: 11). In today's parlance, this kind of government goes under the name of 'small government' or of 'night watchman state'. The opposite of such a government is a maximal one --defined as a government whose functions expand beyond simply maintaining peace as the absence of conflict. In the case of a maximal government, power intervenes in the social and economic spheres through, for example, legislation concerning the consumption of drugs as well as the provision of a variety of social programs, such as a security nets for the unemployed.

According to Locke, the sovereign would automatically lose its right to govern as soon as it "invade[d] the property of the subject or make [himself] master or arbitrary disposer of the lives, liberties and fortunes of the people" (Locke 1980: 111). By doing so, the sovereign would "rebel" against his own subjects: he would bring back (*re*) a state of war (-*bellare*), for he would

violate the rights that his subjects have by virtue of the law of nature (Locke 1980: 114). In such a situation --argued Locke,-- the subjects would have a right to overthrow their oppressive sovereign through a revolution, and thus to restore the legitimate limits within which the sovereign should operate.

Having outlined Locke's theory, I would now like to zero in on the view of power that this theory features. At the outset, note that Locke distinguished between two *kinds* of power. First is pre-political power, which indicated a set of basic rights that everyone possesses by nature. Consequently, this kind of power was distributed in a democratic fashion, insofar as "power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another" (Locke 1980: 8). On the other hand, the delegation of some of these rights to a common authority constituted political power or power proper, which encompassed the right to make as well as execute laws. Unlike the previous kind of power, which was widely distributed, power proper was the exclusive monopoly of the sovereign.

Both kinds of power were a property or a substance that is held; that can be transferred through a contractual agreement, such that some else acquires it; and that can be lost, as when the people overthrow an illegitimate sovereign. Furthermore, the definition of power as something that is unequally distributed between its exclusive holder(s) and those who are excluded from it meant that power was the opposite of freedom --understood as the sphere of action where one is not interfered with by the sovereign (Bobbio 2005: 15-7). On this view, then, the sphere of liberty of the subjects would contract as the sovereign's power expands, and vice-versa (Bobbio 2005: 16).

The relation between freedom and power brings to the foreground the question of the legitimacy of power itself. Specifically, what are the limits within which the sovereign can retain its right to power? In addition, why is power concentrated in the sovereign? To answer these questions, Locke traced the origins of power back to a fictional contractual agreement, through which a number of people decided to delegate part of their natural powers. In doing so, these people instituted a central authority that, while having the right to power proper, was bound to use it in such a way as to not infringe upon one's life, liberty, and possessions. As noted, the preservation of these was the reason why people agree to a sovereign in the first place; consequently -- Locke argued-- it would be irrational for people to consent to an authority with absolute power.

In Locke's theory, the constitution of sovereign proceeded *pari passu* with the constitution of the subject, understood as anyone who is subjected to somebody else's power. More specifically, one became a subject, and therefore acquired the obligation to obey the sovereign, only after consenting to becoming part of a political community. At this point, it is important to note the very constitution of the sovereign presupposed that the signatories had a pre-formed subjectivity, that is, a certain way of acting as well as thinking. Specifically, Locke's claim that people would not agree to an absolute sovereign would not make sense unless we assumed that in the state of nature, people were self-interested as well as rational. These two traits constituted a 'thin' subjectivity; nonetheless, they attest to the fact that that subjectivity *preceded* political power, insofar as people were endowed with rational and

self-interested ways of acting as well as thinking before power proper was constituted.

The upshot of the discussion above is that Locke's theory of limited government features a theory of power that fits my description of the reified-sovereignist paradigm of power. Unsurprisingly, Locke provided for change to take place through the seizure of power, particularly in its revolutionary declension. Curiously, in Locke's theory revolution in fact indicated the restoration of an original situation that had become corrupted. As Hannah Arendt (1965: 35-7) observed, in the XVII and XVIII centuries the word 'revolution' denoted a change *back* to a pre-ordained order. Thus, for example, the 'great' liberal revolutions, the French and the American ones, were "played in their initial stages by men who were firmly convinced that they would do no more than restore an old order of things" that had been violated by absolute monarchy and colonial government, respectively (Arendt 1965: 37). It is only after the French Revolution, and especially with Marx, that revolution came to assume its modern meaning of the movement from an old order to a radically different one.

Before moving onto Marx, however, I would like to 'zoom out' from Locke's text to liberalism as such, in order to focus on the theory of power that this tradition of thought espouses. Bobbio's (2005: 6) assertion that Locke is "one of the fathers of modern liberalism" captures the great influence that Locke's theory has exerted on the liberal tradition since the XVII century. Accordingly, the view of power that underpins Locke's work has deeply structured --as well as limited-- the way in which liberalism has developed over the centuries. Evidence of this is the fact that one of the most important

preoccupations of liberal theory, if not *the* most important, has been to define the legitimate limits of the sovereign's power. The debate on the limits of power, far from interrogating the value of the reified-sovereignist view of power, in fact *presupposes* this view. In other words, it would not make sense to discuss the bounds within which the sovereign's power is legitimate unless it is assumed that power is a thing centrally located in the sovereign.

Specifically, the most recent debates in liberal theory have gravitated around the question of whether the state ought to be minimal or maximal. The minimal view has found support especially, but not exclusively, among the so-called 'neo-liberals', who advance a defence of the free market as against state intervention in the economy (Bobbio 2005: 79-81). On the opposite side are theorists like Gerald Gaus and John Rawls, who have argued that government intervention in the economic and social spheres is necessary to create the conditions for a just society (Gaus & Courtland 2010). At stake in this debate is none other than the meaning of freedom. Proponents of the minimalist state have taken freedom to mean the absence of interference in one's life, as Locke did. By contrast, theorists of the maximal state have understood freedom in more positive terms, "as the ability of people to live on their own terms" (Carmichael 2005: 60). This definition opens the door for a wider role for the state through the provision of the supports and resources that people need to live the lives of their own choosing. Both sides of the debate, however, are still wedded to the idea that power is something in the firm hold of the sovereign.

With the consolidation of the constitutional state and the democratisation of power in the West, revolution has lost increasingly more

ground as a method for change contemplated in and by the liberal tradition. Of course, revolution is still a valid method if sovereign power were to shed its rights-based status and become absolute. Once the state is rights-based, however, the swing towards a minimal state or a maximal can take place through a reformist strategy. This latter seeks to improve, indeed to give a new (*re*-) form (*-formare*) to the existing state of affairs by means of targeted legislation. The reformist commitment to improve things as they stand instead of replacing them altogether dovetails with the commitment, on the part of reform-minded leaders, to gain power through the mechanisms of the current representative political system. The specific device that allows people to do so is that of regular elections. On this view, a group of people can organise as a political party and contest for public office, which they can gain if they can muster enough supporters from amongst the electorate. The regularity of elections helps to stave off discontent among the defeated contenders by providing them with the opportunity to re-contest in successive elections.

II.3. The Shadow of the Reified-Sovereignist Paradigm of Power: Marx

The debate between reform or revolution reached its zenith not within the liberal tradition, but rather within liberalism's greatest foe --the marxist tradition, especially in the declensions that emerged immediately after Marx's death. The debate was especially intense between the orthodox marxist, Rosa Luxembourg, and the revisionist marxist, Edward Barnstein. The focus of this section will not be on marxism as such, which is internally too complex to display a single theory of power. Rather, I want to focus on its founder, Karl Marx. As I will show, Marx attempted to think power outside of the reified-

sovereignist paradigm; however, his attempt was arrested by the captivation that this very paradigm exerted on him. Consequently, Marx ended up re-inscribing many of the same features of a reified-sovereignist perspective.

Marx's view of power is perhaps best summarised in his preface to his book, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. In it, Marx developed an analytical model that centres on the distinction between the base (or foundation) and the superstructure. The base consists of the "material conditions of life" (Marx 1978: 4), as constituted by the forces of production and the relations of production. The former indicates the technologies and resources available at any given moment in time, such as land and machinery; the latter, by contrast, denotes the way in which human beings stand in relation to the productive forces. The class that owns the productive forces will be dominant over the classes that, being cut off from the means of production, will have to rely on the propertied class for their own survival (Baradat 1988: 147).

It follows from the foregoing that one's position in the relations of production determines the extent to which one can exercise power, taking power the mean the capacity to realise one's will over and against the will of others. Here, Marx distanced himself from the reified-sovereignist paradigm in two significant ways. First, he viewed power as a *force relation* between people with differential access to the means of production. On this view, power is not the monopoly of the powerful to the exclusion of the powerless, who cannot but submit to power. Rather, power circuits through both poles of the relations, such that the subordinate pole (that is, the working class) is in a position not only to submit to power, but also to exercise it through strikes,

boycotts, demands for better wages, and so on. Accordingly (and secondly), for Marx the matrix of power is not the sovereign, but rather the relations of production.

Marx's two aforementioned insights into power suggest a radical break from the reified-sovereignist paradigm. However, this break is less radical than it appears to be, due to the fact that Marx fell back into this very paradigm in the act of tracing his base-superstructure model. In order to show this, it is necessary to move onto a discussion of the superstructure, which includes education, ideology, religion, art, law, and the political organisation of society. In Marx's view, the superstructure is epiphenomenal with respect to the economic foundation, insofar as this foundation ultimately determines the superstructural elements (Marx: 1978: 4). Consequently, the function of the superstructure is to perpetuate and reproduce the domination of the class that controls the productive forces. In particular, the state, which is but "the official expression of civil society" (Marx in Thomas 1994: 90),[5] is an instrument used by the capitalist class for the oppression of the workers. Thus did Marx and Engels (2002a: 221) assert that "executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."[6]

As Fredrerick Engels remarked in a letter to J. Bloch dated 1890, the relationship between base and superstructure should not be regarded as being unidirectionally causal. Rather, this relationship is asymmetrically dialectical, with the economic structure being "the ultimately determining element" (Engels 1972). If the superstructure is not just determined by the economic

[5] Marx uses "civil society" as a synonym for the economic base.

[6] Lenin (1985: 46) only follows in Marx's footstep when he remarks that, "to decide once every four years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament --this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarianism."

foundation but can also condition it, then --in Marx's reasoning-- it becomes possible for the oppressed class to seize state power in order to transform the economic structure from above. For this transformation to be successful, though, the material conditions of the coming order need to have developed sufficiently within the bosom of the existing order (Marx 1972: 4-5). Specifically, Marx argued that socialism could not be realised unless enterprises had been centralised in a few hands, leaving the majority of the people with nothing to lose but their chains.

Once this condition is met (in ways that I will explore below), the transition to communism is revolutionary and involves three major steps. First is the forcible seizure of power on the part of the working class organised as a party. Force is necessary in this process because the ruling class will not hesitate to ruthlessly crush any attempt to change the current system (Lenin 1985: 32). After the experience of the Paris Commune in 1871, however, Marx and Engels (2002b: 194) came to the conclusion that the proletariat cannot "simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery." For, the state bureaucracy is likely to have purposes of its own and therefore hinder the execution of far-reaching measures. Consequently (and secondly), the bourgeois state must be smashed and replaced by a 'proletarian' state whose employees are elected, recallable, and receive the same pay as other workers (Lenin 1985: 104). Finally, the proletariat would deploy the mechanism of prohibition/punishment that inheres in the law to create a radically new order, for example through the abolition of private property and the centralisation of credit (Marx and Engels 2002a: 243). The picture of the state that emerges from Marx's description of the path to communism is clearly instrumentalist:

on this view, the state is like a hammer that the bourgeoisie wield against the proletariat but that the proletariat can, and indeed must, seize and wield in turn against their oppressors.

At first sight, there is an inconsistency between Marx's account of his state-centred transition to communism and his assertion that the state is epiphenomenal with respect to the economy. While the state and the economic structure influence one another, the economic foundation is ultimately the decisive element and, as such, is more fundamental than the state in determining social reality. From this point of view, then, it would be more effective to wage the struggle for communism *directly* at the level of the economic structure, for example through the creation of alternative --if embryonic-- systems of production such as co-operatives and participative economies. If this is true, then why does Marx opts for the statist path?

The key to answering this question is to be found in Marx's belief that the conditions for socialism develop outside of human control, as a result of the systemic imperatives of capitalism. These imperatives are such that capitalist firms either expand or risk being thrown out of business by expanding competitors --in the proverbial "get big or get out" fashion. As a result --Marx predicted,-- more and more wealth as well as enterprises fall in fewer and fewer hands, thus creating the conditions for socialism. Regardless of whether or not the centralisation of production is the necessary condition for socialism (which I think is not), the point I want to draw attention to is that Marx saw this process was as automatic and inevitable. In other words, this process is not the product of power, that is, of wilful human action, but rather

of a fate immanent in capitalism. So much so that, as Marx (1972: 5) put it, this process could "be determined with the precision of natural science."

On this view, then, the economic structure follows a logic of its own that makes it impossible for people to modify the economic structure from within. The inevitability of economic processes has the overall effect of displacing the political focus onto the state, to which Marx assigned a particularly privileged position among other superstructural elements.
In this way, Marx effectively re-inscribed the reified-sovereignist paradigm of power in spite of himself: *power, while being a function of one's position in the relations of production, is always-already channelled through, and concentrated in, the state*. In other words, the power of the capitalist class always translates as political power, that is, as a substance centrally located in the state. At this point, we can see that Marx's view of power as a relation gave way to a reified-sovereignist understanding, wherein the dominant class holds power by controlling the state, while other classes are excluded both from the state and, consequently, from power. As the repository of power in Marx's view, the state is then "a privileged position to be occupied" (Foucault 2003d: 246), for only by occupying the state can change be effected.

The re-inscription on the part of Marx of some of the main features of the reified-sovereignist paradigm is not coincidental. As Barnstein (1909: 102) remarked, Marx and Engels' theoretical approach was severely circumscribed by the state-centric strategy of the 'great' liberal revolutions of the XVIII century : namely, the American Revolution and especially the French Revolution. This is Barnstein (1909: 102): "Marx and Engels, in the establishment of their theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, had before

their eyes as a typical example the epoch of terror of the French Revolution." For the moment, I am less interested in the deployment of terror than in the fact that the French Revolution gravitated around the 'seizure of power'. The state-centric nature of the French Revolution is not surprising, given that, as I have indicated, the liberal tradition that functioned as the theoretical justification of this revolution espoused a reified-sovereignist understanding of power.

Marx re-inscribed the reified-sovereignist paradigm not only by concentrating power in the state, but also by implicitly assuming that power belongs to the sovereign by virtue of a fundamental right. As noted, Marx critiqued the liberal-capitalist state on the ground that it is no more than an organ of class oppression, indeed "a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (Marx and Engels 2002a: 221). The main charge here is that the minority appropriate and deploy state power to dominate the majority, such that any liberal-capitalist state is illegitimate in Marx's eyes. In claiming so, Marx was clearly at odds with the liberal tradition. However, Marx's disagreement still proceeded under the assumption that that power is located in the state because of a basic right, which legitimises the current sovereign. In other words, Marx's claim that the liberal state is illegitimate *presupposed* the argument that, ideally and by nature, the state must have a right to power (Foucault 1990: 88). This argument, as we have seen, is a central feature of the reified-sovereignist paradigm of power. By affirming that the liberal state is illegitimate instead of legitimate (as the liberal tradition has it), Marx remained locked within the orbit of what it opposes and, consequently, within the reified-sovereignist paradigm of power.

Of course, it is not my claim that there are no differences between Marx's theory of power and this paradigm. As shown, these differences exist and are indeed important. Rather, my point is that the purchase of a reified-sovereignist paradigm in the XIX century severely limited Marx's attempt to think power (and hence change) differently. It is as if Marx wanted to develop a new language of representation for power, but could not free himself from the hold of most dominant language in that period --that is, precisely the view of power as a thing in the hands of the sovereign. The overall consequence is that Marx's theory of power moved away from the reified-sovereignist theory of power in some respects (for example, through the emphasis on the economy as the matrix of power) *at the same time as* it re-inscribed some of the same features of this paradigm.

II.4. Conclusion

Recent versions of marxism have distanced themselves from Marx's own theory of power in a way that also reflects a distancing from the view of power as a thing in the hands of the sovereign. Theorists such as Althusser, Poulantzas, and more recently Paul Thomas, for example, have suggested that the state is not epiphenomenal to the economic base, but is rather relatively autonomous from it (see Thomas 1994). Others theorists, such as John Holloway, have disputed the inevitability of economic processes, thereby opening up the space for the struggle against capitalism to be waged from within the economic structure itself. In any case, the fact that the distancing of the marxist tradition from the reified-sovereignist paradigm of power took several decades attests to the captivation that this paradigm has exerted on

modern thinking about power. This captivation has been so great that, as I have shown in this chapter, this paradigm of power has not only conditioned Marx's own thought, but also deeply structured the liberal tradition.

The aim of my investigation into the reified-sovereignist paradigm of power has been to shed light on the theoretical horizon against which reforms and revolutions have been formulated as answers to the question of how to effect change. Specifically, I have identified four main features of this paradigm. First, is the view of power as a thing in the hands of the sovereign; second, the centrality of the law as the mechanism through which power operates; third, the legitimacy of the sovereign's power; and finally, the conception of the subject as someone who is subjected to sovereign power. As I hope I have shown, these four features have *allowed* reform and revolutions to take shape as methods for change. Accordingly, the state has been cast as *the* vehicle for social change.

However, if Nietzsche (1989: 119; italics in the original) was right in arguing that "there is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing,'" then these four features make up only a *partial* description of power that overlaps with, complements, or contradicts others descriptions. As the reified-sovereignist view makes it possible to answer the question of how to bring about change through either reform or revolution, similarly we can expect other descriptions of power to yield different methods for change. In order to go beyond reform and revolution, then, we must first explore an alternative description of power --a task that I undertake in the next chapter.

III

Ontology of Power Redux

> How, then, are we to break this vicious cycle of endless oscillation between pro and contra...? There is only one way: to reject the very terms in which the problem is posed.
>
> Slavoj Žižek[7]

In spite of its aura of naturalness and familiarity, the reified-sovereignist view is just a limited way of seeing power, which must contend for dominance with several other ways of looking at the same issue (Nietzsche 1989: 119). My objective in this chapter is to retrieve the relational view of power as one perspective that the reified-sovereignist theory of power has disqualified and pushed to the margins. This relational view will constitute the groundwork for the next chapter, where I seek to enumerate and investigate the methods that it is possible to derive from this perspective.

This essay will proceed in five steps. First, I explicate what it means to view power as a set of relations, paying close attention to the implication of this perspective for how we see freedom. The second part, which focuses on the subject, argues that power both enables and constrains one's own capacity for action. This is in contrast to the liberal tradition, where the function of power is essentially that of blocking or limiting the abilities that one possesses by nature. Thirdly, I argue that, while it is possible to analyse power relations individually, such an analysis needs to take into consideration the background in which these relations are situated. Specifically, I will discuss and analyse three aspects of the background picture: namely, structures, intersectionality,

[7] Slavoj Žižek. 2008. *Violence*. New York: Picador, p. 129.

and institutions. The fourth section draws upon Foucault's work to investigate some of the main trends and discontinuities in the way in which power has operated in western Europe since the Middle Ages. By way of concluding, I explore the difference that it makes to view power as a relation instead of a thing in the hands of the sovereign. More explicitly, in this part I will answer the question of why we should adopt a relational view of power instead of the reified-sovereignist one.

While the relational view of power that I advance in the first three sections is heavily indebted to work by Foucault, I am interested neither in being faithful to his thinking nor in detecting shifts in the way he thought about power. Rather, I want to use his thought in the same way he used Nietzsche's --I want to "deform it, make it groan and protest" (Foucault in Allen 1999: 32) by taking what is useful and modifying or rejecting what I consider problematic. In fact, my work attempts to *move beyond* both Foucault's self-professed refusal to trace a "theory of power," and his corresponding insistence on conducting an empirical analysis of the way power works in western societies in the modern and late-modern period (Foucault 2003e: 127).

The distinction between an a theory of power and an empirical analysis of power --or, as Foucault (2003a: 127) called it rather confusingly, an "analytics" of power-- is as follows. The task of an empirical analysis power is to answers the question, How is power exercised? It does so through an investigation of the operations of power in a given society at a specific time. Consequently, this empirical analysis cannot be disassociated from the specific time-space coordinates that it studies. The focus of a theory of power, by

contrast, is the question, What is power? The answer to this question involves a degree of abstraction, to the extent that this answer transcends the specific operations of power at different times and spaces in order to elaborate on what is distinctive about power. Foucault's uneasiness with elaborating a theory of power finds evidence in his privileging of the question, "how is power exercised?" over that of, "what is power?" (Smart 1985: 77).

Unlike Foucault, my aim is precisely to directly answer the question of what power is. Of course, it is not my contention that empirical work is not important --as I will argue in the fourth section, an accurate description of the dynamics of power in a given society is in fact crucial, insofar as one can subvert specific forms of power only if they are visible. Rather, my point is that even this empirical work both *presupposes* and *proceeds under* a number of assumptions on the nature of power. The reason for this is that we cannot look for something in a specific time and space without knowing what is it that we are looking for. In other words, it is first necessary to have an idea of what we mean by power in order for one to be able to analyse how power operates across time and space. Consequently, the first task that presents itself to us is that of posing and answering the question that Foucault was so keen to avoid and yet *could not escape*: namely, what is power?

III.1. Viewing Power (and Freedom) Differently

I want to start, then, by investigating one alternative to the reified-sovereignist theory of power as an answer to question on the nature of power. I refer to such an alternative as the relational view of power. The central tenet of this perspective is, in Deleuze's able characterisation of Foucault's

definition, "power is a relation between forces, or rather every relation between forces is a 'power relation'" (Deleuze 1988: 70). The specificity of each force is its ability to affect other forces or, conversely, its being affected by them. In more concrete terms, a force manifests itself in the action of influencing or managing others' behaviours, and of leading others to conduct themselves with a degree of regularity and predictability (Foucault 2003e: 137).

That every relation between forces is a power relation means that power is not localised only in the state --although, as we shall see, the state is an important site of power. Rather, power is immanent in social relations, to the extent that these relations encompass parties who seek to influence each other's conduct. If it is true that politics is about power, then the insight above leads to the conclusion that the social *is* political. Clearly, while all social relations are political, the exercise of power always-already takes place through specific mechanisms and techniques. These latter emerge in specific relations and either remain localised in such relations or spread onto a number of other relations. The study of such mechanisms is necessarily empirical, for such mechanisms are historically specific. I will briefly engage in this analytical work in the final section of this essay; for the moment, suffice it to say that such mechanisms may be either widely distributed across any given society, or be circumscribed in more limited clusters or webs of relations.

Crucially, power does not act on passive people, without the mediation of their own thought and activities. Rather, as Foucault (2003a: 137) argued, power "acts on their actions:" for example, it encourages or discourages a certain conduct; it makes it more difficult to take up this conduct or easier;

ultimately, it forbids or makes compulsory. In any of the cases above, the persons over whom power is exercised are recognised as being capable of action, and therefore of responding to the exercise of power in a variety of ways (Foucault 2003e: 136). For example, the subordinates may take up the conducts that they are directed to enact, or refuse to do so, or raise a question about the way they are directed, or escape, and so on.

On this view, a power relation is distinct from one of physical compulsion.[8] While in the former parties act on each other's actions, and therefore recognise each other as being capable of action, in the latter one party acts directly on the other's body. As Foucault (2003a: 137; Deleuze 1988: 70) observed, physical compulsion "forces, it bends, it breaks, it destroys, or it closes off all possibilities. Its opposite can only be passivity, and if it comes up against any resistance it has no other option but to try to break it down." It is not that a power relation excludes the use of physical compulsion altogether --one needs only think here of a parent spanking his child in order to discipline him. The point is rather that physical compulsion is not power's *principal* instrument, for once physical compulsion becomes an habitual practice in a relation, then "its opposite pole can only be passivity" (Foucault 2003e: 137). Stated otherwise, a relation that thrives on this kind of compulsion both proceeds under and results in the denial of the subordinate as someone who is capable of more or less self-conscious action. Consequently, this relation is not strictly speaking a power relation, but rather one of physical constraint.

[8] Foucault (2003a: 136) uses the term "violence" instead of physical compulsion, or rather to mean physical compulsion. I am not convinced that violence can be reduced to just physical compulsion, hence my substitution of terms.

The upshot of the discussion above is that people who are subjected to power are free, in the sense that they are faced with a range of different ways of behaving as possible responses to the exercise of power. On this view, then, power and freedom are not two irreducible opposites, as in the liberal tradition. On the contrary, the two are deeply implicated with each other. For one thing, freedom is power's condition of possibility, insofar as the dominant are themselves free subjects who can direct their counterparts in various ways (Foucault 2003f: 41; 2003a: 139). For another, freedom is also power's "permanent support," for power exists only if "exercised over free subjects, and only insofar as they are 'free'" (Foucault 2003e: 139). As a result, a power relation always entails the possibility for resistance, which I take to mean an action or conduct that challenges or subverts the form of power to which one is subject. Thus did Foucault (1990: 95) write that "where there is power, there is resistance;" and yet, resistance is not "doomed to perpetual defeat," as if it were the always-already colonised underside of power (Foucault 1990: 95). Rather, its successfulness is partly a function of the strategy of struggle that one puts in place to counter the strategy of governance to which one is subjected.[9] The point that I want to draw attention to is that power relations are not static; rather, they are processes that unfold, take new directions, and change as parties attempt to gain advantage on each other.

The fact that freedom is both the condition for and the support of any and all power relations entails that power is not exercised only from one party to another. As Foucault (2003b: 29) put it, "power is not something that is

[9] By strategy I mean the totality of methods that one deploys in order to prevail over her adversary. I explore such methods in the next chapter.

divided absolutely between those who have it and hold it exclusively, and those who do not have it and are subject to it," for this would presuppose that power is a thing. In fact, parties to a power relation "are in a position to both submit to and exercise power" (Foucault 2003f: 29) --i.e., to lead the other's conduct and, at the same time, to be led. From this perspective, resistance itself is an exercise of power, insofar as it seeks to modify the behaviour of the governors by signalling that their specific way of governing is problematic. However, it does not follow from this that all parties to a power relation are able to govern each other equally. Indeed, differences in status, privilege, wealth, competencies, know-how, credentials, and so on permit one party to direct the behaviour of the other party in an asymmetrical way (Foucault 2003e: 140). For example, ownership of the means of production enables capital-owners to control workers' conducts more than workers can control capital-owners'.

While resource disparities allow certain agents to exercise power over other asymmetrically, it is necessary to differentiate between power and resources (Young 1990: 31). Resources are a necessary but insufficient condition for the exercise of power. For, power is the *art* of mustering resources and of deploying techniques and mechanisms in order to structure the field of possibility of another party. Consequently, the superior possession of certain resources is not in and of itself a guarantee that one will successfully govern another. An illustration of this is the fact that the United States failed to cow into submission the Vietnamese communist guerrilla army and political group, the Vietcong, despite the US' own military, economic, and diplomatic superiority.

With this in mind, some power relations are so asymmetric that the dominant are able to control the conduct of the subordinates with relative certainty and little reciprocation. In such cases, then, "the range of options that are available for those in the subordinate positions to exercise power is limited" (Allen 1999: 44). I call such relations, "states [or relations] of domination" (Allen 1999: 44).[10] Once again, even the most tightly regulated relations and regimes, such as military training, presuppose subjects capable of self-conscious action, and therefore of resistance (Tully 2008: 122). Consequently, states of domination may prove to be reversible, even though they may be more impervious to change than egalitarian relations, wherein the extent to which one party is able to direct another more or less coincides with the extent to which the first party is directed by the other one.

As each power relation is unique, it is possible to study any relation individually. Following Allen (1999: 131), we can refer to an analytical focus of this kind as the "foreground perspective." Such a perspective includes an investigation into, among other things: the modalities of power that each party to a specific relation deploys; the effects that these modalities have on their recipients; and the specificities and intentions of the parties themselves. A foreground analysis also needs to be attentive to the fact that individual power relations do not actually obtain between two parties and, therefore, are not dyadic. Rather, they are *reticular*, as the relation between the dominant and the subordinates always intersect with the multiple relations that exist among the subordinates *as well as* among the dominant. In other words, we do not

[10] Allen's adapts her definition of a "state of domination" from Foucault (2003f: 27).

have two monolithic groups that interact with each other, but a web of actors who lead and are led in different ways and to a different extent.

The fact that a number of actors share the experience of being led in a similar way by another group, however, does not necessarily mean that these actors support change. The specific mistake to avoid at all costs here is to assume that *all* the dominant are opposed to transformation, while *all* subordinates are interested in transforming a specific relation. While advocates for change *may* share an experience of domination, what really brings them together is their very "promise to work together" to effect change (Allen 1999: 102). Accordingly, it may happen that some from within the subordinate group do not support a given project for change, while some from amongst the dominant do. For the sake of clarity, then, I call those who advocate for the transformation of a particular power relation, 'change agents'. By contrast, I use 'subordinates' to indicate those who share the same experience of oppression but do not necessarily converge on a project for change.

With this in mind, a particular power relation always-already exists in, and belongs to, a complex context encompassing a multiplicity of power relations --what Allen (1999: 131) has called the "background perspective." Before investigating this analytical perspective, however, it is necessary to complete our picture of what the foreground perspective includes. I do so below by turning to the issue of subjectivity.

III.2. The Paradox of Subjectivation

As noted, parties to a power relation are both in a position to exercise power and to submit to it. As such, both parties are subjects in the sense of

being *subjected* to the exercise of power in any given relation of force (Foucault 2003e: 130). In the process of being subjected, however, one becomes tied "by a conscience or self-knowledge" to the conducts and practices that one is led to take up regularly (Foucault 2003e: 130). As a result, parties to a power relation acquire specific *subjectivities* --fairly habitual and hence predictable modes or ways of conducting themselves. Such modes encompass specific abilities, ways of acting, and modes of thinking (Tully 2002: 539). Thus, for example, soldiers' subjection to military training is such that they are strongly encouraged to become docile by obeying orders and respecting authority.

The specific process through which one acquires a specific subjectivity entails the iterative performance of prescribed practices, to the point where such practices "leave a permanent mark on [one's own] character" and become natural to one's own disposition (Mahmood 2005: 136). That is to say that the iteration of a practice makes that practice habitual, such that one comes to perform it almost automatically and pre-reflectively, without any imposition from the outside. The process by which one learns to play the guitar is a good illustration of this. At the beginning of the process, one needs to be closely followed by a teacher, who prescribes exercises, ensures correct gestures, and supervises progress. After years of practice, however, one no longer needs supervision, as one comes to comes to master the relevant skills and starts to take them for granted. As with playing the guitar, similarly with modes of thought and action: initially imposed from the outside, such modes become spontaneous, indeed almost second-nature.

It follows from the above that subjectivity (understood as a set of habitual ways of acting and thinking) does not precede the performance of subject-specific practices, but rather follows it. For example, one becomes and is a 'woman' to the extent that one engages in practices that both hold in place and are held in place by norms of femininity, such as depilating, putting on make up, doing the chores, and looking after the children in a traditional society. It is not that one engages in these conducts because one is already a woman; rather, it is the enactment of these practices that *constitutes* one as a woman. Consequently, a biologically male person who performs these practices will be considered effeminate (on this, see also Butler in Allen 1999: 67).

If subjectivity is the result of performing certain practices, then subjectivity is not so much something that one is, but rather a specific *activity* that one undertakes. This activity does not consist in "a singular act, but rather [in] a ritual reiterated" over time because of either external pressure, constraints, and encouragement, or one's own desire (Butler in Allen 1999: 72). It is possible to glimpse a paradox in the process whereby one acquires a specific subjectivity. On the one hand, power relations *constrain* people, insofar as they secure their subjection to forms of power; on the other hand, such relations *enable* subjects by endowing them with certain abilities and modes of conduct (Allen 1999: 36). On this view, then, the subject does not possesses natural abilities that power then only blocks or limits, as the liberal tradition has it (Mahmood 2005: 8). Rather, one's own interests and abilities form in and through one's relations with others. In other words, these relations

both limit and make possible one's own agency as capacity for action (Mahmood 2005: 17).

At the risk of being repetitive, it is crucial to note that, to the extent that practices are imposed on subjects, the recipients are not passive individuals. As Tully (2008: 78) has noted, individuals "take a self-conscious part (of varying degree) in the acquisition, learning, [and] exercise... of the subject-specific competencies." It follows that one is always able, at least potentially, to contest an aspect of her subjectivity by modifying the conducts in which one engages. Consequently, one's own subjectivity is never fully fixed or unchanging.

The impossibility of a fully constituted subjectivity is also due to the fact that subject-specific conducts always contend with a number of other conducts *that reflect a different understanding* of the same subject position (Allen 1999: 79). For example, practices like doing the chores and looking after the children both advance and presuppose an understanding of feminity that differs from the kind of understanding held in place by such practices as being economically independent. The fact that such practices (and, by transition, the norms that these practices reflect) always come in contact, interfere, intersect, or overlap with each other means that they limit each other's ability to constitute fully defined, and hence static, subjectivities.

III.3. The Background Perspective: Structures, Intersectionality, Institutions

As already noted, each relation is always-already situated in, and is a part of, a background that encompasses a multiplicity of relations. These latter interact with the foreground relation in complex ways, and an understanding

of such interactions is necessary if one is to gain a better understanding not only of a specific foreground relation, but also of power as such. I proceed, then, by breaking down the background perspective into its main aspects or components, and by discussing how each of these aspects relates to the foreground perspective. The aspects on which I want to focus are: structures, intersectionality, and institutions.

By structure I mean the totality of relations featuring the same subject-positions as in the foreground relation. For example, the relation between this particular husband and this particular wife is only one instance of marital relations in a given society and, more broadly, of the relation between men and women. Similarly, the power relation between a specific firm and its employees is one part of a society's class structure, which is the sum total of all relations between employers and employees in that society. The advantage of looking at this sum total is that of detecting patterns in the forms of the prevalent ways of acting and thinking at play in same subjects-relations. Thus, for example, a structural view enables one to see that *most* indigenous peoples in Canada live in poverty and still suffer discrimination at the hands of generally better-off white persons. Without this kind of focus, it would be impossible to see specific cases of oppression and domination as instances of larger patterns of domination and inequality.

At the same time, a focus on the structure directs our attention to the interplay between structure itself and the foreground relation. On the one hand, the dominant practices and norms at work in same-subject relations "shape[s] the expectations, choices, and beliefs of the individuals involved" in the foreground relation (Allen 1999: 131). For example, a white person who

has been raised in a social environment that approves of discriminatory practices against people of colour will be pressed, expected, and indoctrinated into upholding such practices in his own relations. On the other hand, a structure partly reflects the individual foreground relations it is made out of. As a result, changes in the practices at work in individual relations will affect and shape the entire structure. Clearly, the magnitude to which the structure will be affected depends on the number of foreground relations that are subject to change: the greater the number, the greater its effect on the structure. The upshot here is that transforming the structure is also a matter of changing foreground relations.

While a structure is the totality of same subjects-relations, intersectionality indicates the way in which relations featuring different subject-positions overlap or meet with a foreground relation. More explicitly, intersectionality denotes the fact that one person takes part in more relations at the same time: for example, one is an employee who stands in a power relation with her employer, but also a mother who seeks to manage, and is in turn influenced by, her children; a citizen who seeks to influence her government at the same time as she is governed by it; a person of colour in relation with white people; and so on. Consequently, the subject is not an unitary entity, but rather a *multifaceted* one, with as many subjectivities as the power relations in which she partakes.

As Foucault (2003c: 33) observed, there are always "relationships and interferences" between one's own different subjectivities. These latter converge when different subjectivities feature similar or at least compatible practices. Thus, for example, a child who has been trained to be obedient will

not have problems in adapting to an educational system that stresses the value of obedience for students. Conversely, one's subjectivities can be at odds with each other, as when one plays a very active role as a citizen but a somewhat passive and submissive one as a wife. This tension can, but need not, result in the modification of one's subjectivity on the basis of conducts that pertain to one's other conflicting subjectivities --for example, the submissive wife above use her more active conducts as a citizen as a template to become more assertive in her relation with her husband.

Since each foreground relation is always-already part of a structure, the intersection of different relations implies also the intersection of their corresponding structures. The result of this intersection is an intricate pattern, wherein one's own subject position in a specific relation, and hence structure, may either reinforce or be at odds with her positions in other relations and structures. For example, one's position of dominance as a white person vis-à-vis people of colour conflicts with her subordinate position as a woman with respect to men. However, this dominant position both strengthens and is strengthened by her position of dominance as, say, an employer in relation to her employees. The upshot here is that there are always "relationships and interferences" (Foucault 2003f: 33) between one's several subjectivities, and therefore between the structures in which these subjectivities formed.

As relations of forces intersect, similarly they can converge or diverge. Divergence happens when there are "disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another," thereby forming a line of cleavage between such relations (Foucault 1990: 92). Convergence, on the other hand, consists in the alignment and homogenisation of power relations, such that they find

support in one another. In this way, "a general line" is created "that traverses the local oppositions and links them together" as if they were parts of the same chain (Foucault 1990: 94). The result is a web or a cluster of relations that entertain an affinity with each other or face the same direction. However, this cluster is always unstable due to the fact that points of resistance, which "are present everywhere in the power network," always produce "cleavages in a society that shifts about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings" (Foucault 1990: 95-6).

One particular form that the integration of power relations takes is that of the institution, whether this be a single one like the school or a complex system like the state. In the relational view of power that I am advancing, institutions are best seen as collections of individuals who interact in fairly regulated ways in order to attain specific collective objectives. For example, the police comprise a vertical structure that regulates the interaction between its members on the basis of their ranks. Alongside this structure exists also an horizontal segmentation providing for several bureaux and divisions tasked with specific assignments (say, human resources, investigations, intelligence, etc.). These two structures intersect so as to define the relations between the members of this institution (for example, between an officer and a captain of the same bureau; or between two captains from different bureaux, etc.), who work collectively in order to ensure public order.

An institution, then, is a node where different power relations integrate and congeal in such a way that people's interactions are fairly regulated. That such relations are regulated, however, does not mean that institutions do not change. As noted, power relations are unstable, reversible, and mobile;

likewise, institutions can contract, expand, break down, assume new objectives, and so forth. Furthermore, as a power relation always-already entails the possibility of resistance, so institutions may be traversed by different points of resistance. These may scattered in specific parts of the cluster in an uncoordinated fashion, as in the case of slack on the part of different employees as a protest for having repetitive jobs or for being overworked and underpaid. Alternatively, resistance may be coordinated, as when a number of people send a letter to their directors protesting against what they perceive is an unjust policy or disciplinary measure. My point is that to view any institution as an established and fairly regulated cluster of relations is to grasp institutions as *processes* instead of things. This is in sharp contrast with the view of institutions, and of the state in particular, as monolithic instruments that one can take over and wield differently, as in the reified-sovereignist paradigm of power.

In fact, the state integrates a number of institutions, each of which in turns integrates a number of relations, has specific functions, and stands in defined relations with each other. Dictatorial regimes, for example, centralise legislative, executive, and judicial functions in one person or *junta*, who command the army as well as the bureaucracy. Democratic states, on the other hand, associate these functions not with specific persons but rather with institutions, such as the parliament, the presidency, and the judicial system. The relations between such institutions vary from country to country; in addition, such institutions entertain fairly regulated relations of governance with bureaucratic departments, the armed forces, the police, and so on.

The issues that needs to be investigated now concerns the specific role of the state. How does the state relate to other relations? Conversely, does the state exhaust the workings of power? The answers to these questions need to be derived empirically if they are to be attentive to the actual operations of power in different societies at different times. In what follows, I draw upon Foucault's own analyses of power in order to point out the main mechanisms and techniques through which power has operated in western countries. I am aware that such analyses are not exhaustive, but it is my contention that they do give us a general idea of *at least* some of the main trends and discontinuities in the workings of power.

III.4. From Theory to Empirical Analysis

Foucault's analytics starts from the XIII and XIV centuries, which saw the formation, in France and Britain, of the state as a centralised political organisation claiming and exercising control over a relatively large territory. This new organisation developed under the guide of absolute monarchs on the basis of, and sometimes in opposition to, a plethora of small, overlapping, and often conflicting power relations that gravitated especially on local lords and itinerants bands of armed men (Foucault 1990: 86). The key function to which the monarch laid claim was the establishment --as the motto has it-- of *pax et iustitia*. Peace was obtained through the ban of private warfare and, specifically, of feuds among vassals as well as local lords; publicly-administered justice, on the other hand, was a way to prevent the private settling of counts (Foucault 1990: 87). The precise mechanism through which sovereign power was able to ban and prevent private warfare was that of

prohibition-sanction that inheres in the law. In turn, the enforcement of this mechanism was up to the state, and especially to magistrates and sheriffs.

The specificity of sovereign power is that it is essentially a "subtraction mechanism," that is, a modality of power that functions as "a right to appropriate a portion of the wealth, a tax of product, goods and services, labour and blood, levied on the subjects" (Foucault 1990: 136). Accordingly, the principal fields of application of this power are the land and the subjects who inhabit it, insofar as these are bearers of wealth or commodities that one can confiscate or otherwise deduct (Foucault 2003d: 235). The overall aim that the exercise of this right of deduction served was the preservation of the state in general, and of the sovereign's rule in it in particular. In this sense, sovereignty is self-referential or circular, to the extent that the end of sovereignty is the continued exercise of sovereignty (Foucault 2003d: 236). Consequently, the state of affairs to which sovereign power aspired is that all subjects obey his laws --a state of total obedience.

The fact that sovereign power was the principal modality in which power worked in feudal societies conferred primacy to the relation between the sovereign and his subjects. However, this does not mean that other kinds of power relations did not exist. Rather, these relations were both miniature models of the sovereign relation and were hierarchically inferior to it. Social relations were *modelled after* the sovereign relation insofar as one party stood in relation with another party (say, a father in relation to his family) in the same way as the sovereign did with his subjects. In this sense, sovereign power was the model for the operations of power at the lowest level of society. At the same time, such relations were *inferior* to the sovereign relation in that

all the parties to such relations were first and foremost subjects bound to obey the sovereign. Consequently --Foucault (2003b: 35) concluded,-- the "relationship of sovereignty...was coextensive with the entire social body" in Medieval feudal societies (Foucault 2003f: 35).

Against this background, Foucault (2003b: 23-40) argued, the view of power as a substance in the hands of the sovereign emerged as a way to make sense of both the emergence of a unitary state, and of the subsumption of the plethora of small powers under the sovereign's power. However dominant, this view did not go unchallenged. The specific object of contention was not the importance of the sovereign (in fact, there was almost a consensus on *that*), but rather the very view of power as a thing. Machiavelli, for example, was among the few ones to conceive of the power of the sovereign in terms of relations of force with other rulers as well as with his subjects (Foucault 1990: 97; 2003d: 232). Machiavelli's intuition was that subjects, far from being the powerless side, were in a position to both submit to power and to exercise it, to the extent that they could assume an hostile attitude against their prince, call on other rulers to depose him, and so on. If it is true that Machiavelli's theory was scandalous at the time of its inception, perhaps we should look for the origins of this scandalous aura less in Machiavelli's alleged cynicism, than in his relational grasp of power.

Beginning in the XVI century --argued Foucault,-- the state underwent a significant change in the way in which it operates. While sovereign power found its principle in the preservation of sovereign rule, beginning in the XVI century western states became increasingly more preoccupied with the management of human relationships --that is, with the way people lived

(Smart 1985: 128). Such a shift both presupposed and made possible the revival of an ancient form of power that Foucault (2003a: 131) calls "pastoral." Articulated on the model of the shepherd whose task is to ensure the well-being of his flock, this power has directed modern rulers to look after the health and welfare not only of the population, but also of each and every person. To this end, the state has undertaken to oversee, regulate, and arrange the plethora of power relations at work in its society, including those that centre on the production of wealth, the education of people, and the prevention as well as treatment of illnesses. These relations do not derive from the state, but have found in the modern state their "global overseer [and] the[ir] principle of regulation" (Foucault 2003e: 141).

Of course, it does not follow from the above that sovereign power has disappeared, but rather that it has been colonised and taken over by this modern form of pastoral power, which Foucault (2003d) refers to as "governmental." Accordingly, the characteristic mechanism of sovereign power (that is, the law) has become only one "tactic" among others that the rulers can deploy to ensure the well-being of all as well as of each one (Foucault 2003d: 237). Such tactics consist in a number of mechanisms and techniques that governmental power shares with, adapted, and borrowed from other modalities of power, both ancient and modern. Below, I want to briefly explore two such modalities of power (namely, discipline and biopolitics) that are pervasive in today's societies, in order to then focus on the techniques that governmental power has adapted from these modalities.

First utilised in selected religious communities in the Middles Ages, discipline became an established practice in armies, the workplace, prisons,

and schools in the XVII century, in order to then "reach[...] out to ever broader domains" such as sports (Foucault 1995: 139). This modality of power "define[s] how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but also that they may operate as one wishes" (Foucault 1995: 138). Specifically, discipline aims to effect three principal changes in those who are subject to power. First, it trains individual bodies in such a way to build and augment their capacity to undertake certain tasks, such as using a piece of machinery in the case of workers. Secondly, discipline guides individuals to use their energies economically, that is, in accordance with the principle of maximum efficiency and minimum expenditure, while performing particular gestures (Foucault 1995: 152). Finally, disciplinary training increases the submissiveness of the governed, such that increased capacities do not become sources and instruments of resistance against those who exercise power.

On the whole, then, discipline aims to effect "a parallel increase" both in the utility of the body and in its docility (Foucault 1990: 139; 1995: 40-1). To these ends, this form of power functions through apparently minor, quotidian yet meticulous techniques. One such procedure is a regimen of exercises, through which the governors impose on the governed "tasks that are both repetitive and different, but always graduated" (Foucault 1995: 161). A second instrument of disciplinary training is the continuous surveillance of the governed --of the way they undertake the tasks imposed on them as well as the way they progress in developing their skills. Surveillance works by rendering people visible, such that they become the "principle of [their] own subjection" (Foucault 1995: 202) by conducting themselves as if they were always-already

watched. A third disciplinary technique encompasses the examination alongside the mechanisms of writing and registration that accompany it, to which I turn below.

The specificity of the examination is that it "makes each individual a 'case'" (Foucault 1995: 191) through a meticulous documentation of each person. In turn, the aggregation of individual files makes possible the constitution of a field of knowledge about specific subject-types, such as pedagogy on students and criminology on criminals (Foucault 1995: 191). This knowledge entrenches the exercise of disciplinary power in three steps. First, the aggregation and analysis of individuals allows to determine the statistical norm of collective behaviour among a specific subject-type, as in the case of how quickly students generally learn specific skills. Secondly, this norm is taken up as a normative standard on the basis of which the governed are judged, differentiated from each other, and ranked along a continuum included between the pole of normality and abnormality. Finally, a system of extra-legal penalty or gratification allows the governors to correct the governed on the basis of the norm, so as to produce a degree of homogeneity among the governed (Foucault 1995: 184).

While discipline is directed towards the performance as well as the docility of individual bodies, biopolitics is a modality of power that targets the living body in order to optimise the general state of health (Foucault 1990: 139). Having emerged first in the XVIII century, biopolitics is particularly concerned with biological phenomena as they happen at the collective level, such as birth and mortality rates, life expectancy, and endemics. The specific mechanisms through which this modality of power operates include statistical

analyses, which allow to discern statistically normal biological processes, as well as "regulatory mechanisms" (Foucault 2003c: 246). These latter act on overall phenomena in order to ensure that they remain within a bandwidth of acceptability that is recognised as a normatively good or optimal state (Foucault 2004: 6). More explicitly, the objective is not so much to eradicate, say, illnesses or infirmities or child mortality, which are taken to be in fact constant and 'natural' processes; rather, the aim is to ensure that these processes are kept to an acceptable minimum (Foucault 2004: 45). To this end, interventions include vaccination, health insurance systems, and campaigns on personal hygiene.

As noted above, the governmental state operates through a number of tactics to ensure the health and well-being of all as well as of each member. The law is one such tactic; others include, but are not limited to: incentives, regulatory mechanisms, and techniques of observation and registration like birth certificates, identity cards, social insurance numbers, and police records. Crucially, such techniques of power are not concentrated only in the state. For example, we find biopolitical regulatory mechanisms are work "at the sub-state level, in a whole series of sub-state institutions such as medical institutions, welfare funds, insurance, and so on" (Foucault 2003c: 250). Similarly, disciplinary techniques are present in state institutions (police, army, bureaucracy), but also in factories, schools, hospitals, and various other relations at the capillaries of society. Consequently, while power relations have become more and more under state control in the late-modern period, "an understanding of their operation remains beyond the grasp of analyses which

proceed... on the assumptions that the state is the locus of power" (Smart 1985: 132).

However, the fact that the state does not exhaust power relations does not mean that it is like any other power relation. The distinguishing feature of the state is that, unlike other relations, it can expand its reach over other relations thanks to its regulatory power. In other words, the state can intervene directly in other relations through rules, regulations, incentives, mediation, and so forth, in order to regulate the way in which parties interact with each other. Thus, for example, the state sets standards that guide medical relations between doctors and patients; similarly, it provides the legal as well as financial framework (such as tax breaks, safety legislation, and minimum wage requirements) within which labour and capital relate to each other and work out their relation. This regulatory ability endows the state with a significant role to play in the social sphere. However, while change may come from the state, it can also come from within power relations themselves, as I explore in the next chapter.

III.5. Gigantomachy concerning Power

Above, I have presented an *alternative* way to think and analyse power with respect to the reified-sovereignist paradigm of power. What remains to be investigated is the comparative *difference* that it makes to view power as a set of relations rather than as a thing in the hands of the sovereign. Stated otherwise, what are the merits (if any) of viewing power in the former way rather than in the latter way? Which of these two views of power better enables us to make sense of our political agency and better equips us in our

attempts to challenge specific power configurations? More generally, given that these two views offer differing understandings of power that vie for dominance, which view ought we to pick? Answering this question requires that we determine the relative value of one view with respect to the other one.

I argue that the view of power as a set of relations is preferable on the grounds of two main arguments. The first argument has to do with the empirical level, as it revolves around the capacity of a view to shed light on the actual working of power on the ground. Specifically, my contention is that the reified-sovereignist paradigm of power is unable to give us an *accurate* empirical depiction of how power operates outside of feudal-type societies. As noted in the fourth section of this essay, this paradigm formed in the Middle Ages, as a way to make sense of the establishment as well as of the dynamics of sovereign power in European feudal societies. Being bound to the European feudal context, however, this view is unable to disclose non-sovereign forms of power in other societies in different periods. Consequently, those who view power through the lenses of the reified-sovereignist paradigm are blind to "the operation of forms of domination articulated through relations of power that are not disclosed by this" paradigm (Owen 2002: 223). This blindness is problematic, insofar as it is impossible to even attempt to change a form of power if one is not even aware of its existence. In other words, the invisibility of non-sovereign forms of power guarantees their perpetuation.

The upshot is that the empirical inaccuracy of the reified-sovereignist view of power limits one's own political agency as the capacity to navigate, call into question, or transform specific power configurations. By transition, a politically useful view is one that not only discloses the specific power

configurations at work at a specific time and space, but is also flexible enough to account for the emergence or decline of certain forms of power. The picture of power as a set of relation has the ability both to do the former and to be the latter. For one thing, this picture directs us to pay attention to the specific mechanisms and techniques of power the emerge, are in use, and decline in people's attempt to lead each other's conducts. For another, this view is able to grasp sovereignty but is not necessarily wedded to it, as the reified-sovereignist paradigm is. Consequently, the view of power as a set of relation does not lead us to the assumption that sovereignty is the only locus of political reflection and action.

The second reason why we ought to pick the view of power as a set of relations relates to the question of what power is, and therefore has to do with the theoretical level as opposed to the empirical one. My specific contention here is that the very attempt to think of change beyond the debate between reform and revolution *requires* that power be viewed outside of the reified-sovereignist paradigm. In the first chapter, I have shown that the intensity of this debate in fact conceals the common theoretical horizon that both the reformist position and the revolutionary one share: namely, the view that power is a substance in the hands of the sovereign. Moving beyond this debate, then, necessitates the investigation of alternative ways of understanding as well as analysing power, such as precisely the view of power as a set of relations.

We can see our predicament as being analogous to the person who cannot find a way out of a room with an unlocked door, as described by Wittgenstein. "A man will be *imprisoned* in a room with a door that is

unlocked and opens inwards," Wittgenstein (in Winch 1992: 129; italics in the original) observed, "as long as it does not occur to him to *pull* rather than push it." On this view, the debate on reform and revolution is like Wittgenstein's room: we will be trapped in it unless we are able to change the way in which we think about power. This consequence of this theoretical entrapment, of course, is that one is so fixated on the debate between reform and revolution to the point of being unable to even consider other practices, which may (or may not) be better suited in specific situations. Consequently, this captivity has very practical effects, insofar as it guides one person to act in a specific way (for example, to join a party or a guerrilla group) instead of another, potentially easier, and potentially more fruitful one.

In order to investigate these practices, then, it will be necessary to momentarily put aside the reified-sovereignist paradigm in favour of the view of power as a set of relations. What specific practices can be derived from this view, and what merits or dangers inhere in these practices --that we do not know yet. But one cannot know unless one takes a theoretical leap of faith: as Wittgenstein's man will remain imprisoned in the room unless he tries to pull the door, without knowing in advance whether pulling will work or not; similarly one will be unable to move beyond the debate on reform or revolution unless she experiments with a new way of understanding power.

IV

Methods for Change: A Survey

> It is of the highest importance in the art of detection to be able to recognise, out of a number of facts, which are incidental and which are vital.
>
> Arthur Conan Doyle[11]

The attempt to think change beyond the debate on reform or revolution neither flows from, nor implies, an *a priori* rejection of these two methods. Such a rejection would be theoretically obtuse as well as strategically naïve, for, as I argued in the previous chapter, the state remains an important site of power in modern societies. Rather, the main reason for thinking about change differently is that fixating on the debate of reform versus revolution precludes turning our attention onto other practices that *may* prove to be better suited than either reform or revolution. Consequently, this essay builds on the relational view of power explored in the previous chapter, in order to shine a light on a number of alternative methods for change.

I will argue that this view enables us to consider four practices, which I describe in four respective sections: namely, infrapolitics; discursive challenge; confrontation; and finally, non-participation. Whenever possible, my description includes a discussion of some of the limits of these methods as well as of the basic conditions that need to be there for such methods to be likely to be successful in achieving any given end-goal. In the interest of comprehensiveness, an intermezzo between the first and last two sections will discuss reform and revolution. The overarching goal that this paper sets out to

[11] Arthur Conan Doyle. *The Reigate Squire*. cited in *The Chronicles of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, available online at URL: <http://www.siracd.com/quote_title_resp.php?TName=The Reigate Squire> (Accessed May 10, 2012).

achieve is to combine examples (both historical and not) with theoretical insights into a much-needed, if somewhat summary, survey of methods for change. This survey will provide the groundwork for the next chapter, where I discuss which methods are most likely to bring about non-domination.

IV.1. Below the Radar: Infrapolitical Practices

The first method that flows from a relational understanding of power is what James Scott (1990: 183) has ably called "infrapolitics" --the activity of acting differently *without* directly challenging the partakes (Tully 2008: 76). To explicate this point, recall that both the dominant and the subordinate parties to a power relation acquire a specific subjectivity over time --that is, a fairly regular and predictable way of acting. On this view, to display a specific subjectivity is to repeatedly engage in a specific set of practices, such that these practices become habitual and even pre-reflective. Thus, for example, one is a woman to the extent that she engages in practices that are traditionally associated with femininity, such as putting make up on, varnishing one's own nails, depilating, and so on.

Now, the fact that subjectivity is an activity re-enacted over time introduces the possibility to purposefully repeat a specific practice slightly *differently*, in a way that conflicts not only with the original practice but also with the particular norms that this practice was supposed to reflect. For example, a biologically female person may decide to put increasingly less make up, or to depilate increasingly less, and still claim to conduct herself as a 'woman'. In doing so, this person seeks to subvert the normal way in which she is directed to behave.

Like the example above, infrapolitics seeks to subvert the way one is conducted, but it does so by means of low-profile imperfect repetitions that are performed behind the back of the dominant (Scott 1999: 188; Tully 2002: 540). The very name 'infrapolitics' is meant to capture the fact that these challenges take place unobtrusively, "beyond the visible end of the spectrum," much like infrared rays (Scott 1999: 183). An illustration of infrapolitical practices at work can be found in the relations of production, whether in a plantation, or at the factory, or at the office. Here, infrapolitical resistance manifests itself especially as "performances that are not bad enough to provoke punishment but not good enough to allow enterprises to succeed" (Scott 1999: 192). When localised to a small group of workers and to moment of abated supervision, unproductive work is likely to have a relatively small effect on the overall performance of an enterprise, and therefore on the employer. If, on the other hand, foot-dragging is repeated on a massive scale not just in one firm but across several firms, then this petty practice can destabilise the entire system of production. In the former Soviet Union and in communist East European states, for example, unproductive work was such a widespread practice that it was a contributing factor to the chronic economic crisis affecting these countries (Scott 1999: 192).

As a technique of resistance, infrapolitics is particularly suited where the dominant are likely to crushing any overt challenge ruthlessly. The reason for this is that infrapolitics places offstage --that is, there where the dominant are not likely to see. When the cards are stacked against the change agents in any open challenge, then, the *invisibility* of infrapolitics is its greatest strength. However, the detection of infrapolitical practices does not necessarily carry

negative implications for change agents. In fact, maybe the opposite is true, insofar as such agents can only *probe the limit* of the possible in their relation by assessing how the dominant react to an infrapolitical challenge after having detected it (Scott 1999: 196). On this view, any challenge that the dominant detect and do not reprimand establishes a new limit that *incorporates* the specific conducts that change agents had intended as a unobtrusive challenge. Thus, for example, unproductive labour that goes unpunished will be considered as a permissible form of conduct. Conversely, the dominant may not only punish the indirect challenge, but also suppress previously tolerated ways of acting or thinking. In this case, the limit moves in the opposite direction, in a way that narrows the range of permitted conducts that are available to the subordinates (Scott 1999: 196). To illustrate, one need only thing of employers who seek to curb a lack of productivity by increasing surveillance on workers, threatening to decrease salaries, or setting production quota for each individual.

The process of testing the limits is always an attempt to obliquely re-negotiate, and therefore slightly modify, a power relation. This change can go either way: it can *either* enlarge *or* restricts the range of conducts that the subordinates are permitted to engage in. In fact, there may not even be any change at all, as the previous limit may be re-established. The point, however, is that one cannot know which direction the limit will move unless one engages in the "empirical process of search and probing" of this very limit (Scott 1999: 196). Infrapolitical practices are particularly apposite to this function in that they are the least risky form of challenge: if punished at all, infrapolitics usually elicits relatively mild ripostes on account of their minor

and unobtrusive nature. The danger, of course, is that the dominant assigns a disproportionate punishment to the transgressor in the hope to make an example out of her. But this is a risk that one must be willing to run if one wants to test the limit at all.

IV.2. Discursive Challenges and their Discontents

We have seen above that infrapolitics meets its limit when the dominant proceed to curb the re-enactment of such alternative conducts that, in their minds, threaten their privileged position. In this case, change agents may try and raise the stakes by openly challenging the dominant by raising a question about a specific exercise of power in a relation. I call this practice a 'discursive challenge'. This latter consists of three elements, which may be either implicit or explicit. First is a *critique* of the way of thinking that underlies a practice of power that one deems problematic, as in the case of a concerned citizen writing an op-ed to challenge the government's rationale for a stricter crime bill. Second is the *proposal* of a solution to the problematic aspect identified in the first step. Finally, a discursive challenge includes a *demand* to the dominant that they enter into a procedure "of negotiation, deliberation, problem solving, and reform with the aim of modifying" a contested practice or a perceived power imbalance (Tully 2002: 540).

There exist two main ways in which one can pose a discursive challenge. First, one can use the established opportunities for participation or the official channels for negotiation that are present in specific power relations (Tully 2011: 146). Thus, for example, a group of workers may raise a problem about their low wages at an annual general meeting, or otherwise resort to the

in-house dispute resolution mechanisms that exist in the organisation where they work (Tully 2002: 540). Alternatively, one may resort to the conflict resolution mechanisms afforded by the state, as in the case of making an appeal either to the courts or to the governing institutions. By doing so, change agents effectively ask the state to step in and regulate the contested power relation, whether this be between corporations and consumers, or employers and employees, conjugal relations, and so on.

Second, in the absence of established opportunities for negotiation, the very act of posing a discursive challenge is an attempt by change agents to create a space for their own participation in establishing the way they are directed (Tully 2011: 146). For example, an environmental group may attempt to influence environmental policies by producing public documents, such as reports and leaflets, that call into question the reasons for the government's current policies. Indeed, there exist a vast range of techniques for posing a discursive challenge: among others, artistic media such as political graffiti and installations; verbal media such as songs and contestation in dialogue; and written media such as leaflets, pamphlets, reports, and op-eds.

The target of a discursive challenge need not be confined to this or that exercise of power in a relation, such as a specific law or increased supervision, but can extend to the relation as such. In this case, the object of critique is the discursive justification for why the balance of power is so asymmetrical that one party controls the conduct of the other with little reciprocation. An illustration of this kind of challenge is the critique by indigenous activists and their allies, of the "two underlying presumptions" that serve to legitimise the continued colonisation of indigenous peoples (Tully 2000: 51). The first

presumption is that settler societies exercise jurisdiction over the territories of indigenous peoples in an effective as well as legitimate fashion; the second one, by contrast, is that there is no alternative to the *status quo* (Tully 2000: 51). This critique is not merely an intellectual exercise; rather, it seeks to delegitimise these propositions, in the attempt to transform the day-to-day colonial practices that both rest on such propositions and hold them in place.

As with every other method for change, the practice of raising a question has its own limits or, alternatively, harbours certain dangers that one must guard against. One such danger has to do with what Richard Day (2005: 80) has called the "politics of demand." As noted, every discursive challenge involves a more or less explicit demand to the dominant party that either a form or a balance of power be modified. In the absence of a threat to raise the stakes if this demand were not met, this kind of challenge is nothing more than an appeal to the benevolence of the dominant, who must be persuaded to dispense concessions in the form of gifts (Day 2005: 79-80). The act of demanding, then, constitutes change agents as supplicants at the same time as it inscribes the dominant as potential benefactors.

As long as demand-making is a *strategic* practice --that is, a practice that is deployed only when it promises results,-- being-supplicant is a fleeting role that one can easily shed if her demands were to go unanswered. When deployed repeatedly, however, demand-making can mould the subjectivity of the subordinates in such a way that they come to identify and conduct themselves as supplicants (Coulthard 2007: 452). Consequently, one sees oneself as being unable to better one's own conditions without the intercession of the dominant. In other words, the subordinates come to think and behave

themselves *as if* they were powerless, and by transition to recognise and treat the other party as if it were dominant.

This recognition is problematic insofar as it in fact *produces* the party one supplicates *as* the dominant party. Indeed, what makes one party dominant is not necessarily their possession of specific resources, or their skill in mustering such resources for their own ends. Rather, it is the fact that the subordinates, having come to believe that the other party has all the power, relate to this other party as if it were *already* dominant (Žižek 2009: 372). This belief becomes self-fulfilling: on the one hand, it demoralises the subordinates and it reduces them to "supplicants begging for concessions;" on the other hand, it bolsters the other party's self-confidence and courage to act decisively (Parekh 1989: 155). Consequently, the subordinates' own conduct as supplicants has the overall effect of allowing the other party to become dominant, irrespective of this party's own intrinsic qualities such as resources and skills. In this way, the subordinates contribute to the very state of things that they protest against --that is, precisely their own subordination.

Once again, the case of indigenous peoples in Canada provides an apt illustration. Since the 1970s, indigenous tribes' recourse to the Canadian legal system has resulted in a number of important, if limited, victories, such as land rights and degrees of self-government (Tully 2000: 44-5).[12] Such victories have encouraged further recourses to the courts, to the point where the legalistic approach to self-determination has now become the set mode of action among most indigenous communities (Coulthard 2007: 452). The

[12] The landmark ruling here is *R v. Calder* (1973), which, while resulting in a defeat for the indigenous claimants, recognised that "Aboriginal rights existed at the time of contact" (Tully 2000: 45).

dominance of this approach has led the Mohawk scholar, Taiaiake Alfred, to worry about the indigenous peoples' increasing reliance on the institutions of the settler society. As he puts it, "we... turn to the white men for the answers to our problems; worse yet, we have started to trust them" (Alfred 2005: 31). Alfred's specific concern here is that the more indigenous peoples look to such institutions to right some perceived wrongs, the more they become *accustomed* to relying on the benevolence of these institutions. While being a supplicant pays when the gifts are dispensed, the dominant's refusal to make concessions cannot but leave the supplicants in a dead end.

Secondly, a discursive challenge is likely to fail there where the language in which the dominant listens to change agents distorts or even disqualifies what such agents say. Stanley Cavell (in Tully 2002: 537) has nicely illustrated this point in his analysis of the marriage between Nora and Thorvold in Ibsen's play, *A Doll House*. In it, Thorvold "takes it as a matter of course that a marriage is a dollhouse" (Tully 2002: 537), and consequently he always responds to the problems that Nora raises as if she were a doll. Stated otherwise, Thorvold's own way of thinking about marriage is such that in his own eyes, Nora cannot *but* be a doll. As a result, Nora's protests that she not be treated like one falls on deaf ears. It is important to highlight the fact that Thorvold cannot make sense of Nora's protests not because he does not *want* to listen, but rather because his way of thinking does not *allow* him to "secure uptake of Nora's claim as a 'claim to reason'" (Tully 2002: 537).

Cavell's analysis of the relation between Thorvold and Nora serves to illuminate similar dynamics at work in others relations. To illustrate, consider the claim advanced by some environmental as well as indigenous groups, that

governments and businesses ought to respect the environment because there exists a deep spiritual bond between all living beings and the earth.[13] If this argument has not been very successful in striking a chord with its intended recipients, this is mostly because it is formulated in terms that are foreign to the languages in which governments and businesses understand themselves and their functions. These languages centre mainly on the biopolitical protection of the population in the case of governments, and on profits for businesses. Of course, these languages are not static, as illustrated by the ascendancy of the notion of corporate responsibility in business language. The fact remains, however, that such languages have not changed *yet* in such a way to make space for claims on spirituality. Consequently, these languages fail to be taken seriously.

One way to circumvent the disqualification of one's own claims by the language in which the dominant listen and respond, is to couch these claims precisely in terms of the dominant' own language. On this view, for example, the argument for environmental protection would at least make sense to government and businesses if formulated in terms of its alleged benefits for citizens' well-being or of corporate responsibility, respectively. While engaging with the dominant language may be successful in overcoming the problem of not being heard, this move introduces its own dangers. Arguably, the main such dangers is that one becomes accustomed to using this language to the point of assimilation, where one starts to think like the dominant (more on assimilation below). If a discursive challenge is not to lose its subversive potential, one must guard against such dangers carefully.

[13] This kind of argument appears, for example, in work by Joanna Macy, a preview of which is available at URL: <www.joannamacy.net> (Accessed January 4, 2012).

Finally, a discursive challenge meets it limits whenever the dominant are able to co-opt a number of change agents, especially those that are invited to take part in negotiations to resolve the on-going dispute. Co-optation manifests itself in two different forms: as collusion and as assimilation. In the former case, the subordinates who negotiate with the dominant deliberately accept an agreement that is disadvantageous to the entire subordinate party in exchange for certain privileges. For example, trade-union representatives may agree to drop or substantially modify their demands for higher wages after receiving a cash payment from the other negotiating party. Collusion, then, consists in 'selling out' to the dominant.

By contrast, assimilation is the process of becoming like the dominant --i.e., to acquire the dominant's ways of thinking as well as acting. An illustration of assimilation is the increasing purchase of the belief among Amerindians that the land is something to be owned and exploited instead of cared for and protected. One of the reasons for this is indigenous participation in land claim processes (Nadasdy in Coulthard 2007: 452). These processes are couched in the language of property, thereby making imperative for indigenous people to having recourse to this very language in order to at least be heard by the Canadian courts. Problematically, these land processes are shaping the subjectivity of the indigenous claimants in a way that directs them *away* from their tradition belies on land (Coulthard 2007: 452). Specifically, the worry here is that indigenous claimants become so imbued with the language of property that they come to think of themselves and act as property-owners instead of protectors of the land.

It is important to note the difference between collusion and assimilation. One can be colluded without being assimilated --i.e., one can 'sell out' to the dominant during a negotiation and yet maintain his own ways of acting and thinking. Conversely, one can be assimilated without being colluded; in fact, the more the subordinates become like the dominant, the less need will there be for the dominant to 'buy' the subordinates, as the two parties will share a similar way of acting and thinking. However, assimilation and collusion do intersect occasionally, as in the case of indigenous leadership that not only has appropriated the white man's way of life, but also sells out to, say, corporate interests by ensuring corporations advantageous contracts in exchange for a bonus (Alfred 2005: 40-2). Be that as it may, co-optation has the overall effect of *neutralising* the demands initially put forward by the subordinates by fuelling factionalism --i.e., by creating divisions among the subordinates through precisely the tactics of assimilation and collusion.

Intermezzo: Reform and Revolution in Perspective

The intersection of collusion and assimilation is a pressing danger not only for any discursive challenge that results in a negotiation, but also for reform as well as for revolution. On the one hand, the danger of assimilation finds expression in Salman Rushdie's (1998: 211) assertion in his *The Satanic Verses*, that "to be raised in the house of power is to learn its ways, to soak them up." Here, Rushdie draws attention to the fact that initiates in state power, even the most sincere ones, are vulnerable to betraying their initial intentions once they are exposed to the imperatives that pervade the 'halls of power' --namely, ensuring the loyalty and smooth functioning of state

institutions, guaranteeing social order, and maintaining one's own position in power. The specific danger is that representatives take up such imperatives and make them their own, so as to become less interested in effecting changes than in perpetuating their own privileges as members of governing bodies (Newman 2009: 225).[14]

The overall effect of soaking up the ways of the 'house of power', the, is the distancing between party members in governing institutions and the rank-and-file of the party, who come to feel unrepresented and disenfranchised. Of course some people may decide to throw their support behind another party or, when multi-party elections are not available, organise a clandestine party with an armed wing in the hope to seize power. However, both moves run the very same risk of assimilation: if they were to succeed, what is to prevent the new people in power from comfortably resting on the pillow that they previously wanted to punch? In other words, what ensures that the initiates in power do not lose sight of their initial intentions of changing the system of power, whence they now draw their privileges?

The questions above are behind the sense of disenfranchisement among a growing number of people in Italy. This sense manifests itself in everyday discourse through the designation of *all* parliamentary parties as the "caste" (see, for example, Fittipaldi 2011).[15] This term is meant to capture the wealth of privileges that elected representatives to the Italian Parliament enjoy, including a €14,000 per month salary/allowance and a guaranteed annuity

[14] The theme of betrayal is a very prominent one in Marxist revolutionary theory, and especially in Trotskyism. The landmark text here is Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed*, in which he critiques Stalin for derailing the Russian revolution.

[15] A Google search of "casta + Italia " generated 14,900,000 hits on January 5, 2012.

after five years of service (Fittipaldi 2011). In a country where one third of the youths are now unemployed and the impact of the global financial crisis has forced people to tighten the belt, it is not surprising that these privileges have caused popular resentment (Adnkronos International 2011). Furthermore, the tenacity with which elected officials hold onto these privileges in spite of popular protests and lawsuits cannot but fuel the perception that holding public office has become more a means to living a comfortable life than to serving the citizenry. The widespread sense among the Italian electorate is that calls for change on the part of political parties only results in the substitution of the persons in power, but not of the system of power itself.[16]

Alongside the danger of assimilation, initiates in power are vulnerable to collusion with corporate interests that attempt to protect or further their own interests by influencing the governing bodies. The United States is a case in point --it is an habitual practice for elected officials to receive contributions from lobbyists acting on behalf of either specific corporations or industry fields, such as energy and pharmaceuticals (OpenSecrets.org 2012). For the 2010 legislative cycle, for example, House representative Harry Reid (D-Nev) topped the list of recipients of contributions with $943,388 received from lobbyists and $1,043,738 from lobbyists' family members (OpenSecrets.org 2012). It is not my contention that all US representatives, and Reid in particular, are colluded with corporate interests. Rather, my argument is that it is hard to justify such contributions to House representatives if corporate

[16] To my knowledge, the scandal of the privileges that the Italian 'caste' enjoys exploded in the last third of 2011, when an employee at the Chamber of Deputies decided to publish documents detailing privileges and abuses of power by elected representatives following his or her lay-off after 15 years of employment on yearly contracts. This whistleblower, who goes by the curious pseudonym of 'Spidertruman', continues to make his or her voice heard through his blog, which can be found at URL: <http://isegretidellacasta.blogspot.com/>.

interests did not hope to gain their favour --i.e., to quite literally buy their support.

Of course, the logic behind taking over state power is that the state, while not exhausting the multiplicity of power relations, can expand its reach to regulate social relations through rules, regulations, incentives, persuasion, mediation, and so on. Thus can the state bring about desired transformations in specific relations. If such transformations are to be successful and sustainable, however, elected representatives must take precautions against the very real aforementioned dangers of both assimilation and collusion.

IV.3. Becoming Adversarial: Confrontation

When a relation of domination proves to be unresponsive to discursive challenges and therefore non-negotiable, the subordinates can turn to direct confrontation with the dominant "in acts of liberation and self-determination" (Tully 2011: 146). This practice of resistance takes the form of a physical fight, a revolt, an insurrection, or a revolution, whereby one's counterpart becomes an adversary to be defeated (Foucault 2003e: 142).[17] The aim here is to compel the dominant to make concessions through the use of force --even lethal force, if necessary. A confrontation between adversaries reaches its end either when it becomes a relation of physical compulsion, or when a new power relation is established.

The former instance obtains when one party takes hold of its opponents in such a way as to act directly on their bodies instead of acting on their actions. On this view, the victors do not incite, dissuade, encourage, captivate,

[17] The arguments that I develop in this section are applicable to revolution, as well, insofar as this method involves a military confrontation with government forces.

or threaten the defeated party, for example by providing incentives to ensure their loyalty. Rather, the dominant "force, bend, break, destroy" their adversaries through killings, torture, rape, and arbitrary detentions, such that the other party is not simply defeated but also reduced to impotence (Foucault 2003e: 137). To illustrate this, one need only think of the extraordinary renditions of suspected terrorists by CIA operatives.

In the case of the re-establishment of a power relation, by contrast, one party becomes able to direct, "in a fairly constant manner and with reasonable certainty, the conduct of others" (Foucault 2003e: 143). This power relation may either reproduce the balance of power in existence before the confrontation, or reflect a new balance, as determined by the outcomes of the confrontation itself. A revolt wherein the subordinates are able to gain and maintain an advantage on the dominant will likely result in the instatement of a balance of power tilted in favour of the subordinates (who thereby become the dominant). Conversely, the subordinates' inability to withstand the force of the dominant in a direct confrontation will translate in their re-subjection in a more rigid relation of domination.

The successfulness of a direct confrontation is contingent on one or more of the following three elements. First is superior physical or military strength --as a saying popularised by an Italian TV series has it, 'when someone with a gun meets someone with a machine gun, the one with the gun is most likely a dead man'. While physical or military superiority is important, often it is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition of success. For, a weaker party can overcome a stronger one provided that the former has a better-refined strategy, that is, a plan of how best to induce one's adversary to

give up the struggle by exploiting his vulnerabilities. At times, then, strategy can compensate for inferior physical or military strength, as shown by the victory of the poorly-equipped guerrilla movement led by Fidel Castro against the better-armed Cuban army in the 1950s. Finally, the outcome of a confrontation varies in accordance with the strength of the connections that the subordinates have been able to weave, and therefore with the kind of assistance that they receive from their allies (Holloway 2005: 212). For example, Libyan rebels greatly benefitted from the military assistance offered by various countries, such as those making up the NATO alliance, in their own struggle against Gaddafi's regime.

Confrontation meets its limits not only when one or more of the aforementioned elements do not obtain, but also when it is not exactly clear who the oppressors are. To illustrate this point, consider contemporary forms of imperialism --what usually goes under the name of 'postmodern' imperialism. In this specific declension, imperialism manifests itself increasingly less as the military occupation of, and the imposition of foreign administrators on, a given territory --although, of course, examples of military-political imperialism still persist. Rather, imperialism has taken more and more the form both of economic exploitation on the part of corporations based on the first world, and of the permeation of western ways of acting and thinking into indigenous lifestyles (Parekh 1989: 18-9). With the forces of imperialist oppression becoming ever-more elusive, "latter-day guerrilla find themselves punching at air" (Alfred 2005: 58), as there are no foreign administrators to kill or armies to fight. Similarly, storming corporate offices would be of little use, as economic dependency does not exhaust the

contemporary forms of imperialism. In such a case, confrontation proves to be at best of little use.

So far, I have discussed confrontation as if the yardstick for success were the extent to which the subordinates can prevail over their adversaries. When victory is next to impossible due to great military disparity, however, the bar for success is much lower or, rather, *different*. In this case, success is not so much emerging triumphant from the fight, as inducing the dominant to finally *hear* the subordinates' plight to initiate a problem-solving dialogue. As noted, this dialogue is precluded either when the dominant ignore the subordinates' discursive challenges, or when the language with which they listen disqualifies the subordinates' claims from the outset. In either case, the recourse to a short-lived confrontation is a powerful catalyst to get the dominant to *turn their attention* to issues that, in the subordinates' own eyes, had been previously overlooked. On this view, then, a confrontation can still be considered successful if it opens up a much-need dialogue on issues that the dominant had been unable or unwilling to consider.

To illustrate the above, consider the short-lived military insurgency by the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) in Chiapas, Mexico in 1994. This unexpected armed insurrection brought to the fore issues that many, both in Mexico and beyond, had largely ignored: among other, the assault on indigenous ways of life on the part of businesses and preservation of Chiapas' delicate ecological balance (Wild 1998). The EZLN was clearly aware that the insurgency was doomed to failure --indeed, its was swiftly repressed by the Mexican army. But its greatest achievement was precisely that of rendering a number of invisible issues visible again, and thus to open

us a dialogue about such issues in the 'halls of power', in the media, and in people's homes.

IV.5. Refusing to be Directed in this Way: Non-Participation

An alternative method to confrontation is for the subordinates to overly refuse to engage in dominant-prescribed conducts. I call this method 'non-participation', as it entails turning *away* from the practices of power through which the dominant seek to manage the subordinates. In the attempt to gain a better understanding of this method, it is useful to begin by contrasting it with the three methods described above. First, unlike a discursive challenge, which takes place at the *discursive* level, non-participation is a form of struggle by *deed*: it consists in *acting* otherwise with respect to the way that one is directed to follow. However, while non-participation is distinct from a discursive challenge, the two are not incompatible, as in the case of a person who refuses to pay a tax that she considers unreasonable while justifying her action in an open letter to the treasury. Second, non-participation differs from confrontation in that it falls short of taking up arms or physically attacking one's opponent --or even insulting or teasing them, for that matter. Finally, while infrapolitics takes place offstage, non-participation is overt and in fact makes it a point to be so. For, its aim is precisely to *signal* one's own dissatisfaction with being directed in this specific way (say, in an authoritarian fashion) instead of another way (say, in a more collaborative fashion).

As a mechanism of resistance, non-participation builds on a key insight on the limits of power --defined, to reiterate, as the action of governing someone's behaviour. Namely, this action is successful if, and only if, if the

subordinates engage in the conducts prescribed by the dominant. For example, a firm may introduce a bonus in order to encourage workers' productivity, but this measure can only achieve its desired end only if the workers themselves buy into it. Of course, insubordination is likely to lead to the intensification of the power relation, as the dominant have recourse to more assertive measures (for example, threatening lay-offs). But these measures in turn give rise to a field of responses on the part of the subordinates, who can yield to the dominant's request, or raise a problem about this request, or stick to their refusal. My point is this: if power is a mode of action on people who are recognised as being capable of action more or less self-consciously, then there is always the possibility in a power relation to refuse the re-enactment of one or more conducts. (This also means that the possibility of refusal ceases to obtain when a power relation gives way to a relation of physical compulsion.)

However, the fact that this possibility exists in a power relation may lead one astray. The fallacious conclusion to be avoided at all costs here is that those who do not seize this possibility *willingly* take part in an oppressive power relation (Parekh 1989: 202). This may be true in some cases, but certainly not for all. For example, one can engage in prescribed conducts not because she willingly embraces such conducts, but rather out of fear for reprisals. Similarly, she can endure her oppressive circumstances in the hope that they are just temporary or, alternatively, in order to better prepare herself for a forthcoming struggle. Finally, as noted, one can reluctantly engage in prescribed conducts, yet challenge them at the discursive level or subvert them behind the dominant's back. In sum, then, the risk that one runs in focusing on the dichotomy between participation and refusal is that one obscures the

qualitative difference between several possible ways of participation. This difference, I submit, is real and ought to be taken seriously.[18]

As there are different kinds of participation, similarly there is non-participation and non-participation. First, the refusal that inheres in non-participation can range from *one* behaviour to the *entire range* of prescribed conducts. An example of the former is an act of civil disobedience --that is, the violation of a law that one deems unreasonable or unjust. In this latter case, by contrast, non-participation takes the form of the abandonment of the relation of power in which one took part. Thus, for example, a group of workers can decide to go on strike until a new collective agreement on wage and labour standards is reached; alternatively, they may decide to quit their job altogether and migrate to another city, another state, or another continent (Hard & Negri 2000: 212). Similarly, a soldier may decide to desert the army if he finds its operations to be objectionable, and a wife who is subjected to continuous abuses may choose to flee and seek refuge at a women's shelter.

The examples above point to the fact that non-participation may either be a *temporary* measure or a *definitive* one. In the former case, non-participation is a technique meant to bring about a re-negotiation of the power relation, as in the case of an industrial strike to obtain better working conditions. By contrast, the latter case obtains when the subordinates flee or escape never to return. Of course, the question that comes with every escape revolves around where one is going (Braidotti in Day 2005: 165). In other words: what follows the negative, subtractive gesture of withdrawing from a

[18] Similarly, as I explicate in chapter V (p. 151ff), there are several, qualitatively different ways to exercise power.

given power relation? Or rather, what *needs* to follow this gesture if escape is to in fact challenge, and not simply shun in an escapist fashion, a given relation or structure of power?

The specific danger to ward off here is to be unable to go beyond the negative stage of saying 'No!' to the dominant --one is reminded here of the predicament of Bartebly the Scrivener, as described by Melville (1853/2012) in his homonymous short story. As a newly-hired legal assistant, Bartebly initially works in a zealous fashion on the tasks that the narrator, a wealthy New York lawyer, assigns him. One day, however, he refuses the lawyer's request to help him proofread a document, muttering 'I would prefer not to'. He continues to refuse an increasing number of tasks in the following months until he ends up doing nothing all day long. At his refusal to leave the premises of the office, he is forcibly removed and thrown to jail, where he finally dies of starvation because he eventually turns down food too (Melville 1853/2012).

The predicament in which Bartebly-like figures find themselves is this: while their refusal deprives the dominant of important services, thereby weakening the dominant's own bargaining position, being unable to go beyond the stage of refusal can only lead one to a "suicidal marginal position with no consequences" (Žižek 2009: 353). Thus, for example, a group of workers who have quit their jobs but are unable to go beyond this stage will soon lack the means to sustain themselves. The way out of this predicament is for change agents to engage in the *positive* task of enacting and experimenting with alternative ways of doing things. An illustration of this is when people set up and link together "their own democratically run cooperatives and community-

based organisations to provide the same or similar public goods" that the structures that they have abandoned do (Tully 2011: 146). In this sense, escape or flight are to be understood less in their usual escapist sense, and more as an *active* gesture of leave-taking that aims to create a space outside of the scope of the dominant (Virno 1996: 199-203). Thus, for example, a group of workers may decide to pool their resources and link with specific consumers to create viable cooperatives; similarly, colonised people may create their own indigenous structures of governance after having abandoned colonial ones.[19]

At this point, it may be beneficial to investigate the circumstances in which non-participation affects the dominant in such a way to make it difficult for them either to re-subjugate the resisters, or to do so without making concessions. In other words, what needs to obtain for non-participation to successfully bring about a transformation of a relation of power? There are, I submit, three main factors that determine the successfulness of non-participation: (a) the degree of dependency between subordinates and dominants; (b) inter-group solidarity; and (c) intra-group solidarity.

Let us start with the first factor. I have argued that in a power relation, power is at work only insofar as the subordinates do not refuse to engage in the conducts prescribed by the dominant. In this sense, all dominant parties depend on the participation of their respective subordinate parties for the power relation to exist at all. And yet, there are also cases in which the dominant use the services, resources, or recognition provided by the subordinates to consolidate their own (that is, the dominant's) position of superiority. Consider, for example, the relation between employers and

[19] I expand on this point in Chapter V, p. 163ff.

employees and that between corporations and consumers. In the former relation, employers cannot "produce the goods and services upon the sale of which his own living depends" without the participation of workers in the production process and/or service delivery (Paullin 1944: 20). Similarly, it is impossible for corporations to make profits unless customers are willing to pay for their products (Paullin 1944: 22). In these two cases, the dominant position that employers and corporations occupy is a function not simply of their own material assets, but also of the labour and money that employees and customers provide, respectively. This dependency opens up the space to undermine this dominance, and thus weaken the bargaining position of the other party, through strikes (that is, the refusal to work) and product boycotts (that is, the refusal to purchase certain products).

A similar logic is at work in Nietzsche's remark in his *Human, All too Human*, that "if whenever the occasion for using the vote arises hardly two thirds of those entitled to vote, perhaps indeed not even a majority of them, come to the ballot box, this is a vote *against* the entire voting-system as such" (in Call 2002: 47; italics in the original). At the core of Nietzsche's remark is the insight that in modern electoral democracies, the ritual of voting both authorises a new government and recognises it as legitimate. More importantly perhaps, the presupposition on which such democracies operate is that party politics is *the* way to conduct politics, and therefore that the most effective method to have an impact is by participating in formal political structures by voting or joining a party. This kind of participation makes sense when most people feel that existing parties represent them appropriately, or when the financial, juridical, etc. barriers to start new parties are not too difficult to

overcome. But what if these conditions do not obtain, as when all parliamentary parties (both the ruling bloc *and* opposition) act more like a 'caste' interested in perpetuating their own privileges?

Here, Nietzsche provides a refreshing perspective: in participating in formal political structures through the act of casting a vote, people actually perpetuate them. Stated otherwise, these structure do not exist independently of people's participation in them: as there could be no parties without party candidates, similarly elections require voters. Consequently, a gesture as small as refusing to cast one's vote subtracts energy from these structures and therefore undermines them. Granted, this gesture is not likely to impact the elections results when made by a handful of individuals --in fact, in this situation such a gesture may even backfire, insofar as it may deprive the least worst candidate of important votes. (I deal with this criticism in the next chapter.) In massive proportions, however, this refusal is likely to destabilise the entire political establishment, as described by José Saramago's (2006) in his fictional novel, *Seeing*. The central event on which the story revolves is a national election in the unnamed capital of an unnamed democratic country. When election results show that a super-majority of cast votes are blank, parliamentary parties are thrown in a panic and quickly shout conspiracy against the democratic system (Saramago 2006). The government then decides to abandon the city and to withdraw the police from it, in the hope that it will descend into chaos --but surprisingly, the city continues to function normally...

It is important to note that not all relations feature the same degree of reliance on the subordinates' participation on the part of the dominant. One example where this reliance is at its lowest, if inexistent, is the relation

between Israel and Palestinian refugees. As Rigbi (in Burrowes 1996: 87; italics in the original) has insightfully observed, "Israel wants to rule over the *land* of Palestine; it does not want the *people*," their labour, or their recognition. While numerous Palestinians remain in the occupied territories, many others have had to flee to neighbouring countries or to Palestinian-controlled territories. The former can have recourse to a non-participative strategy in their struggle against Israeli occupation through the refusal to pay taxes, to abide by Israeli laws, to work for the construction of Israeli settlements, and so on. Palestinian refugees, by contrast, do not have this option, as their relation with Israel is predicated on their own expulsion from Palestine. Non-participation, then, is not a ready-made solution that works everywhere and every time; rather, its deployment must follow a careful assessment of its suitability vis-à-vis the specific nature of the relation or structure of power at hand.

Now, the fact that some relations feature a minimal-to-inexistent degree of reliance by the dominant on the subordinates does not invalidate my argument that power is relational. Even when the subordinates are unable to influence the conduct of the dominant, their oppression on the part of the dominant could not be possible without the dominant's *intra*-group co-operation. Indeed, with the notable exception of one-person-scenarios, the dominant party consists of a number of people and institutions --in the specific case of Israel, the government, the ministries, the army, the police, industry, the electorate, and civil society organisations. These institutions, which are themselves bundles of relations, entertain complex relations with each other, which are either collaborative or conflictual (or both). However, at least a core

of such institutions needs to co-operate with each other in order to successfully acquire and rule over Palestinian land; the government needs the participation of soldiers to occupy the land, of policemen to patrol it, of colons to settle in it, of firms to use its resources, and so on. But co-operation is not a given; it is a dynamic process that can expand or, alternatively, contract to the point of break-down.

It follows from the above that the dominant are always dependent on somebody (for example, each other), but they are not "necessarily dependent on the participation of the people they actually oppress or exploit" (Burrowes 1996: 87). This dependence introduces the possibility for Palestinian refugees to transform their relation with Israel by building alliances with the Palestinians who live in the occupied territories, but also with people from Israel's army, police, bureaucracy, citizenry, business community, etc. The goal here is to persuade *them* to withdraw their participation in institutions involved with the continued occupation of Palestinian lands. Clearly, a critical number both of Palestinians in occupied territories *and* of Israelis need to be on board for this occupation to become increasingly more difficult to sustain -- a number that is perhaps too difficult to arrive at in a short time frame. And yet, one has to start somewhere; perhaps the beginning will be a small one but, in the absence of other viable methods for change, small beginnings should encourage rather than discourage the work of building solidarity and alliances by spreading one's own non-participative example.

This alliance-building work needs to involve not only members of the dominant group, but also other partners, especially those with whom the dominant entertain a relation of dependence. One example of this kind of work

is an initiative started by a coalition of Palestinian non-governmental organisations in 2005, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Campaign. This initiative calls upon global consumers, corporations, citizens, and civil society organisations, to pressure Israel to end its occupation through the boycott of Israeli products as well as the withdrawal of investments from corporations complicit in this occupation (BDS Movement 2012). The non-participation of some members of the dominant group as well as of its partners in other relations, then, can play a crucial role in weakening the dominant's bargaining position, thereby compensating for cases in which the subordinates' non-participative approach proves ineffective. Needless to say, the pressure on the dominant only increases there where the dominant *do* have something to lose from the subordinates' own withdrawal. In either case, alliance-building outside of one's own circle reveals itself to be a second factor that contributes to the successfulness of non-participation as a method for change.

The third and final factor has to do with the degree of solidarity and co-operation within the subordinate group. The more the subordinates act as a united front, the more likely it is that a non-participative strategy will result in the complete suspension of the supply of important resources, services, or recognition to the dominant, and therefore, the more pressure will the subordinate bring to bear on the dominant themselves. As noted above, the creation of a united front requires the difficult task of engaging with other people in order to convince them to overcome their sense of disempowerment, fear of sanction, respect for an authority that oppresses them, and so on. Unless the sense of oppression and injustice is strong and widespread, as in the recent cases of popular protests in Tunisia and Egypt, the beginning is likely to

be small. But every beginning is a demonstration and an example that many others either can be encouraged to follow, or spontaneously replicate in other places, in such a way to create an ever-broader network of action (Lunn 1973: 229).

One of the barriers, if not the most important one, that makes intra-group cooperation among the subordinates difficult is the fact that they are also dependent on the dominant in some way or another (Paullin 1944: 18). In some circumstance this dependence is emotional, as in the case of someone who continues to love her abusive partner; other times this reliance centres on certain services and resources that the dominant provide to the subordinate. For example, wage labour, even if badly paid and dangerous, allows employees to have the financial means to make it to the end of the day; similarly, even dictatorial government provide at least a number of citizens with jobs, in addition to controlling the supply of water and electricity. Consequently, lessening one's own reliance on the dominant, their resources, and services is a crucial step if one is to encourage other subordinates to join the cause while weakening the dominant's own bargaining position. For, the more one is able to dispense with the services or resources of the dominant, the less leverage they have to enforce their desired outcome (Paullin 1944: 18).

The above begs the question of how to lessen one's reliance on the dominant. The answer, I submit, is in the constructive work that I alluded to above --the work of creating alternative institutions or spaces that provide for similar goods to the ones that the dominant offer. Thus, for example, people who continuously experience domestic abuse can come together and found a

shelter where people can find emotional support, beside food and a bed. Similarly, the establishment as well as the linkage of democratically-run social enterprises creates economic opportunities for the disadvantaged and the unemployed. If the alternative spaces that people construct in abandoning dominant spaces are to be sustainable over time, then they must work towards reducing whatever dependency ties the subordinates to an oppressive relation.[20]

IV.6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to provide a survey of practices for transforming power relations. Specifically, I have identified four methods *besides* the traditional ones that revolve around seizing state power --that is, reform and revolution. First is infrapolitics, which consists in acting in a different yet unobtrusive fashion, in such a way to test the limits of the possible in a power relation. Secondly, one can challenge either a practice or a balance of power by raising a problem or a question about it. Third, when a power relation proves non-negotiable, one has the option of revolting against the dominant, thereby inaugurating a physical or military confrontation between adversaries. Alternatively, one can refuse to comply with the dominant and therefore withdraw either partially or completely from the power relation that one contests.

In discussing these methods, I hope I have shown that each of them requires the specific conditions be met in order to be likely to be successful.

[20] I expand on the creation of alternative institutions to lessen one's dependency on the dominant party in Chapter V, p. 162ff.

This leads to the conclusion that one must carefully consider the specific situation in which this method will be deployed when deciding which method is best suited to bring about a given end-goal. While situational factors are important, they are in and of themselves insufficient. As I argue in the upcoming chapter, one must also take in consideration the qualitative suitability between the method one employs and the end-goal one seeks to achieve. It is to this that I now turn.

V

Prefiguration and Ethics: Towards a Politics of the Here-Now

> The best defence would no doubt be to match insult with insult, calumny with calumny, to fight injustice with injustice, but this way of dealing with iniquity is not within the scope of people like us.
>
> Jan Potocki[21]

The aim of this chapter is build on previous chapters to answer the question of what methods are best suited to bring about non-domination. I delineate my answer in three sections. Firstly, drawing upon Gandhi, I argue that the means at use prefigure and indeed determine the nature of the end produced. Accordingly, the only way to attain non-domination is by practicing non-domination in the here-now. This requires two mutually sustaining processes, which I explore in the second and third sections, respectively. The first process is the *cultivation* of an ethics of non-domination --a way of relating to other people that reflects the personal virtues of responsibility, responsiveness, openness, self-rule, and self-control. The second process, by contrast, is the *deployment* of methods that, while designed to get one's counterpart to agree to a more symmetrical relation, do not corrupt the end goal in the very process of achieving it. As I will argue, of the six methods surveyed in the previous chapter, confrontation and revolution fail to pass this test. To corroborate my arguments, I make reference to recent events such as the uprising in Libya, the Occupy movement, and the protests in Syria, in addition to using Gandhi's theoretical insights on *swaraj* and *satyāgraha*.

By way of concluding the argument that I have traced throughout these

[21] Jan Potocki. 1996. *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa*. Translated by Ian MacLean. London: Penguin Classics, p. 272.

five chapters, I zoom out from the foreground perspective's focus on one power relation, onto the complexity of interacting relations in a specific system. This shift in perspective is needed if one is interested in bringing about systemic changes as opposed to more localised ones. As I will argue, the creation of systemic changes requires two main steps: firstly, the horizontal integration of all aspects of one's life to create a coherent pattern of life based on non-domination; and secondly, the creation of links of solidarity with like-minded people in different axes of oppression.

V.1. Probing the Relation between Means and Ends

The question of how one might best go about achieving non-domination asks after the *comparative difference* that it makes to use one method instead of another one. For example, what is the advantage of having recourse to confrontation instead of employing a discursive challenge? Consequently, which one is better? Arguably, the principal way of answering this question has been to say that the best means are those that enable one party to achieve its ends as expeditiously and efficiently as possible. On this view, the desirability of the end-goal renders *any* step towards this goal equally desirable. Thus can one legitimately persuade, threaten, or kill to bring about a more symmetrical relation, according to whichever is the most expedient method. This kind of consequentialist thinking features prominently in Marx's writings, where stateless, harmonious, and peaceful communist society is alleged to be born out of a violent takeover of the state apparatus on the part of the proletariat (see, for example, Marx and Engels 2002a: 244). The logic at work here is clear: one must be willing to sacrifice the present for the

sake of the future. One has to accept killing and torture here and now, in order to enjoy a state of peace and non-violence in the future. By the same logic, one has to seize state power now in order to destroy the state in the future.

There is a clear temporal structure at work in the way of thinking about the relation between means and ends that Marx's thought exemplifies. Namely, the end-goal is always futural, in the sense that it materialises only *after* the process put in place to achieve this goal is complete. Actually, to assert that the end-goal comes after the process sounds almost like a truism to many of us. The fact that is does, however, may be more the symptom of a problem than a reassurance. For, if Nietzsche was right in arguing that it is always possible to see something from another perspective, then seeing a perspective as a truism means that that perspective has become so ingrained in the way we think (and act) that we simply accept it as true without questioning its value.

Against this background, I would argue that the main limit of this consequentialist way of thinking is that it overlooks the significance of the process vis-à-vis the end-goal. The reason for this is that the repetition of a certain practice as a way to obtain a specific end makes that practice *habitual*. Thus, for example, resorting to physical force to pave the way for peaceful relations creates a mode of being that centres on, and is disposed towards, the use of physical force whenever a problem arises. This aggressive mode of being precludes the establishment of peaceful relations, such that the process vitiates the very end-goal one seeks to bring about.

In keeping with what I have argued in the first chapter, my critique of the consequentialist way of grasping the relation between means and ends is based on principles that, far from being transcendental, are internal to another

perspective. I call this other perspective 'prefigurative', for its main tenet is that means at use foreshadow the end-goal one seeks to bring about (as I will explicate shortly). Prefiguration has a long history, as it featured prominently in the writings of thinkers and activists such as Tolstoy, Gustav Landauer, and Gandhi (to name a few). In what follows, I will draw mainly upon Gandhi to outline the main features of the prefigurative perspective. Next, I will seek to pin down the value of this perspective --i.e. explain why I prefer the prefigurative way of thinking about means and ends to the consequentialist mode of thought I talked about earlier.

The central theorem of the prefigurative model finds its most effective expression in St. Paul's assertion that "whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (in Gandhi 1997: 81). On this view, the relation between means and ends is akin to that between a seed and its corresponding plant. As a seed is an embryonic form of the plant to which the seed itself gives rise, similarly methods are ends *in* their initial stages (Gandhi 1997: 81-82; Parekh 1989: 142). A few illustrations of this are the deceptively simple case scenarios that Gandhi considered in his *Hind Swaraj*. "If I want to cross the ocean," wrote Gandhi (1997: 81) at a time in which aviation was clearly at its dawn, "I can do so only by means of a vessel; if I were to use a cart for that purpose, both the cart and I would soon find the bottom." Yet again: "I am not likely to obtain the result flowing from the worship of God [such as eternal absolution,] by laying myself prostrate to before Satan" (Gandhi 1997: 81). To assert otherwise is akin to "saying that we can get a rose through planting a noxious weed" (Gandhi 1997: 81). Consequently, the end goal is not external or separate from the means that one uses to achieve it. Rather, it is internal and

indeed integral to these means, for there exists the same "inviolable connection" between means and ends as between a seed and its corresponding plant (Gandhi 1997: 81).

Another way of grasping this "inviolable connection" is to say that each step by which one attempts to attain a specific goal *defines* the way this goal will look like (Parekh 1989: 142). We can revert once again to Gandhi's analogy of means as seeds and of ends as their corresponding trees to illustrate this point. While a seed is clearly different from a plant, one will get an oak, a rose plant, or a weed depending on whether the seed that one plants is an acorn, a rose seed, or weed seed. In this sense, the specific seed that one uses *prefigures* (i.e., foreshadows) the final product by determining its nature. In the same way, the methods that one employs to attain a specific goal are not exactly identical to this goal but *prefigure* it --i.e., anticipate and determine its character-- in the very act of bringing this goal about.

The fact that the means that one employs determine the nature of the goal produced has profound implications for how one is to achieve a given goal. More explicitly, a specific end goal is attainable on condition that the means at use are *congruous* with the nature of the end goal itself (Parekh 1989: 142). Thus, for example, it is impossible to obtain an avocado tree by planting a pomegranate seed. Similarly, as Gandhi (1997: 82) reasoned, "if I want to deprive you of your watch, I shall certainly have to fight for it;… and if I want a gift, I shall have to plead for it; and according to the means I employ, the watch is stolen property… or a donation." This watch cannot be a donation if I steal it; conversely, it is not stolen property if I receive it as a donation. The upshot is that it is a necessary condition for attaining a specific

end-goal that the means at use be *qualitatively* consistent with this goal --i.e., that they be of the same kind. If this condition were not to be met, then the means at use would at best distort, at worst irreparably damage, one's end goal in the very process of obtaining it (Parekh 1989: 142).

Not only does the "inviolable connection" between means and ends have a qualitative dimension (insofar as means and ends must be of the same kind), but it also has a *temporal* one. In the prefigurative perspective, the goal is not something that exists only in the future, as the end point of a series of methods that follow each temporally on a linear scale. (For example, I plant a rose seed now, and the plant will grow sometimes in the future.) Rather, the end goal is always-already *immanent* in its corresponding methods, on account of the fact that the means are in fact ends in their embryonic forms. Therefore, the end exists in the *here-now* --not in its fully formed shape, of course, but rather in its incipient form. In this light, and returning to Gandhi's initial analogy, a seed *is* a plant *in the making*, such that the plant is not (only) a futural product, but something that exists in the present in the very process of being made.

Now that we have a grasp of the prefigurative perspective, I want to apply its main theorems to non-domination as a way to ascertain the *value* of this model. In my mind, it is possible to infer two main theses from the discussion above. The first one, which derives from the postulate that the means at hand must be of the same kind as the desired end-goal, is that the only way to achieve non-domination is through non-domination itself. To unpack this thesis, recall that a relation of non-domination is one where parties influence each other in a fairly reciprocal fashion in a spirit of collaboration.

On this view, non-domination is a specific *way* in which parties to a relation interact with each other. Accordingly, subordinate change agents who are looking to reconfigure a relation along the lines of non-domination must transform both (a) the way in which they relate to the dominant, and (b) the way in which the dominant relate to the subordinates. I provide an in-depth investigation of these two processes later; for the moment, the few introductory notes that I sketch below will suffice.

Briefly, the former process entails the *cultivation* of an ethics of non-domination in one's practical relations with others. This ethics encompasses a way of exerting power over others that extend to them a say and a hand over how they are conducted. At the same time, this ethics requires an assertive way of arraying oneself against authoritarian forms of power *by* others. However, just like a plant will hardly grow in adverse conditions, similarly this ethics requires surroundings that can support it (McWorther 1999: 197). To this end, subordinate change agents must find ways to prevent their counterparts from stopping or disrupting its flourishing. The second process, then, entails the deployment of methods designed to get one's counterparts to agree to a more symmetrical configuration of power. In line with the prefigurative model, these methods must be qualitatively congruent with a way of life centred on non-domination, lest they distort it or corrupt it. As I will show later, of the six methods that I surveyed in the last chapter, confrontation and revolution fail to meet this condition.

The mode of being that one cultivates and its corresponding methods for struggle that one employs interact to inscribe non-domination in the *present* tense. If the path to non-domination is non-domination itself, then this

end goal is not simply a thing of the future, but rather something that needs to be lived and practiced in the here-now as much as possible. Granted, practising non-domination in the present is bound to be an experience marred by imperfections, difficulties, and even partial failures. But imperfections and failures are not so much signs that we are going in the wrong direction, as perhaps part and parcel of the process of *perfecting* non-domination through trials and errors in adverse circumstances. With this we come to our second thesis –namely, that non-domination exists in the present in its very making, as a prefiguration (that is, as an incipient form) of the vision that one wants to achieve in the future.

Against this horizon, the advantage of prefiguring non-domination in the here-now is that *one fits oneself for non-domination by learning it in the present*. This learning comes through practice, as instantiated in and made possible by the two processes outlined above. More explicitly, one practices non-domination both by cultivating its corresponding ethics, and by arraying oneself against those who try to suppress this ethics by means of suitable methods for struggle. Crucially, each of these two processes is by itself insufficient to prefigure non-domination; both are needed. On the one hand, one cannot cultivate an ethics of non-domination in the present without struggling against those who impede its flourishing; on the other hand, as I will illustrate later, this struggle risks leading people in the "dark quagmire" of domination if it is not wedded to the cultivation of an ethics of non-domination.

Prefiguration, then, enables change agents to soak up the ways of non-domination and to become accustomed to its dynamics. Consequently, if non-

domination were ever to be achieved, such agents will find themselves at home in it. Skipping the transformative and preparative process that inheres in prefiguration is self-defeating at best, and counterproductive at worst. Consider, for example, the case where the dominant bestow non-domination upon the subordinates in the form of a gift, or where spontaneous episodes of violence on the part of the subordinate are successful in vanquishing the dominant. In both cases, the subordinates will have formally shed their status as subordinates; however, they will still be likely to *behave* as such, on account of the fact that years of subordination will have habituated them to specific conducts (more on this below).

The upshot of the discussion above is that, without a suitable transformation of one's own subjectivity, non-domination will simply turn out to be a formal arrangement that fails to reflect the dynamics on the ground. Prefiguration plays an instrumental role in staving off this danger by enabling change agents to prepare themselves for non-domination. Herein lies the *value* of the prefigurative model: namely, that it alerts us to the importance of preparing oneself for non-domination by undergoing a suitable degree of transformation. In a nutshell, this model draws our attention to the fact that non-domination cannot be *granted* to us as if it were a gift, but must be *taken* through the work of learning it by practicing it in the here-now.

As a way to illustrate this argument, I now turn to a more in-depth investigation of each of the two mutually sustaining processes for transforming a power relation that I have identified above.

V.2. Non-Domination as/through Ethical Self-Fashioning

I have argued that the first step to reconfiguring a given power relation along the lines of non-domination is for subordinate change agents to modify their *own* conduct in order to attain an ethics of non-domination. What does this mode of being look like? How specifically does one attain it? To answer these questions, it is first necessary to lay the groundwork by going back to some of the points made earlier in my work.

As it will be recalled, one of the main arguments that emerged in the third chapter was that the subject does not precede power but originates in power relations. Specifically, while power constrains the subject by setting limits on what she can legitimately do, it also enables the subject by endowing her with specific ways of acting, thinking, and being. In this sense, the subject is *crafted* by forms of power by others. However, the subject can also *fashion* herself on the basis of the very skills that she has gained in and through her subjection (Golder & Fitzpatrick 2009: 115). On this view, self-fashioning is the practice by which the self realigns, reforms, or transforms his own forces and capacities, so as to "reconstitute the energies already shaped by existing relations of power" (Scott 1999: 214).

In the process of reconstituting one's forces, the self establishes a relation with itself articulated through both one's knowledge *of* itself as well as the application of power *on* itself. On the one hand, this knowledge surfaces as the subject turns on her own modes of thought and action, such as her diet or deportment, into an object of reflection and elaboration (Foucault 2003g: 111). It is important to note that such modes do not constitute a human essence to be discovered, but are always-already historically contingent forms that can be

modified or shed (Golder & Fitzpatrick 2009: 115). And yet, the historical contingency of such modes is not always evident to those who engage in them. An example of this is to be found in Fanon's argument that most of the colonised come to internalise the demeaning image that the colonisers project onto them. As a result of this internalisation --Fanon (1967: 83-108) argued,-- the colonised develop a mimetic desire to be like their oppressors: to behave like them, eat like them, and think like them. What is worst, colonised peoples come to see this desire as being innate, natural, and primordial.

Against this background, the first step towards engaging in a work of self-fashioning is for the colonised to grasp the historical contingency (and, therefore, the modifiability) of their own conducts. This could be done through the kind of historical studies that I discussed in the first chapter. As it will be recalled, the aim of such studies is to disclose the historical condition of possibility for a given object of study --that is, in our case, one's way of acting or thinking. To this end, these studies trace the historical formation of a given aspect of one's subjectivity in two ways. First, they identify the moment of its emergence (*entstehung*) in a given interplay of forces; and second, they study its descent (*herkunft*) through a survey of the events and accidents that have given this conduct its current shape (Foucault 2003b: 355-59). Thus, for example, an historical investigation into the inferiority complex of colonised people would show how the colonial setting served as the generative structure for this complex. More broadly, this investigation would show that a purportedly natural conduct is in fact "singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints" (Foucault 2003g: 53). In doing so, historical studies enable people to partially "free themselves from the horizons of" their

conducts (Tully 2002: 546).

The critical distance that one gains from her subjectivity imports the possibility to deliberately apply power on oneself in order to produce certain effects upon the self (Scott 1999: 206). This application of power takes the form of a set of exercises through which the self re-tutors itself, as in the case of a dietary regime. Drawing upon ancient Greek thought, Foucault (2003: 112) groups these exercises under the name of *ascetism*. In Foucault's use of the term, ascetism does not indicate self-renunciation and abnegation, as per its Christian understanding. Rather, it is the activity through which the self attains a desired mode of being (or *telos*). In this sense, ascetism relates to *telos* in the same way in which a means relates to a given end.

In order to illustrate what specifically ascetism entails in relation to developing an ethics of domination, it is first necessary to discuss the *telos* itself --a lifestyle or ethics of non-domination. This lifestyle manifests itself in and through a specific way both of exerting power *over* others and of arraying itself *against* power by others. On the one hand, non-domination consists in enacting power over others in a way that allows them to have a say and a hand over the way in which they are conducted. In this way, non-domination creates a space in which the other can contest a rule, raise a problem, and experiment with "acting and thinking differently" in a spirit of cooperation and negotiation (Tully 2008: 76). More explicitly, non-domination minimises the recourse to coercive methods by providing for conflict to be dealt with through dialogue instead of, say, confrontation. By minimising the need for coercive force in social interactions, non-domination dramatically reduces the injuries that a party suffers as a result of being subject to constraints that she considers

oppressive.

On the other hand, a lifestyle of non-domination entails the proclivity to struggle against "what will otherwise be done to and for us" (Brown 1995: 25). "The free man," wrote Nietzsche (in Brown 1995: 25), "is a warrior," for he can only be free by asserting oneself against others' attempt to define his conduct in such-and-such way. It is through this agonistic struggle against the other that one extends her say and hand over the forms of power to which she is subject. Of course, this assertive way of arraying oneself against others begs the question of what methods one ought to use in one's struggle against others. This will be the main focus of the upcoming section; for the moment, the point to which want to draw attention is that an ethics of non-domination entails the proactive determination to call to account those who attempt to dominate us.

As a specific way of both enacting power over others and of arraying oneself against power by others, a lifestyle of domination defines the relation that the self ought to entertain with others. However, as Foucault (2003: 30) observed, underlying any *deliberate* way of relating to other people is a specific way in which the self *cares* for itself. This care of the self translates as the cultivation of one's own character through the acquisition of specific virtues, that is, dispositions that one considers exemplary (Aristotle 2009: 28). Accordingly --I would argue-- an attitude of non-domination transpires in and through six principal virtues of the self, which I sketch out below. As a qualification, this sketch does not purport to be exhaustive but simply illustrative; as such, it will leave much to be desired. This is intentional, for my hope is that interested readers will make this sketch their own by filling its many blanks.

Firstly, non-domination thrives on the virtue of self-rule. I take self-rule to indicate one's commitment to (a) question one's own modes of thought, ways of acting, and the forms of power to which one is subject; and (b) to experiment with the possibility of "acting and thinking differently" (Tully 2008: 76). Embodied in the critical-experimental *ēthos* described in the first chapter, this commitment betrays the self's uneasiness and unwillingness to submit to power passively. As such, self-rule enjoins the self to *make something* of itself through a work of self-fashioning. As seen, this task involves the re-alignment of one's own energies and skills on the one hand, and a certain recalcitrance in the way the self relates to people who want to craft the self in their own ways. A commitment to self-rule, then, is nothing short of the will to affirm oneself against what other do *to* and *for* the self.

At this point, the question arises as to what is to prevent the will to affirm oneself from overpowering and dominating others. What the self needs here is the virtue of self-control --defined as the ability to control the urge to seek vengeance, be aggressive, and exercise power over others in a tyrannical or authoritarian way (Foucault 2003f: 30). Self-control entails the management of one's own inclinations, desires, affects, and urges in such a way to leave to others a reasonably capacious space where they can exercise their own freedom and, thus, develop their own capacity for self-rule.

Arguably, the main challenge that subordinates face in developing self-control is that of avoiding giving in to *ressentiment* for their own past injuries. As I explored in the first chapter, this affect vitiates non-domination by giving rise to a politics of suffering that constantly affirms one's own injuries in the very act of avenging them. If this is true, then striving for non-domination

requires that one overcome one' own *ressentiment*. In my mind, the hope for this overcoming is not to be found in the much-praised practices of forgiving and forgetting. I find the former difficult to apply, especially when the injurers *know* of the suffering that they cause but neither stop perpetrating it nor attempt to enter a negotiation with the injured party. Forgetting, on the other hand, is self-defeating to the extent that forgetting past mistakes (both one's own and others') paves the way for repeating them. Rather, I would argue that the hope in overcoming *ressentiment* lies in the very act of resisting the urge to give in to it. Doing so is immensely challenging, but it is precisely the challenging nature of this task that makes even partial successes immensely satisfactory. This feeling of satisfaction, I would argue, is paramount to sublimating one's desire to seek revenge.

Yet another virtue that sustains a lifestyle of non-domination is openness to alterity, that is, the disposition to approach what others do and say without distorting or disqualifying their message from the very beginning. This disposition entails first of all a *sincere* effort to acquaint oneself with the other's way of thinking as well as with why he holds this perspective (Parekh 1989: 144). It also requires the recognition that one's own way of thinking is always partial, and hence limited in its ability to shed light on a certain issue. These two attitudes best position one to avoid Thorvold's predicament in his relation to Nora, as described by Stanley Cavell in his analysis of Ibsen's play, *A Doll House*.[22] In it, Nora suffers because her husband treats her like a doll, but her vehement protests falls on deaf ears because Thorvold takes it as a matter of course that his wife, indeed any wife, is a doll (Tully 2002: 537). If

[22] See chapter IV, pp. 101-2.

one is to avoid being a Thorvold-like figure, who disqualifies what the other says from the very beginning, then one *must* be open to question one's own assumptions and to consider others' seriously.

An attitude of non-domination requires not only that one hear what the other has to say, but also that he be able to *respond* reasonably quickly to it. As a virtue, responsiveness does not mean yielding to whatever requests the other puts forward. Rather, it entails the willingness to establish a dialogue with the other and enter into negotiations on how to solve a disagreement or a conflict. To this end, one must be willing to: first, evaluate the other's arguments for why her request is reasonable; second, propose a possible solution; third, advance arguments for why this solution is desirable; and finally, engage in a work of reciprocal elucidation to test the value of the arguments and solutions that both parties have advanced. In short, responsiveness requires nothing short of a commitment to a laborious process; however, this commitment is necessary if one is not to dominate the other.

Finally, anyone aspiring towards non-domination needs to be responsible, in the sense of being able to answer *for* what the self has done. As Brown (1995: 25) has noted, responsibility is "sober," almost "exhausting," in that it continuously asks the self to justify its own action. In doing so, responsibility enjoins the self to enact power over others *carefully*, by applying serious attention and consideration to both what one does to others and how one does it. And yet, responsibility is not the opposite of freedom, as if it were "a debt to pay for spending, a price to pay for indulgence," or a counterweight to licence (Brown 1995: 25). Instead, responsibility is *integral* to freedom: it is the sobering awareness that accompanies any and all

deliberate actions. As Nietzsche (in Brown 1995: 25) observed with his idiosyncratic perspicacity, "for what is freedom, but that one has the will to assume responsibility for oneself?"

Thus far, I have focused on both non-domination and on the virtues of the self that sustain this attitude as a *desired* mode of being –as the *telos* that one ought to strive towards. Before moving onto a more in-depth investigation into what kind of process of self- fashioning this lifestyle requires, it is worth reiterating that this *telos* is not a regulative principle or a categorical imperative "whose precepts [are] compulsory and whose scope [is] universal" (Foucault 1986: 21). Far from serving as a code that everyone must learn and observe on pain of punishment, this lifestyle is more like a cautionary principle that the self takes it upon itself to follow through an ascetic process of self-fashioning. Accordingly, self- transformation is inscribed against the horizon of *ethics* as opposed to *morality*, as I explicate below.

As Deleuze (in Day 2005: 167) observed, morality "presents us with a set of constraining rules of a special sort, one that judges actions and intentions by considering them in relation to transcendent values." Consequently, morality is concerned with what is *right*. Ethics, on the other hand, is preoccupied with the relation that the self establishes with itself, as well as with the way in which the self undertakes a constituent mode of acting upon itself in light of voluntary guidelines (Foucault 1986: 19). Consequently, ethics displaces the focus from what is right onto what is *exemplary*. Perhaps it is time to take to heart the famous verses by Rumi, the Sufi poet: "out beyond ideas of right-doing and wrong-doing there is a field. I will meet you there." In my own (unconventional) reading, the field beyond morality to which Rumi

refers here is precisely that of *ethics*, where what is exemplary takes precedence over, and perhaps even replaces, that which is right.

It must be noted that, while an ethics of non-domination is concerned first of all with the self, it does not give rise to a solipsistic politics, on account of two reasons. Firstly, as noted, the cultivation of a lifestyle of non-domination is always-already other-regarding, insofar as this lifestyle is a way of managing the space between the self and others. From this perspective, then, an ethics of non-domination starts from the care of the self, but in doing so it necessarily projects itself *beyond* the self towards the relation that the self entertains with others (Foucault 2003f: 31). The second reason why ethical self-fashioning is not solipsistic is that the self *disposes* others to take up non-domination, either by actively raising awareness or by simply serving as an example to others. This bond cannot be imposed on people, for imposition is an act of domination and is therefore at odds with an attitude of non-domination. Rather, the task is to offer an ethics of non-domination as a suggestion to others: to encourage them, invite them, inform them, and make it easier for them to take up this lifestyle. The ensuing convergence of a number of people on non-domination creates a *sociality* --that is, a communal bond-- that comes to permeate and indeed support self- fashioning.

Now that we have a clearer idea of what the *telos* is, the question arises as to how exactly the process leading to this *telos* looks like. In other words, how does one achieve the aforementioned virtues and, by transition, an attitude of non-domination? As I show below, Aristotle's insights into ethical pedagogy can help us answer this question in a way that is consistent with the horizon of the prefigurative perspective that I have laid out above. In *The*

Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle (2009: 23) drew an analogy between virtues and expertise at a certain craft, arguing that the process of developing both is similar --though, as I will show, not completely equal. Just like one becomes skilled at playing the guitar by playing it time and again, similarly one acquires a certain virtue by deliberately *exercising* it in one's daily life. "Virtue," wrotes Aristotle (2009: 23), "comes about as a result of habit." On this view, for example, one comes to learn and display the virtue of self-control by acting in such a way not to dominate others or seek vengeance whenever the opportunity for vengeance and domination presents itself. The same applies to responsiveness and the other virtues that I have described above: one becomes responsive through the repeated act of answering the questions and requests that the other puts forward; one learns to be responsible by continuously exercising care in, and answering for, one's actions; and so on.

While developing a virtue and acquiring expertise at a craft both depend on the regular performance of specific acts, developing a virtue moulds and indeed creates inward dispositions while becoming expert at a craft does not. As Aristotle (2009: 24) argued, "we become brave or cowardly…by doing the acts that we do in presence of danger, and by being habituated to feel fear or courage." That is to say, the repeated act of standing our ground against what we perceive as a danger habituates us to control our fear by developing a sense of courage before danger. A similar dynamic is at work with the virtues on which non-domination is anchored. For example, we grow assertive and confident in our capacity for self-rule by exercising our freedom to struggle against what is done to and for us; likewise, the more and

the more we resist and control *ressentiment*, the less *ressentiment* will play a role in shaping our actions.

It is worthwhile to linger on the relation between bodily exteriority and inward disposition that Aristotle's view entails. Here, the soul does not have ontological precedence over the body, as in Plato or Gandhi (as we shall see later); rather, "the soul [is] the form of the body's matter," such that there is an "inseparable unity" between the two (Mahmood 2005: 134). On the one hand, the re-tutoring of one's body through the repeated performance of bodily actions leaves a mark in one's disposition, thereby slowly creating a corresponding inward state of character (Aristotle 2009: 24; Mahmood 2005: 135). On the other hand, this state of character makes the performance of the acts that produced it habitual and pre-reflective. As Aristotle (2009: 25) noted with respect to temperance, "by abstaining from pleasures we become temperate, and it is when we have become so that we are most able to abstain from them." In other words, the more one engages in virtuous acts, the more rooted their corresponding inward dispositions will become in the self, and therefore, the more the performance of these acts will become habitual and even spontaneous.

However, it is not that the process of acquiring a virtue is effortless. As learning to play the guitar is often marred by frustration at one's mistakes and pace of progress, so practicing self-control, responsibility, openness to alterity, etc. is bound to incur into difficulties and partial failures, especially in the initial stages of one's self-fashioning. For example, the untrained self can sometimes slip in its effort to keep aggressivity and *ressentiment* at bay despite its sincere effort to the contrary. This means that the acts that one

performs in the process of obtaining a virtue may not always be *perfect* reflections of this virtue. But this is not surprising, for these acts are *embryonic* forms of the virtues that they seek to bring about, in the same way in which an acorn prefigures an oak tree while not being exactly one. Through patience and perseverance in the face of difficulties, inward characters arise from like activities and start to take root in the self (Aristotle 2009: 24). In sum, then, it is only through a laborious and often frustrating work of practicing the six aforementioned virtues of the self that one can ever hope to acquire as well as cultivate an attitude of non-domination.

As my discussion of non-domination as/through self-fashioning has been rather abstract so far, it might be useful to illustrate it by zeroing in on a specific power relation. In the remainder of this subsection, then, I want to focus on the relation between colonised and colonisers by exploring Gandhi's notion of *swaraj* (self-rule). This notion by no means exhausts the breadth of Gandhi's thought, and is in fact difficult to grasp if isolated from a number of other practises that Gandhi advances. It is not my aim to provide a comprehensive overview of Gandhi's thought here; however, a brief discussion of at least some of his main ideas is inevitable. This discussion will find its complementary part in the upcoming subsection, where I use Gandhi's notion of *satyāgraha* to illustrate my argument on methods for struggle. Finally, it must be noted that, while Gandhi's thought and my argument on an ethics of non-domination converge on many points, there are also some differences between the two --differences that I will duly point out at the end of my exposition.

According to Gandhi (in Parekh 1989: 18), British imperialism in India

had three main aspects. Firstly, the British exercised political control over India, thereby preventing Indians from managing their own affairs. Secondly, at the economic level, the British pillaged India's resources and brought Indian industries to their knees by flooding the Indian market with cheap goods manufactured in Britain. Thirdly, the British had turned "Hindustan" into "Englistan" by directing Indians to take up the British ways of thinking, behaving, dressing, eating, and so on (Gandhi 1997: 28). This third aspect of British imperialism was cultural or, more precisely, civilisational, insofar as it consisted in the imposition of "modern" or "western civilisation" onto Indians' ways of living (Parekh 1989: 18-21; Gandhi 1997: 35).

It may be beneficial to linger on what Gandhi meant by western civilisation. For Gandhi (in Parekh 1989: 21), the specificity of western civilisation is that it prioritises the body over the mind –the former being the seat of limitless desires and wants, the latter being one's consciousness or soul. Accordingly, the emphasis on the body imported into modern civilisation a relentless search for personal satisfaction and bodily welfare that not only isolated one from the other, but also created competition and animosities between people (Parekh 1989: 26; Gandhi 1997: 35). Gandhi (in Parekh 1989: 26) believed that, despite the self-interested and violent orientation of this civilisation, most Indians had become bewitched by and infatuated with it. They had become increasingly more concerned with their bodily welfare than with their spiritual well being, and they had lost touch with each other. On the whole, then, British imperialism had moulded the subjectivity of most Indians in such a way to turn them into "brown Englishmen" (Parekh 1989: 18).

If British imperialism played itself at the levels of politics, economic,

and subjectivity --reasoned Gandhi (in Parekh 1989: 18)-- then the struggle for independence had to be waged at all three levels. Specifically, India could not be truly independent unless: (a) it achieved economic self-reliance (*swadeshi*); (b) it obtained home rule (*Hind swaraj*); and finally, (c) it underwent a process of "national regeneration" (Parekh 1989: 52-7; Gandhi 1997: 112-8). Economic and political independence was to be obtained through the non-participative method of *satyāgraha* (which I discuss later); national regeneration, by contrast, entailed the transformation of Indians' ways of being *away* from the competitive and self-interested practices of modern civilisation. This transformation --Gandhi argued-- was to proceed through a work of self-fashioning through which the self strives to attain individual *swaraj* or self-rule/control.

By individual *swaraj* Gandhi (1997: 67) meant first of all the acquisition of "mastery over [one's own] mind and passions," and particularly over one's own greed, desires, and physical wants. To this end, the self would need to acquire a strong character by practicing five main virtues. The first one was chastity, which Gandhi (1997: 97) took to be the pinnacle of one's control over her "animal passions." Secondly, one would have to take up an attitude of indifference to material possessions. The third virtue was frankness, which Gandhi understood to encompass not only honesty, but also humility in the way one holds a conviction as well as open mindedness in the way one approaches others' views (Gandhi 1997: 97; Parekh 1989: 142). Fourth was courage, understood as the ability to stand one's ground in the face of danger and fear. Finally, *swaraj* entailed the overcoming of one's own hatred against potential adversaries, and a general disposition of compassion as well as care

towards others (Parekh 1989: 48).

As the quest for self-control, the Gandhian notion of *swaraj* presupposed the commitment by the individual to make something out of itself –i.e., to acquire a mode of being that is *different* from the colonial subjectivity that most Indians had acquired under British rule. In this sense, underlying individual *swaraj* was what I have called self-rule, defined as the will to affirm oneself against what others do to and for the self. In my reading of Gandhi, the point for him was not to sever all ties between Indians and British, but rather to create the conditions for interaction between the two parties to be conducted in the field of non-domination. In this respect, Gandhi regarded individual *swaraj* to be more fundamental to independence than political home rule and economic self-reliance. The reason for this is that obtaining political home rule without individual self-control/rule would be equivalent to establishing "Englistan" (Gandhi 1997: 28), that is, an independent India populated and ruled by "brown Englishmen" (Parekh 1989: 18).

To put the foregoing differently, the creation of a relation of non-domination with the British required first of all that the self establish a relation with itself and realign its energies to achieve self-control/rule. This is why, for Gandhi, independence for India could not be a *gift* by the British: if unaccompanied by self-fashioning, the gift of self-government would fail to create a truly independent India. Indian administrators would replace English ones, but neither the system of power, nor the economy, nor most people's habitual ways of acting and thinking would be any different. In fact, as a gift self-government could even be counterproductive for Indians, insofar as it would shroud India's *de facto* dependence on its colonisers' mores, structures

of governance, and economy under the deceptive aura of formal independence. Consequently --Gandhi argued-- Indians had to *take* their independence by "fit[ting] themselves for it by undergoing a suitable degree of self-transformation" (Parel 1997: liii; see Gandhi 1997: 112).

In the spirit of the prefigurative perspective that I have described above, Gandhi did not see individual *swaraj* as a utopia –a project whose realisation lies in the future. "Do not consider this *swaraj* to be like a dream," enjoined Gandhi (1997: 73); "there is no idea of sitting still." The implications are clear: each individual would have to engage in a process of self-fashioning *here* and *now*, in a way that prefigures their desired mode of being in the present. In this sense, the emancipation of India would begin with the emancipation of the self (Gandhi in Parel 1997: lxii). It is only after the self starts to work on itself that that it will be in a position to serve others by offering itself as an example and by persuading them to engage in the same work (Gandhi 1997: 188). This task is not less easy than the previous one, and certainly as difficult as the task that I explore in the next subsection: that of preventing one's counterpart from disrupting or hampering one's process of self-fashioning through domination.

It should be clear by now that Gandhi's account intersects with my argument on an ethics of non-domination on several points. For one thing, both accounts see self-fashioning as being paramount to transforming a given relation; for another, they locate the temporal coordinates of this process in the here-now instead of the distant future. In addition, both of these accounts revolve around non-domination, self-control, and self-rule. However, there exist divergences and disagreements, too. My first disagreement with Gandhi

is with his focus on what he calls "western civilisation." This focus, I think, obscures the fact that any "civilisation" in fact encompasses competing practices that reflect equally competing norms. While I find it hard to dispute that bodily welfare is at the centre stage of the western imaginary, to portray this as the main feature of western civilisation masks the existence of, say, western practices and precepts that prioritise the soul and its salvation over the body (as in Catholicism).

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, Gandhi's distinction between body and mind is untenable. It is not that some civilisations or ways of life are body-centric while others are spirit-centric; rather, all ways of life entails the performance of bodily practices that create corresponding inward dispositions. Accordingly, while I recognise the value of courage, self-control, frankness, and compassion (which I believe are compatible with, if not integral to, an ethics of non-domination), I reject chastity as the zenith of the control of the mind over the body. The point, I think, is not to avoid sex as the weakness *par excellence* of the "western man," but rather to entertain erotic relations that feature as little domination as possible. Despite these disagreements, Gandhi's work not only illustrates the general direction of my argument on an ethics of non-domination, but is also a precious resource to which my argument is indeed deeply indebted.

V.3. From Ethical Self-Fashioning to Ethical Struggle

I have argued that, in order to reconfigure a given power relation along the lines of non-domination, subordinate change agents must embark upon a process of self-fashioning with a view to attaining an ethics of non-

domination. This process is not futural, or at least not simply so; rather, it unfolds in the present in a way that *prefigures* the mode of being that one wants to attain. As I have noted, however, self-fashioning is in and of itself insufficient to transform a power relation, for it does not modify the way in which the *dominant* relate to the subordinates. Unless these latter find a way to prevent their counterparts from exerting power in an authoritarian way, the relation between the two parties will remain almost unchanged.

Now, it could be argued that the most effective way to prevent one's counterpart from dominating is to redistribute existing resources more equally within a power relation. Thus, for example, employers would not be in a position to dictate terms to employees if workers were able to maintain themselves more or less independently of their salaried jobs (for example, through familiar support, or a strong social net, or through their own cooperatives). There is a moment of truth in this argument, insofar as parties to a relation cannot interact in a reciprocal fashion if one of them does not have access to at least basic resources. In this sense, a relation of non-domination *does* require a redistribution of resources. However, starting from this redistribution does not take us very far, for it begs the question of what methods for struggle one is to employ to get the dominant to relinquish their monopoly over specific resources.

What subordinate change agents need, then, is a strategy of struggle through which they can induce the dominant to settle for a more symmetrical relation and, by transition, to a different distribution of resources. At the core of this strategy will be one or more of the methods for change that I surveyed in the last chapter –that is, to recall: infrapolitical practices, discursive

challenges, non-participation, and confrontation, in addition to the methods that centre on seizing and using the regulatory power of the state (reform and revolution). However, it is not that each of these methods is as good as the other as a means to bring about a relation of non-domination. For, if it is true that the means employed determine the nature of the end (Parekh 1989: 142), then the method at use has to be qualitatively congruous with the vision of non-domination that one wants to attain. The deployment of an incongruous method would be dangerous at best and disastrous at worst, as it would sidetrack or even corrupt the goal of creating a relation of non-domination.

With this in mind, what difference does it make to use one method instead of another one to create a relation of non-domination? For example, are we likely to achieve a relation of non-domination if we seize resources by force instead of negotiating their redistribution? To answer these questions, we need to investigate which method from amongst the six ones listed above dovetails with an ethics of non-domination. As a way to begin our investigation, it is fruitful to draw attention to the specificity of non-domination as a way of organising power relations. It will be recalled that a power relation is a relation between forces, wherein force denotes the action of influencing or managing others' behaviours (Deleuze 1988: 70; Foucault 2003e: 137). In this sense, force is inherent in *any* power relation. However, it does not follow from this that all force is the same. Rather, there exist different ways of exerting pressure, ranging from non-coercive methods to physical compulsion, as I explicate below.

The non-coercive side of the spectrum features such methods as incentives. These operate in a positive fashion, to the extent that they promise

subjects something that they do not have yet (like a reward), were they to take up the conduct that is suggested to them. On the opposite side of the spectrum we find restraints, which work negatively in that they threaten to deprive subjects of something that they already have (say, their salary, their liberty, or their life) if they fail to take up a prescribed course of action. At the furthermost point of coercion we find physical compulsion, which signals the limits of power insofar as it strips one even of the possibility of non-compliance. Clearly, there are gradations in between one pole and the other: for example, the threat to deprive the other of a non-essential service is less coercive than a death threat.

Against this horizon, a relation of non-domination is one where both parties keep to a minimum the use of *coercive* force. Failure to do so by either party damages the equilibrium and tilts the relation in favour of the party that intensifies and extends the use of this kind of force. The reason for this is that the intensification of coercive force is bound to overwhelm the points of resistance that it encounters, until the other party either is reduced to impotence or responds with even more coercive force (Foucault 2003e: 143). Consequently, there exists an inverse relationship between non-domination and the degree of coercion one employs: the latter increases there where the former establishes itself, and vice-versa.

If I am right about the relation between non-domination and coercion, then a commitment to strive towards an ethics of non-domination in the here-now necessarily enjoins change agents to *begin* their struggle with the least coercive method –that is, with incentives. For these latter to be likely to work, however, subordinate change agents must offer the dominant something that

they do not already have and from which the dominant themselves can draw a certain benefit. Problematically, this condition rarely obtains; in fact, it is perhaps a structural feature of a state of domination that the dominant are more in a position to offer incentives to the subordinates than the other way around. The few incentives that the subordinates *are* in a position to offer often only deepen their subordination, as in the case of workers offering to work for longer hours at a lesser pay. While incentives are then a good starting point, they hardly are a panacea to negotiate a more symmetrical relation.

Beyond incentives one finds infrapolitics, defined as the practice of acting differently from prescribed behaviours in a unobtrusive fashion. As a method for change, infrapolitics is non-coercive in the sense that it does not place any restraints on the dominant. At the same time, this method does not actively encourage the dominant to undertake a course of action. In this sense, infrapolitics operates neither negatively (as coercion does) nor positively (as incentives do). In fact, its purpose is not so much to get the dominant to make concessions, but rather to *probe* the limits of what one can do by means of low-risk, low-profile infractions. In doing so, infrapolitics allows change agents to push the boundaries of their prescribed conducts in such a way to practice the virtues associated with an ethics of non-domination. Thus, for example, they can build up their courage or assertiveness by engaging in increasingly more courageous or increasingly bolder actions.

However, the strength of infrapolitics is also its greatest weakness. Due to its non-coercive nature, the practice of overstepping and thus moving the limit little by little can continue as long as the dominant are careless or patient enough to allow it. Were the dominant to start punishing infractions or even

suppress previously tolerated behaviours, then infrapolitical practices would hit the proverbial wall. In this case, change agents who wish to undercut the dominant's attempt to maintain their privileged position have no other option but to resort to other methods –discursive challenges, reform, confrontation, or non- participation. This raises two main questions. Firstly, just how coercive are these four methods? Secondly and consequently, is there a threshold of coercion beyond which one cannot venture *without* jeopardising the very ethics as well as vision of non-domination that one wants to attain? This question calls for an exploration of how exactly each method relates to an ethics of non-domination.

While incentives and infrapolitics are non-coercive, discursive challenges are situated at the very low end of the coercive realm. To explicate, recall that a discursive challenge encompasses three elements: (a) a critique of the arguments that holds in place and are in turn held in place by the dominant's modes of action; (b) the proposal of a new way of acting; and finally, (c) a demand that the dominant at least consider this proposal. In my mind, it is precisely this last point that holds the key to ascertaining the coercive nature of a discursive challenge. Underpinning any such challenge is the claim that the other be *reasonable* –i.e., that they at the very least be open to consider our arguments, and evaluate their pro and cons sincerely and seriously. If one's counterpart is not reasonable, then the hope that the better argument will prevail is squashed from the very beginning. But in asking that the other be reasonable, one effectively invokes reasonabless as a *normative constraint* on the other. The very act of invoking reasonabless as an ideal and a restraint that the other should abide by effectively inscribes discursive

challenges in the horizon of coercive methods. To be sure, discursive challenges are minimally coercive, on the grounds that reasonableness can hardly be enforced as a rule. But the fact that there is no firmly established penalty for failing to oblige by a rule for does not detract from the existence of the rule itself --it simply means that the power of this rule is mainly normative instead of being founded on its enforceability.

As a minimally coercive method for change, a discursive challenge dovetails well with an ethics of non-domination. In fact, this ethics is a *necessary* (albeit insufficient) condition for the successfulness of a discursive challenge. The reason for this is that change agents must fit themselves for the self-rule that they discursively ask for by undergoing a suitable process of self-fashioning (Parel 1997: liii). The risk in disassociating a discursive challenge from a process of self-fashioning is that change agents would still conduct themselves as subordinates were their challenges to be successful in establishing a more symmetrical relation. Thus, as Gandhi argued, a formally independent India that had not refashioned itself would be nothing more than a mirror image of Britain, insofar as most of the Indian people would think, act, dress, eat, and speak like the British. The upshot is that self-rule cannot be a gift by the dominant, but must be taken through a process of self-fashioning. So, while a discursive challenge can be instrumental in initiating a negotiation on a more symmetrical relation, this challenge must be propped up by self-fashioning if it is to lead the subordinates to true self-rule.[23]

A step beyond infrapolitical practices and discursive challenges is reform. This latter differs from the previous methods in that it enables change

[23] Self-fashioning involves pushing the limits of one's prescribed conduct, such that we land on infrapolitical terrain once again. Consequently, to say that self-fashioning is necessary for the successfulness of a discursive challenge is to tie this challenge with infrapolitics.

agents to transform social relations from *without* through the regulatory power of the state. Unlike revolution, however, reform provides for gaining access to state institutions through electoral channels (where these are available). Accordingly, reform is a unique blend of different kinds of force. On the one hand, both the recourse to existing channels of contestation and the use of incentives, persuasion, and rhetoric to entice voters would place reform at the minimally coercive end of the spectrum. The use of state power to regulate power relations, on the other hand, *ultimately* rests on the ability of the state to compel or punish a non-compliant party. As a combination of qualitatively different forces, then, reform arguably sits somewhere in between the two poles of the spectrum.

Nonetheless, or rather consequently, I do not think that reform is incompatible with non-domination. While coercive force or the threat thereof is an inherent characteristic of the state-form, the scale of modern societies and the nature of their problems are such that the state form *can* play a significant role in: ensuring minimum necessary order; setting up a broad regulatory framework to stave off the imminent threat of ecological catastrophe; and finally, providing services and infrastructure to secure basic human needs. In addition, the state could be paramount to redistributing resources across relations. To be clear, I am not claiming that state is here to remain because there is no alternative to it. My contention is rather that, given both the problems ensuing from the increasing concentration of people in urbanised areas and the need to take quick steps to avoid an ecological crisis, there might be some value in the state as a form of social organisation.

Accordingly, instead of doing away with the state (for the moment), it

would be better to model it along the lines of non-domination. To my mind, such a state: (a) minimizes the use of coercive force and maximises the use of incentives; (b) is as close as possible to the citizens through the principle of decentralisation and subsidiarity; (c) is subservient and responsive to them in its daily operations; (d) extends to citizens a say and a hand over its operations through deliberative as well as consultative methods; (e) provides citizens with channels of contestation and redress; (f) uses its regulatory power responsibly –i.e., providing convincing arguments to citizens for why this power ought to be used to regulate specific relations in the first place; (g) devotes the use of this power to equalise power relations; and finally, (h) mediates conflicts between parties instead of simply imposing a solution from without, where possible.

As one method among others for transforming the state along the aforementioned lines, reform *needs* to be tethered to an ethics of non-domination if it is to be successful. Without this ethics, change agents will be vulnerable to betraying their initial intentions in favour of ensuring the continued support of entrenched interests, perpetuating one's position in power, and drawing personal benefits from this position. Even a strong commitment to non-domination may wane with time, as change agents are exposed to the old ways of the 'house of power' and become more pliable to entrenched interests. In my mind, this challenge calls not only for a firm yet critical dedication to non-domination on the part of change agents, but also for the *institutionalisation* of this ethics. One form that this institutionalisation can take is the creation of in-built mechanisms into government operations, such as laws guaranteeing public responsiveness and frequent public engagement

initiatives.

Clearly, a reformist approach is not without its difficulties. It requires a breadth of popular support that cuts across different power relations and that is hard to obtain without, for example, appropriate resources for campaigning. In addition, reformist approaches are generally lengthy processes, not least because it takes time to build a popular base of support. Consequently, reform may not be very practical as a way to transform a non-negotiable state of domination that, in the eyes of change agents, has been going on for too long and can no longer be tolerated. In this context, what other methods are available to such agents? We are now left with non-participation, confrontation, and revolution. With these three methods we approach the mid- to highly coercive end of the spectrum. But are these methods equally coercive? More importantly, what difference does it make to use one method instead of another for an ethics of non-domination?

I want to start exploring these questions with confrontation and revolution. In fact, as revolution involves a confrontation with the state, it is reasonable to assume that what will be said about confrontation applies to revolution, too. Now, confrontation entails the transformation of one's counterpart into an adversary and the recourse to physical force against them. As such, this method is the most coercive techniques for change from amongst the six ones surveyed in the last chapter. The reason for this is that, while a non-physical threat still affords the targeted person the possibility to disregard this threat and act otherwise, physical force acts directly on their bodies in such a way to deprive them of this very possibility. Accordingly, as already noted, physical force signals the limits of power, insofar as this latter

presupposes that the targeted party be faced with a range of different ways of behaving as possible responses to the exercise of power to which they are subject.

With this in mind, the deployment of confrontation as a means to bring about a relation of non-domination is very likely to endanger the end goal in the very process of attaining it. The reason for this is that the iteration of any given practice over time makes that practice habitual. Accordingly, engaging in physical force over time constitutes a mode of being that is revolves around the use of physical force itself. This aggressive mode of being predisposes change agents to resort to physical constraints whenever they run into resistance, both from the defeated party and from their own comrades-in-arms. As violence is bound to suppress the points of resistance that it encounters (unless overcome by greater violence), such agents effectively exercise power over others in an authoritarian fashion, thereby foreclosing the possibility for non-domination. Thus did Gandhi (1997: 78) comment on the prospective of engaging the British in a military confrontation: "if all the British were to be killed, those who kill them would become the masters of India, and as a result India would continue in a state of slavery." The point that Gandhi wanted to draw attention to is that a confrontation does not transform the system of power but simply inverts it, in that it replaces a set of oppressive people with another one.

Recent developments in post-Gaddafi Libya are an apt illustration of the foregoing. One year and a half after the popular uprising against Gaddafi's repressive regime began and almost five month after the dictator's death, Libya is largely "run by a patchwork of former rebel fighting brigades"

(Gatehouse 2012). Not only do these latter often clash with each other in order to solve debacles or to safeguard their territories, but they have also been involved in revenge attacks, cases of torture, and the arbitrary detention of suspected Gaddafi loyalists (Amnesty International 2012). The BBC journalist, Gabriel Gatehouse (2012), has summed up the post- revolutionary situation thus: "in Libya…the '*kateeba*' [the gun] rules supreme." This is unsurprising, for, as I have argued, confrontation produces a mode of being that centres on, and is disposed towards, physical force. "We like carrying our guns," said a student- turned-fighter to the BBC's Edwin Lane (2011); "with them we can do what we want and go whenever we want." Accordingly, while the majority of rebel fighters have failed to demobilise, those that have done so "have a new arrogance, and threaten to resort to violence to solve disputes." (Lane 2011).

To be clear, it is not my contention that Gaddafi's regime should have remained in place. On the contrary: the faults of this regime were so many and its relation with most of its citizens so injurious, that it should have been done away with a long time ago. My point is rather that the very process through which change agents have brought this repressive regime to an abrupt end is giving rise to a new state of domination –and this *despite* such agents' intentions of creating a 'free' Libya. While it is surely too early to draw conclusions, most of the signals that come from post-Gaddafi Libya seem to me to be pointing towards the wrong direction. In this respect, Gandhi's aforementioned assertion on the prospects of India in the case in which it obtained its independence through confrontation gains an almost prophetic aura in the case of Libya: 'if Gaddafi and all of his men were to be killed,

those who killed them would become the new masters of Libya'. For once, I wish (against hope and especially against sense) that Gandhi had been wrong.

The conclusion that ensues from the above is that confrontation is congruent neither with an ethics nor a vision of non-domination. For, as I have argued, this method derails the cultivation of virtues of non-domination by producing the habit of deploying physical force as a way to deal with resistance. Unless it faces a force of equal magnitude in a confrontation, this kind of force is bound to overwhelm and suppress the points of resistance that it encounters. The overall effect is that the other in a power relation is reduced to impotence at worst, and is unable to influence her counterpart's conduct in a reciprocal way at best. The implication here is clear: in rebelling against domination through confrontation, one is less likely to abolish domination than to secure it for oneself (Day 2005: 122). If change agents are looking to create a more symmetrical relation, then exploring and experimenting with methods other than confrontation is not simply a desirable step but perhaps even a necessary one.

It might be more fruitful, then, to turn to non-participation, which consists in the refusal to engage in prescribed behaviours overtly. As I have explored in the previous chapter, there exist different forms of non-participation, but the one that interests me here centres on the refusal both to engage in activities and to provide resources from which the dominant draw a certain benefit. A classic example of this kind of non-participation is the labour strike, whereby workers curtail their employers' ability to obtain a profit by halting the production process. Other examples include the non-payment of taxes, boycotts of commercial products and services, and the

refusal to participate in legitimising rituals such as voting. Accordingly, the purpose of this method is to bring the dominant to the negotiating table by depriving them of services, resources, and/or legitimacy upon which they are dependent to maintain their own privileged position.

The use of deprivation as a sanction against the dominant places this method somewhere in between discursive challenges and confrontation in the scale for coercion. On the one hand, this type of non-participation adds the force of sanctions to the normative restraint of reasonableness to which a discursive challenge lays claim. On the other hand, non-participation is less coercive than confrontation in that it falls short of compelling the other to undertake a course of action through the use of physical force. Crucially, unlike confrontation, this method sits well with a vision of non-domination. The reason for this is that the refusal to engage in prescribed behaviours allows change agents to experiment with alternative modes of being, such as those that pertain precisely to non-domination. Thus, for example, strikers can create temporary assemblies in and through which they manage their own affairs in a non-authoritarian fashion. Similarly, students involved in classes and tuition boycotts as a protest against management initiatives like budget cuts can try out their own democratic management through the occupation of their scholastic institutions. In practicing and learning the virtues associated with non-domination with each other, subordinate change agents can learn to relate to others in a non-dominating way.

In sum, then, while non-participation seeks to bring the dominant to their knees by depriving them of precious services and resources, it does so in a way that allows change agents to practice non-domination here and now.

Now, a major difficulty that most change agents encounter in withdrawing their participation is that at times it is precisely this participation that guarantees them access to important resources or services. For example, workers rely on their employers to receive the financial means of survival; similarly, even the most oppressive regimes often have a monopoly on water and electricity provision, health care, and education, not to mention the fact that they employ at least a part of the population in the bureaucratic and service delivery sectors. Consequently, it is not just the dominant who often rely on the subordinates to maintain their privileges, but also the subordinates who depend on their counterparts to access more or less basic services and resources (Paullin 1944: 18).

It follows from the above that the outcome of a struggle depends, among other factors, "on which of the two parties to the conflict can best or longest dispense with the services of the other" (Paullin 1944: 18). Therefore, it is paramount to undercutting the dominant's bargaining power that subordinate change agents take steps to reduce their own reliance on their counterparts. In my mind, the most effective step is the creation of *lateral* organisations that provide for the same or similar goods to the ones that the dominant offer. Such organisations exist *alongside* the dominant ones, in the attempt to render these latter redundant. An example of this constructive move is the self-managed carpool system that Martin Luther King and his associates organised in Montgomery, Alabama, as a way to provide transportation for the African Americans involved in the 1956 boycott of the segregated bus system (King Institute Encyclopaedia 2012). This carpool system helped people to sustain the boycott over time and, in doing so, contributed to its success,

which in turn boosted the cause of African Americans in the United States.

In the Montgomery case, the creation of a carpool system was a temporary move that fulfilled its purpose as soon as the authorities agreed to end their policy of segregation in public transportation. What if, however, the dominant persist in being unresponsive? Even worse, what if they find a way to dispense altogether with the services that protesters had provided, for example by recruiting other people who are willing to do the job? This is indeed a very real danger with which people who opts for non-participative forms of struggle have to reckon. To illustrate, one need only think of strikers who lose their jobs to unemployed people who are only too eager to take their place, or corrupted political leaders who are only too happy to occupy the space left out by parties that boycott elections as a protest against abuses of power and repressions.

While one should not overlook this danger, my contention is that an oppressive and *non-negotiable* power relation leaves change agents no other option but to embrace the risks that inhere in non-participation. Were they not to do so, they would be complicit with their own oppression through the continued supply of resources and services to those who oppress them. To be sure, at times there might be some value in short-term complicity, insofar as it allows change agents to mobilize resources as well as to build support for their cause. However, prolonged complicity makes the subordinates as guilty as their oppressors. When one can no longer tolerate an oppressive condition, then, one ought to at least "wash his hands of" this oppression by withdrawing one’s support to it while accepting the punishment for one’s actions (Thoreau 1969: 9). Thus did Thoreau exhort people who condemned slavery as well as

the 1846 US war with Mexico to stop funding both through the refusal to pay taxes. In his view, to continue to pay taxes while criticising slavery and the war was hypocritical, in that it was precisely the payment of taxes that enabled a war-hungry, anti-abolitionist government to function (Thoreau 1969: 12). Granted, the withdrawal by a small number of individuals may be easily brushed aside and punished, but this does not mean that withdrawing is futile. For one thing, this action signals discontent with a specific situation and invites public scrutiny on it. Perhaps more importantly, this action sets an example for other people to follow; it shows them that they are not alone in thinking that a certain situation is no longer tenable; and in doing so, it encourages them to join forces with others. In this sense, to quote Rosa Luxemburg (1970: 55) out of context, the action of a few individuals may be "premature," but it is precisely through such "premature" actions that one comes to be in a position to create a critical mass able to deal a blow to the dominant.

With this in mind, a way to circumvent neutralisation by the dominant is to actually exploit their unresponsiveness to establish lateral organisations on a more permanent basis. This method provides for the transformation of a relation to take place through a work of disengagement and construction (Day 2005: 123). Through the former change agents withdraw energy from existing relations by refusing to provide services and resources to the dominant. Construction, on the other hand, enables these agents to live and sustain a vision of non-domination in the here-now through the creation of a permanent counter-space. As seen, this space sustains itself by providing its denizens with similar goods to those that the dominant provided for. The hope is that

the construction of alternatives in the here-now encourages more and more people to abandon oppressive relations in favour of populating such counter-spaces.

One illustration of the above is the case of exploited workers who decide to pool their resources together and to start their own cooperatives, linking them with other cooperatives in such a way to form a network of mutually sustaining units. This is what the fair trade movement has been attempting to do, if imperfectly and not without failures, for some time -- namely, to connect peasants and artisans with each other as well as with consumers in order to promote fairer and more sustainable practices of production and exchange. To be sure, the fair trade movement is neither the only economic alternative that is available to us, nor perhaps the most desirable one. However, this movement strikes me for its attempt to create a fairer form of capital in the here-now, within the shell of existing capitalist relations. It does so not through armed revolt, but rather by directing workers and consumers to stop supporting exploitative relations and to contract fairer economic relations in their stead.

The advantage of creating counter-spaces, such as the fair trade network, is that it allows those who wish it to enact, practice, and live their vision of non-domination in the present. Change agents cannot wait for everyone to be willing to live differently, for otherwise they will likely wait forever (Day 2005: 126). At the same time, they cannot impose non-domination upon others, for imposition is an act of domination and would therefore distort the end goal in the very process of attaining it. What they *can* do is to join forces with like-minded people and engage in a work of

withdrawal and construction in order to sustain non-dominating ways of living in the here-now. "That is the task," wrote the German anarchist, Gustav Landauer (in Day 2005: 126): "not to despair of the people, but also not to wait for the people."

As a way to bring the argument that I have laid out so far closer to home, it might be useful to turn our attention to the recent wave of protests against the injustices of capitalism that has shaken the west. Collectively known as the Occupy movement, participants to such protests have by and large desisted from extending a list of demands to the state or to corporations -- the notable exception here being the demand that policy-makers increase taxes on wealth. Instead, Occupy has opted in favour of the experimentation with democratic forms of living-together in occupied public spaces, occasionally accompanied by demonstrations and marches. Underlying this experimental attitude is the belief that non-domination is not a thing of the future, but rather something that exists in the present in its very making. Accordingly, the orientation of Occupy has been on achieving non-domination by prefiguring it and learning it in the here-now.

In my mind, however, the specific tactics adopted by the Occupy movement show far less sophistication that the overall orientation of the movement itself. Firstly, while Occupy has subtracted itself from the state by refusing to extend demands to it, this subtraction has been more symbolic than substantive. Marches and occupations are instrumental in building public support, but they are no substitute for the withdrawal of actual services and resources from both capital and the state. To my knowledge, Occupy has failed to call for a wide-ranging boycott of the products made or sold by

exploitative corporations; the non-payment of taxes or the resignation of one's job (*pace* Thoreau); and finally, casting invalid ballots (*pace* Nietzsche and Saramago). One of the few actions that actually caused some inconvenience to corporate interests was the transfer of savings from major banks to local credit unions by some Occupy members during the so-called "Bank Transfer Day."

Secondly, while Occupy has created a temporary space outside of the reach of both capital and the state in the form of occupied squares, it has neither established lateral organisations able to sustain protesters, nor effectively connected with existing alternative structures. To my knowledge, for example, most Occupy camps have not provided day care as a way to help interested parents and families to join the protest. Similarly, while the connection that the movement has created with local credit unions would have ensured Occupy loans at very advantageous terms, this movement has failed to capitalise on this opportunity to create, say, special shops, or consumers' cooperatives, or even think tanks. It is through the creation of such lateral organisations and their connection in broad networks, *not* through the setting up of tents, that Occupy can consolidate democratic experimentation in the shell of existing structures. Accordingly, if the police had not forcibly closed down most Occupy camps, my guess is that most members of the movement would have willingly dropped as a result of Occupy's failure to create a self-sustaining alternative.

This brings us nicely to the conundrum that most protesters often face: namely, what is the place of physical force in resistance when the dominant proceed to suppress protesters forcibly? The specific danger of using physical force in self-defence is that, as noted, initial acts of violence that are

successful in keeping the assailants at bay encourage the belief that physical force is the most effective way to solve problems (Parekh 1989: 148). This belief in turn sustains the further recourse to physical force, such that violence exceeds the limits of self-defence and establishes itself as a way of relating to others. To be clear, it is not my contention that the deployment of physical force in self-defence *necessarily* gives rise to a violent mode of being, as in the case of the offensive use of violence. What I am saying is that resorting to violence in self-defence introduces the risk of slipping into this mode of life -- that is why it is *prudent* to avoid the use of physical force.

However, in light of current events in Syria (among others), where government forces have turned peaceful protests into bloodbaths and are now shelling entire civilian areas, the injunction to avoid violence in self-defence smacks of academic elitism to say the least. It is all too easy to preach non-violence in the comfort of a socio-political environment such as the Canadian one; an environment that, while it is not extraneous to the suspension of basic rights and the indiscriminate use of force, at any rate puts a certain value on difference and dialogue. Does the injunction to non-violence hold also there where no such conditions obtain --where harmless civilians are brutally killed? In my mind, the answer to this question lies with stressing the *prudential* nature of the aforementioned injunction. To quote Walter Benjamin (1978: 298) out of context, avoiding violence in self-defence is not a categorical imperative or a "criterion of judgment." Rather, it is "a guideline for the actions of persons or communities who have to wrestle with it in solitude and, in exceptional cases, to take on themselves the responsibility of ignoring it" (Benjamin 1978: 298). In other words, while it is prudent not to use violence

in self-defence, in some cases one may do so, taking full responsibility for the risk of endangering one's own desired vision of non-domination.

The Benjaminian argument that I have advanced above puts me somewhat at odds with Gandhi, who saw in self-suffering the key to triggering off a process of self-examination and conversion in one's adversary (Gandhi 1997: 90; Parekh 1989: 151). I would argue that Gandhi's take on self-suffering is not only flawed, but also ethically dangerous. To explain why, it is first necessary to introduce Gandhi's main insights into how to struggle against those who oppose us. As I will show, such insights build on as well as expand Gandhi's treatment of ethics, on account of the fact that the way one struggles against others affects one's own mode of conduct. Accordingly, the discussion to follow serves as the complementary part to the previous section. Put together, these two parts do not certainly constitute an exhaustive account of Gandhi's thought, but they do give us a sense of at least some of his main ideas.

As we have seen in the previous section, at the core of Gandhi's approach is the presupposition that there exists "the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree" (Gandhi 1997: 81). Unsurprisingly, Gandhi reached some of the same theses that my own work has advanced, especially as they regard the use of physical force. More explicitly, Gandhi held that the recourse to violence in one's struggle against others moulded the subjectivity of the resisters in a way that pushed them *away* from the goal of individual *swaraj*. This latter required self-control and a commitment to self-rule, which were goods that the recourse to violence could not deliver insofar as violence generated a self that is armed

to the teeth, unruly, aggressive, and dominating.

Consequently, Gandhi (in Parekh 1989: 143) reasoned that the best way to resolve conflicts was through persuasion and rational discussion. The exchange of reasons enabled interlocutors to see the partiality of their own way of thinking, and therefore to weigh the pro and cons of one way of thinking against another one. Through discussion, parties could cooperatively search for *satya* or "truth," taking truth to mean not what is universally valid, but rather what parties *sincerely* believe to be valid in a certain time and space. However --Gandhi argued (in Parekh 1989: 143),-- certain conditions needed to be in place for a dialogical approach to be successful in resolving a conflict. Firstly, parties needed to be well-disposed towards each other; secondly, they had to be open-minded and receptive to new ideas; and finally, they needed to make a sincere effort in appreciating each other's way of thinking (Parekh 1989: 144). I would not go as far as Gandhi in claiming that these three conditions *guarantee* the solution of a conflict, for at times differences between parties run so deep that it might be difficult to find common ground. However, such conditions do defuse tensions and, consequently, can play an instrumental role in building more cooperative relations.

Gandhi himself was no stranger to the limits of rational discussion. "If you do not concede our demands," wrote Gandhi (1997: 85) addressing himself to the British, "we will be no longer your petitioners." Accordingly, he argued that, whenever their appeals for negotiations fell on deaf ears, resisters could raise the stakes by employing *satyāgraha* (Gandhi 1997: 85, 90; Parekh 1989: 149). A combination of the Sanskrit words *satya* (truth) and *āgraha* (insistence short of obstination), this term referred to the action of making a

stand for one's beliefs by (a) refusing to comply with one's opponents' orders through non- cooperation, and (b) by accepting punishment for non-compliance and undergoing suffering. Let me briefly analyse each of these two steps below.

To begin with, Gandhi (1997: 90; Parekh 1989: 150) held that self-suffering played a crucial function in evoking a moral response in one's adversary. For one thing, self-suffering would activate a sense of decency in the perpetrators, so much so that it would "melt even the stoniest heart" (Gandhi in Parekh 1989: 167). For another, self-suffering would impact people's psyches in such a way to make it increasingly difficult for them to keep on inflicting injuries. As a result --Gandhi argued (in Parekh 1989: 150),-- suffering would trigger a process of self-examination and, possibly, of conversion in one's opponents. However, Gandhi realised the limits of self-suffering early in his life as an activist, as he faced obstinate and deeply prejudiced interlocutors. To add force to the power of suffering, then, *satyāgraha* provided for the withdrawal of one's cooperation with one's opponents through boycotts, strikes, and civil disobedience. The aim of these actions was political, insofar as they sough to undercut the dominant's bargaining position and to induce them to negotiate.

As Parekh (1989: 157) has observed, Gandhi thought that this kind of economic as well as political pressure "was only designed to facilitate and intensify" the force that inheres in suffering, not to substitute it. On this view, then, *satyāgraha* was first and foremost a *moral* method, insofar as it sought to transform one's opponent by activating his sense of what is right. *Satyāgraha* was also a deeply *ethical* method, in the sense that it both required and

reflected the deliberate cultivation of *swaraj* on the part of the resisters. As noted, *swaraj* directed people to be free of hatred or ill feeling against their opponents, to cultivate courage, observe chastity, adopt poverty, and follow truth (Gandhi 1997: 96). As such, a commitment to *swaraj* guided resisters to resort to non-violent methods of conflict resolution, on the grounds that such methods dovetailed with and indeed sustained a lifestyle of non-domination and mutual aid (Gandhi 1997: 93).

An illustration of the intersection of moral, ethical, and political dimensions in *satyāgraha* is Gandhi's first national campaign of protest against the British colonial government in 1919. This campaign encompassed mass demonstrations as well as a nation-wide *hartāl* --that is, the cessation of work accompanied by fasts and prayers. As a strike, the *hartāl* was clearly intended to exact concessions from the colonial government and the strong English economic interests that sustained it. For Gandhi, however, its main purpose was that of expressing sorrow at the injustices of colonial rule and, hence, of awakening the British government's sense of justice and morality (Parekh 1989: 157). At the same time, this campaign aimed at a popular awakening by encouraging Indians to embark on the path of *swaraj*. When, however, cases of arson, violence against English, and looting became frequent, Gandhi realised that most Indians had not undergone a suitable degree of ethical self-transformation and called the campaign off, referring to it as the "Himalayan blunder" (Gandhi in Parekh 1997: 16).

With time, Gandhi put increasingly more emphasis on the need for economic and political pressure while adhering to his commitments to the moral and ethical dimensions of *satyāgraha*. Thus, for example, his 1920 Non-

cooperation Movement was based on the (now familiar) idea of disengaging from the colonial state and of constructing indigenous structures in its stead (Parekh 1997: 16). It required that Indians quit their jobs as government employees, refuse to pay taxes and use the colonial state's services, and more generally avoid any dealings with the colonial administration in order to set up their own indigenous structures. Granted, this movement failed in its overall objective to paralyse the colonial state, for "it demanded sacrifices of career only a few were willing to make, and implied a hostility to Western institutions that only few shared" (Parekh 1997: 18). However, by the time the movement ended in 1922, it had succeeded both in making national independence a widely shared goal in India and in expanding the civic space through the creation of voluntary organisations (Parekh 1997: 18).

My account of non-participation and Gandhi's notion of *satyāgraha* converge on numerous points. For example, both share an emphasis on the political as well as ethical dimensions of methods for struggle; in addition, both accounts provide for the option of creating a space outside of the scope of the dominant there where a power relation proves to be non-negotiable. Where Gandhi and I diverge is on the moral dimension of methods for change. My first misgiving is with Gandhi's argument that self-suffering "melts even the stoniest heart." While this argument may turn out to be true in *some* cases, it is also true that at times self-suffering either exasperates perpetrators and provokes them into even more brutal violence, or leaves them unaffected (Parekh 1989: 165). To illustrate this, one needs only look at the pictures of US soldiers abusing harmless and non-resisting detainees in Guantanamo Bay with sinister enjoyment.

My second quarrel with Gandhi has to do with the danger of an ethics of self-suffering. If it is true that the means employed determine the end produced, then the repeated recourse to self-suffering as a way to evoke a moral response in one's opponent is likely to create a mode of being that centres on self-suffering (Parekh 1989: 170). Indeed, this mode of being may even idealise self-suffering as a sign of one's strength. This is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, this idealisation defies the purpose of struggling for non-domination, to the extent that non-domination is precisely a mode of interaction that seeks to reduce the incidence of injuries. Secondly, the self-infliction of injuries (whether these be emotional, physical, etc.) degrades and incapacitates the self, to the point where the self consumes and even destroys itself and, therefore, has no longer reason to struggle for non-domination. For these two reasons, the moral dimension of methods for struggle ought to be abandoned, in favour of a focus on what these methods do politically as well as ethically. Despite my qualms with Gandhi, I hope I have shown that there is much to be learnt from his insights into the relation between means and ends, the need for ethical self-transformation, and the need for an ethically grounded method of struggle against one's opponents.

V.5. Conclusion: Transposition and Integration

The aim of these chapters has been to delineate to delineate a theoretical framework for grasping change. I have attempted to develop this framework by answering two main questions. Firstly, what is the direction of change? This question called for a normative investigation into the end goal that change agents ought to strive towards. Secondly but not less importantly,

how does one best achieve this end goal? More specifically, what are the most suitable means to this goal? This question required that we probe the relation between means and ends.

In relation to the first question, I have argued against theories of justice that postulate the existence of universally just principles as well as practices, on three grounds: epistemological, political, and prudential. From the epistemological point of view, to postulate that a specific principle is transcendental automatically shields it from critical scrutiny, such that one is unable to call this principle into question from within the theory of justice that has generated it. Secondly, and consequently, such principles of justice and their corresponding practices can turn into political forms of domination by capturing people into fixed arrangements that are likely to generate unforeseen problems. Finally, the claim to universalism that inheres in transcendental principles has frequently served as a justification for imperialism.

Successively, I have argued against a purely nomadic (that is, relativistic) attitude, on account of the fact that such an attitude allows for highly injurious configurations of power such as exploitation and oppression. Accordingly, I have attempted to navigate the Scylla of theories of justice and the Charybdis of pure nomadism by advocating a critical-experimental attitude geared towards non-domination. By this latter I mean a way of organising power relations, such that parties influence each other in a relatively reciprocal fashion in a spirit of cooperation. As I have argued, the normative thrust of this arrangement lies with the fact that it minimises the incidence of injuries that one suffers as a result of her failure to successfully resist what others do *to* and *for* her. The reason for this is that non-domination provides those who are

subject to power with a hand and a say over the way in which they are conducted, such that they can steer interactions towards less injurious modes. This in sharp contrast to domination, which generates suffering by exposing the subordinates to abuses, impositions, and bullying.

While advocating for non-domination, I have warned against taking up the goal of non-domination all too easily. Specifically, I have argued that non-domination loses much of its emancipatory force if it is a surrogate for a vision of domination that change agents cannot realise because of their weakness. As a surrogate, non-domination would be invested not only in the impotence that produced it, but also in the *ressentiment* that this impotence breeds. If one is to avoid these pitfalls, then non-domination must be chosen *for its own sake.* At the same time, one should always question the value of this goal against alternatives through an activity of reciprocal elucidation, and therefore reconsider, modify, transform, or re-work the goal of non-domination accordingly.

If we take non-domination as our provisional end goal, then how does one best achieve it? Drawing upon Gandhi, I have introduced the prefigurative perspective as a way to answer this question. The principal tenet of this perspective is that there is "the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree" (Gandhi 1997: 81). On this view, the means at use must be of the same nature as the ends they seek to bring about; in fact, means are incipient forms of their corresponding ends and, as such, prefigure these ends in the here-now. As applied to non-domination, this insight has led to the conclusion that the only way to achieve non-domination is through non-domination itself. Seeking to achieve non-

domination through domination is self-defeating at best and disastrous at worst, for domination is bound to corrupt and vitiate the end-goal.

As I have argued, a non-dominating path to non-domination involves two mutually sustaining processes. First is the cultivation of an ethics of non-domination, which gravitates on such virtues as self-rule, self-control, responsiveness, responsibility, and openness to alterity. The second process encompasses the deployment of methods aimed to get one's counterpart to agree to a more symmetrical relation. I hope I have shown that, out of the six methods that I have surveyed in the previous chapter, confrontation and revolution are *not* congruent with an ethics of non-domination. The reason for this is that they create an aggressive and arrogant mode of being that is disposed towards physical force. Consequently, those who do resort to such means even in such exceptional cases as in self-defence, must take upon themselves the responsibility for endangering the very vision of non-domination they try to achieve.

With this in mind, the intersection of both processes enables change agents to *practice* non-domination in the here-now. To be sure, at this incipient stage non-domination will be marred by difficulties or even partial failures; what these agents actually practice is not non-domination as such but rather a *degree* of non-domination. However, it is through this kind of prefigurative practice that one *learns* non-domination and becomes fit for it by undergoing a suitable degree of self-transformation. Skipping this learning is self-defeating, for change agents who do not undergo self-transformation would still display the narrow modes of conduct that they have acquired as subordinates. To illustrate, one need only think of colonised people who gain

formal independence but have soaked up their colonisers' ways so much that the colonised have become their colonisers' mirror image.

The upshot of the above is that learning non-domination is necessary to finding oneself at home in the new kind of relation that one is struggling for (that is, precisely a relation of non-domination). At this point, we can see the *value* of the prefigurative perspective as a way of grasping the relation between means and ends --i.e. we see why this perspective is a good way to grasp this relation. As I have argued, the value of this model lies with the fact that a focus on prefiguration directs change agents to practice non-domination in the here-now, such that they are able to *learn* from their practice. In doing so, they fit themselves for the vision that they want to attain. In this sense, non-domination is not one of those dreams that maintain their force as long as they are unrealisable --the kind of dreams that one would not know what to do with once they materialise. (One is reminded here of the popular saying, 'be careful what you wish for. It might come true'.) Rather, prefigurative non-domination is just the opposite: an aspiration that maintains its force precisely because it is being realised in the here-now.

By way of concluding, I want to say a few words about systemic changes as opposed to changes to a given foreground relation. Although this chapter has mainly focused on specific foreground relations for the sake of clarity, such relations do not exist in isolation. In fact, even *within* a foreground relation one cannot overlook the relations that exist *among* the subordinates and those that obtain among the dominant. Such relations, in turn, always exist within a *system* encompassing a multiplicity of other relations with which they converge, diverge, overlap, intersect, and/or are

clustered. Crucially, such systems partly reflect the individual power relations on which they build, yet are not reducible to the sum total of such relations. The reason for this is that these relations interact with each other in non-linear and unpredictable ways in order to create a unique configuration. Not only is this configuration *different* from the simple aggregation of individual power relations, but it is always dynamic and mobile, as power relations shift and re-align.

To illustrate the dynamic and unpredictable nature of complex system, consider the case in which certain trade unions attempt to promote their members' interests by pressuring the government to curtail the ability of corporations to fire their employees. The fact that the government concedes to the unions' request aligns this government with both the trade unions and the workers that these unions represent at the same time as it puts these parties at odds with corporations. Faced with increasing costs, however, these corporations decide to reduce salaries, lengthen working hours, and replace green technologies with 'dirtier', less expensive ones, such that workers now feel that they are worse off than they were before their trade unions' action. In sum, then, not only has this action failed to achieve its initial aim to better workers' overall conditions, but it has also backfired. Consequently, some workers may now side with the corporations against the trade unions, while environmental groups may mobilised to oppose the pollution resulting from these corporations' decision to downgrade their technology.

The complexity and unpredictability of complex systems can often lead to a defeatist or fatalist attitude, whereby people come to see the system as being beyond their reach. While it is true that these systems are too complex to

anticipate in a reliable way, the fact that they partly reflect the individual components on which they build means that systemic change does not just happen by accident. Rather --I would argue-- it requires organisation and preparation, as instantiated in and through the following two steps. The first step consists in individuals *transposing* both an ethics of non-domination and its corresponding methods for struggle onto all the relations in which they take part. As I have argued, one occupies several subject positions at the same time --for example, by being an employer or employee, a partner, a colleague, a neighbour, a citizen, and so on. The point, then, is to integrate all aspects of one's life in order to create a coherent pattern based on non-domination (Parekh 1989: 98). In other words, one should seek to align her different subjectivities, such that they *converge* on the field of non-domination.

The second step is for change agents to connect with like-minded people. This connection takes the form of vertical integration whenever a network of action is created among people on the basis of their shared subject-position, as in the case of employees from one company joining with employees from other firms. Alternatively, solidarity-building can happen across several subject-positions, as when a trade union links up with neighbourhoods' organisations, civic groups, and anti-racist associations. In this latter case, integration happens horizontally instead of vertically. The intersection of vertical integration with horizontal integration is the creation of a "general line that traverses the local oppositions and links them together," as if they were part of the same chain (Foucault 1990: 94). This line effectively fractures the existing system, by carving a space from within it that prefigures an alternative system based on non-domination.

To be sure, replacing the existing system with a new one will require actions that go beyond the transposition and integration, such as the redistribution of resources and the institutionalisation of non-domination. In my mind, however, these actions result from, as opposed to precede, the four 'pillars to systemic change': namely, self-transformation, ethical struggle, transposition, and integration. No redistribution of resources can happen if one does not struggle for it --and, as I have argued, this struggle not only cannot be separated from the cultivation of a specific way of life, but requires also the constitution of a network of like-minded people. In a world that is far too complex for people to control, these four pillars to systemic change can help interested parties live the kind of futures that they want to see here and now.

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